



Everyone Wants AI. Almost Nobody Has It Working

New research on why AI stalls and what the organizations getting it right are doing differently.



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Executive Summary

The question is no longer whether AI matters. It's why so few organizations can actually make it deliver.

Our survey of CX and IT leaders tells a story that's becoming familiar: AI is a top priority for nearly half of all organizations we spoke with, and yet fewer than 1 in 5 have real deployments in place. The gap between intent and execution is a strategy problem, not just a technology problem.

Just over half of respondents (51%) describe themselves as slow AI adopters: not opposed, not unaware, but stuck somewhere between planning and production. And the data shows exactly where the friction is:

20%

have moved from pilot to production.

18%

have AI use cases actively in operation.

57%

are stressed about finding the right solution.

The organizations that are getting it right aren't using better tools than everyone else. They're building AI on stronger foundations, with unified systems, clean data, and clear outcomes defined before the first line of code gets written.

This report breaks down the three places AI gets stuck, looks at where it's actually working, and offers a framework for asking better questions before your next AI investment, so you can start with the outcome and build backward.

Because the goal was never to have AI. The goal is to make it work.

CX and IT Leaders Agree: Everyone's Bought In. Almost Nobody's Shipped It

AI isn't just a shiny new toy anymore. It's complex and already embedded in the business (or on the way to being so). It may be happening quickly or slowly, but the question has shifted from "Should we use AI?" to "Why can't we get it to work?"

Our research shows that AI adoption is a major strategic priority for nearly half of all organizations we interviewed.

The caveat? There's a big divide between "we have to be doing it" and "we're actually doing it."

less than

18%

have AI use cases currently operating (8x8 Survey).

only

1 in 5

moved from pilot to production (8x8 Survey).

57%

are stressed about finding the right solution (8x8 Survey).



The journey between idea and execution is a lot longer than most organizations thought. This isn't about hype anymore. It's about making hard choices with incomplete information."

Joel Neeb, Chief Transformation and Business Operations Officer, 8x8

Why so slow? Key challenges include:

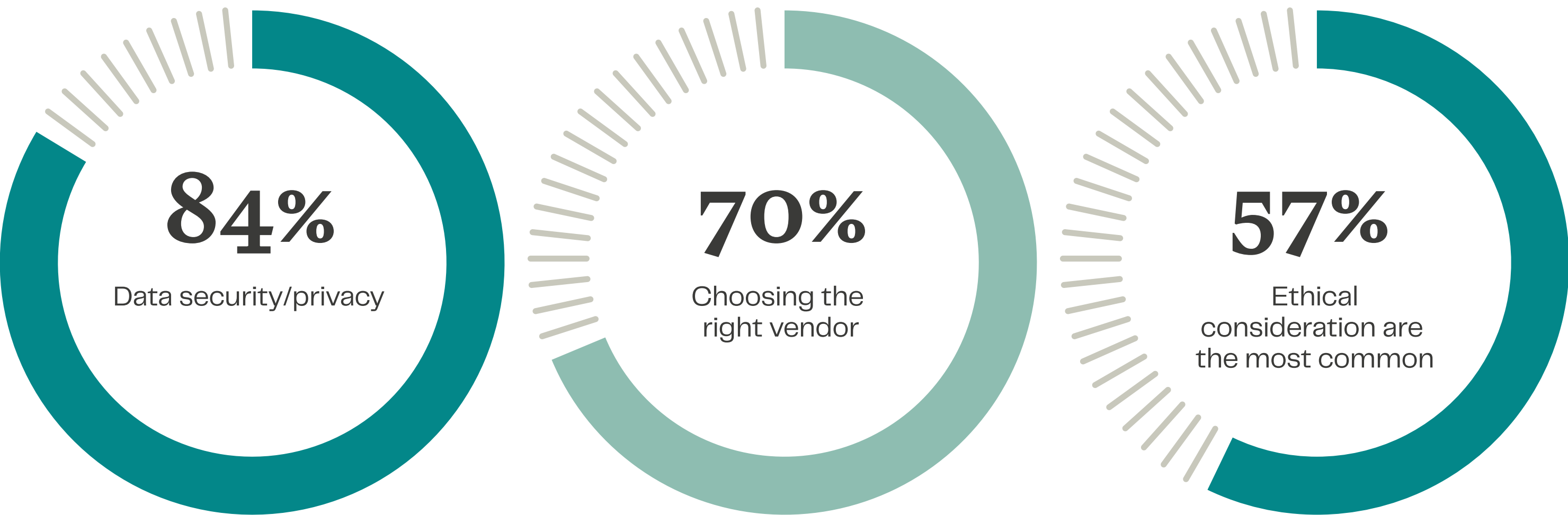
- ✓ Unclear use cases
- ✓ Lack of data readiness
- ✓ Integration complexity
- ✓ Security and governance concerns

Organizations aren't suffering from a lack of ambition; they have a destination in mind. But they're also stalling because they can't see what the path to get there looks like.

The implications for CX are critical: Customers now expect some services to be AI-enhanced, and organizations that hesitate on their AI adoption strategy risk falling behind the curve.

The Three Places AI Gets Stuck

While early pilot successes shine, the road ahead is cloudy, like the unexplored parts of a map in an open-world video game. What lies within the murky unknown, scattered with question marks? There are more skills to learn and more challenges to overcome before you level up. There's no single way forward, only choices, tradeoffs, and lessons that will shape the next chapter.



Our survey identified three major barriers keeping AI stuck in pilot mode.

The Trust Problem

Data security and privacy concerns top the list; 84% cite data security/privacy as top concern, and 57% list ethical considerations as a major worry (8x8 Survey).

Businesses are already weighing the risks of using AI and the potential exposure of sensitive information. [Research by ISACA](#), an international association focused on IT governance, found a massive organizational gap between AI adoption and regulation of its use. In Europe, 81% of IT professionals say their employees use some form of AI in their work, but only 31% of organizations have formal AI policies in place.

Underpinning the security issue is a broader conversation about responsible deployment, including understanding how people and AI can function together.



The "Right Tool" Trap

Organizations also worry about selecting the right technology partners: vendors whose tools not only perform well but also align with an organization’s long-term security, compliance, and integration needs.

- 70%**
cite choosing the right vendor as a significant challenge (8x8 Survey)
- 58%**
standardize on single provider (8x8 Survey)
- 42%**
take best-of-breed approach (8x8 Survey)

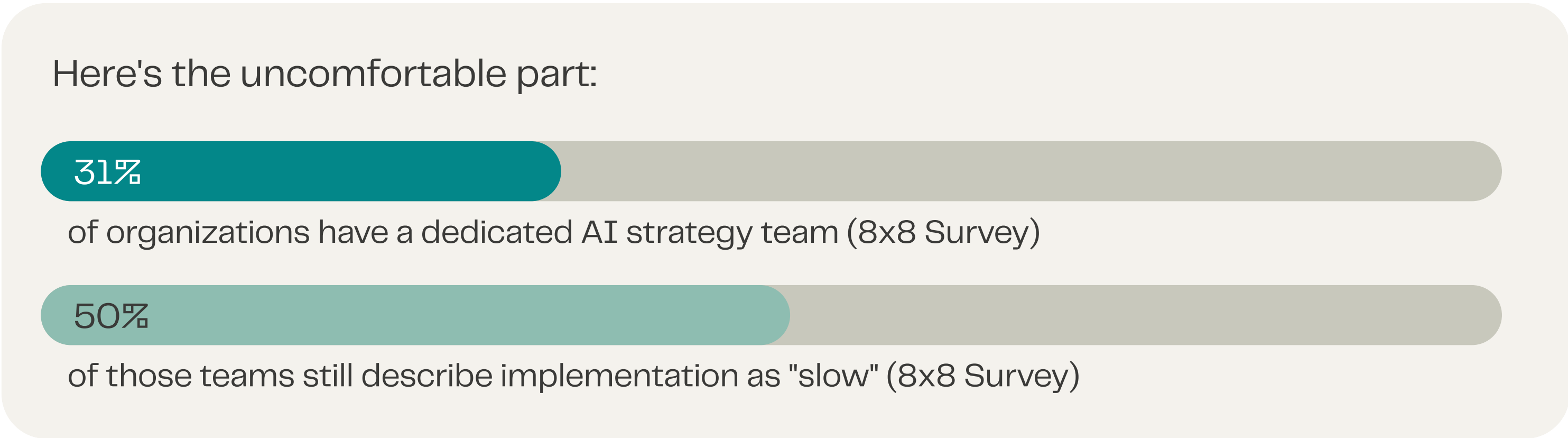


When AI is tied to real goals, ROI becomes clear quickly. When it's not? That's like handing someone a hammer and expecting it to work like a Swiss Army Knife."

Hunter Middleton, Chief Product Officer, 8x8

The vendor challenge is complex because while there are many tools out there, it’s hard to choose when you don’t necessarily understand what problem you're solving.

You Can Have a Plan and Still Go Nowhere



You can have a team. You can have a strategy. You can have executive buy-in and budget. And you can still get stuck. The organizations that have moved from pilot to production aren't starting with the technology—they're starting with outcomes.

When the Foundation is Right, Results Show Up

The early experiments are done, and the results are in. Where organizations have moved beyond pilot projects and deployed AI with real focus, the data shows that AI is undeniably proving its value (under the right conditions).

AI works—especially in data analysis and customer service, where precision, prediction, and personalization matter most. Over a third of surveyed organizations already use AI for data analysis, a clear sign that it is reliable and useful.

These early successes prove that AI is optimal for tasks where speed, pattern recognition, and personalization are the driving needs. It's crucial to turn these wins into a revolutionary shift in how organizations use AI to gather context and distribute it across the customer experience.

Business impact:

75%

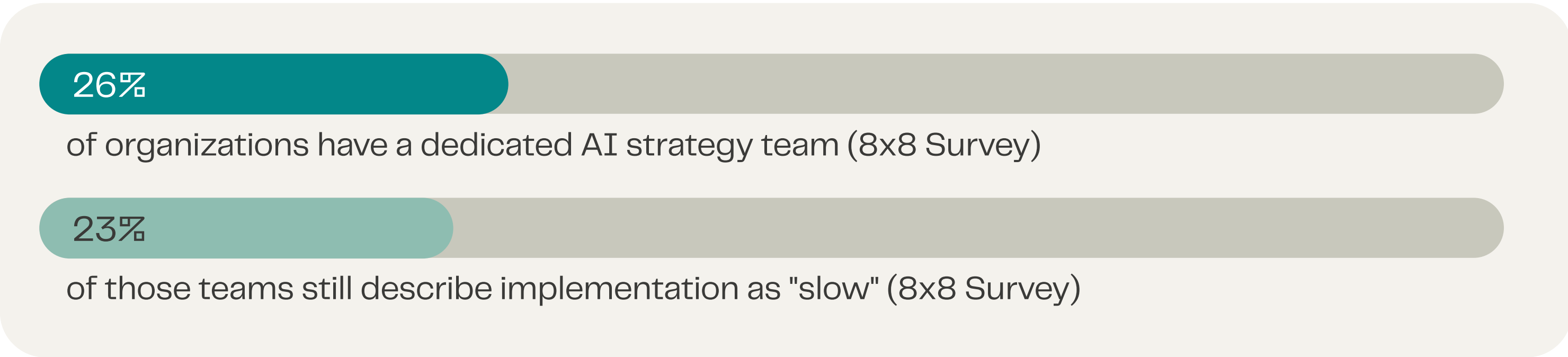
say AI helps generate enough sales to cover contact center costs

23.5%

decrease in contact center turnover



But here's what really separates success from struggle: data integration. Research from Metrigy shows that organizations integrating contact center data across their organization see dramatic results:



The catch? Only 28% of companies currently make this data widely available.



AI has never been a trend for us. It's the throughline of everything we do. That consistency matters."

Bruno Bertini, Chief Marketing Officer, 8x8

The organizations seeing results aren't using better AI tools than everyone else. They're building AI on stronger foundations.

Know Where You Stand Before You Decide Where to Go

A third of organizations believe their use of AI could be more effective. They have big ambitions. When we asked them where the gaps were, the answers were many and varied:

Here is where we really see that the lack of wider, deeper adoption is keeping these organizations from fully realizing the value of AI. There's a need for a better AI strategy, better training, and more careful alignment of AI with the parts of the business that can deliver the best outcome with the tools in question.

For every smooth implementation, there's another that's tangled in organizational priorities, technical debt, and uncertainty around purpose. AI is working, but not always, and not everywhere.

The survey data backs up what is already clear to those on the ground: AI deployment is not a one-and-done event. It's an evolutionary path.

Our research reveals organizations operating at distinctly different levels of AI sophistication:

- Assistive AI (the starting point):
Automates repetitive tasks (e.g., call transcription, meeting summaries).
- Augmentative AI (where the early adopters are moving):
AI as co-pilot. Assists decision-making and customer interactions in the moment with intelligent insights. Requires infrastructure changes and trust-building.
- Agentic AI (where almost no one is):
This is AI at its most aspirational. AI sets goals, plans tasks, and even executes — sometimes autonomously, sometimes with a human assist. This requires significant organizational maturity.



As organizations move toward agentic AI, the shift isn't just technical—it's cultural. Success requires empowering people rather than replacing them."

Joel Neeb, Chief Transformation and Business Operations Officer, 8x8

With these stages in mind, the 51% in our survey who identify as "slow adopters" aren't failing. They're navigating the complex jump from Stage 1 to Stage 2.

What Actually Moves the Needle on a Purchase Decision

AI purchases are all about outcomes. And that's especially true for:

IT leaders:

They want secure, scalable AI that reduces integration risk and operational friction.

CX leaders:

They demand AI that directly improves customer outcomes and team productivity, without disrupting service workflows.

To win buy-in and budget, AI must align to the KPIs that matter: cost savings, improved productivity, and long-term scalability.

This means learning to see through the marketing and the hype. Organizations need to see how an AI implementation would actually work. That means deeper knowledge, better education, and working with a partner who won't just run off when the purchase order gets signed.

Start With the Outcome And Build Backward

It's important to get the order of operations right. AI is not a tool to throw at problems with budget or productivity. Prior to purchasing, leaders need to be laser-focused on asking if the tool in question will actually help achieve those outcomes.



The most successful organizations don't start with the technology—they start with asking: What specific CX experience are we trying to improve?"

Bruno Bertini, Chief Marketing Officer, 8x8

This phased approach allows organizations to:

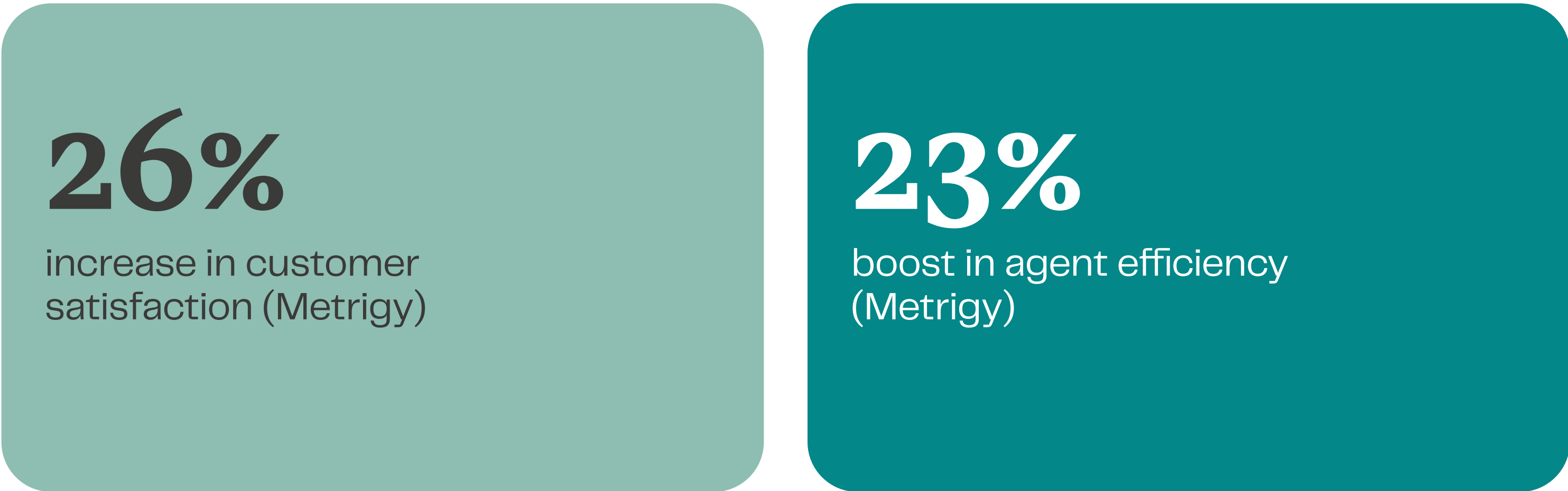
- Drive immediate value through automation
- Build agent trust and engagement with AI
- Improve CX outcomes while reducing operational load

Without the scaffolding of the assistive and augmentative stages of AI, fully agentic systems risk eroding trust, creating compliance risk, and undermining the very outcomes they promise to deliver.

AI Isn't the Strategy, But It Can Power One

AI sophistication requires infrastructure and cultural changes, not just better technology. When we asked where AI could improve, responses varied wildly: strategy, training, alignment, integration, and data readiness.

But where it works, it works. Organizations that integrate their data and lay strong foundations see dramatic results:



Those are the organizations that are building AI into unified systems with clear outcomes in mind. Success is achievable with the right foundation, strategy, and partner to bridge the gap between ambition and execution.

Methodology: 8x8 AI Outcomes Sentiment Survey (March 2025): Survey of CX and IT leaders exploring AI adoption, implementation challenges, and outcomes. External Research: Metrigy (contact center data integration), ISACA (AI policy gaps), Reuters (AI legislation)



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