

Executive Brief

4 ways AI can increase agent productivity

Agents are the heart of CX, providing service customers (and companies) depend on. They are the voice of the brand for the consumers they interact with. And, they represent ~80% of the costs in large contact centers. Creating efficiency is critical—but that can't come at the cost of alienating customers. Adding to the challenge, as bots handle simple tasks, agents spend more of their time on complex customer needs.

Net: Agents need help. Forward-thinking companies are engaging AI to support them in ways that keep both customers and agents happy—and meet the need to increase productivity at the same time.

This brief will highlight how companies can increase agent productivity by employing AI strategically to:

01 Understand how agents fulfill needs

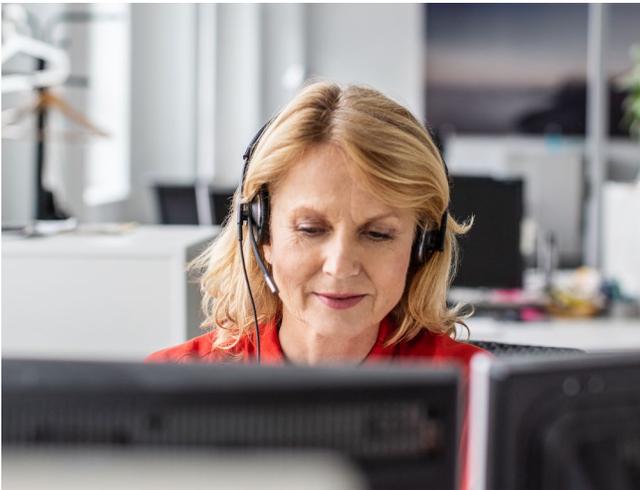
02 Engage automation to help agents

03 Inform better coaching

04 Keep customers satisfied



The first step in helping agents is to understand how they're addressing needs now. Not just what they are saying, but what they are doing as they step through working with a customer to solve a problem or complete a sale. By engaging AI, CX leaders can analyze interactions across the agent pool to see patterns and learn where inefficiencies exist. From there, they can make changes to drive improvement.



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Today's advanced machine learning systems go beyond simple conversational AI or basic motion tracking for this analysis. They're able to pair transcription with activity data within the context (intent) of each contact to provide a much more comprehensive picture.

With this type of analysis CX leaders can see:

- Where do agents spend their time for each intent?
- What processes and applications do they use?
- Which intents are most time-consuming?
- What combination of words and actions lead to successful outcomes?
- Conversely, what may lead to customer frustration and/or escalation?
- What differences are there between how new and tenured agents address needs?
- Are there differences by teams?

Armed with this information, it is much easier to determine how best to help agents and streamline processes to improve productivity. The following are some examples of how that can be put into play:

AI enables automated learning from best agents

When agents are working in an office together they often turn to others for help, "Hey, how did you..." or "Where do I find..." Knowledge is shared informally from one to another.

Machine learning can help codify that knowledge, making it possible to share more broadly through both training and AI-driven technology designed to support agents. That's valuable to have in any situation, especially when team members may be working remotely and not have the option to get answers by swiveling their chair to ask. And it's important in an industry that sees high turnover—and a wealth of knowledge contained in individual agents' minds walking out the door. (AI can help with agent retention too. See our separate paper on that topic here.)

AI helps identify opportunities for automation

This type of analysis makes it much easier to spot bottlenecks and inefficiencies in current processes. Insights can be used to see where automation might be added to agent workflows. For example, information collected once might be automatically shared across the multiple systems where it's needed instead of having the agent copy and paste multiple times. Or automation could take an agent to the exact screen they need in another system, rather than having them click through multiple screens to get there.

This analysis can also highlight processes that might be completely automated with a virtual agent serving self-service flows.

Agents spend significant time during each conversation on tedious, repetitive processes. These tasks aren't directly solving the customer's problem. And they take agent focus away from human interaction with the customer. Advanced AI can help automate activity before, during, and after contact to support the agent. This enables agents to stay more engaged with their customers, concentrate attention on any complexities, accelerate resolution, and fulfill more customer requests.



Forward-thinking companies now realize automation is not an all-or-nothing proposition. There are significant benefits to engaging automation to support agents, not replace them—having the two work together to drive productivity and deliver best outcomes.

For example, AI systems can:

- Provide agents with context as they engage in conversations
- Predict what the agent should say and do as the conversation unfolds, then put the words and information they need at their fingertips
- Do a subset of their work for them automatically

AI can automatically provide context

Both customers and agents are frustrated when there are past interactions with the company but the current conversation starts off cold. AI can help ensure the agent has the right context as they engage with the customer. Historical analysis can provide the agent with insight into the customer's relationship with and sentiment toward the company and highlight recent issues. And, a good system will facilitate a warm hand-off between the virtual agent and live agent, so the customer doesn't have to repeat information they've just shared.

AI can guide agents throughout each conversation

Today's best machine learning models can learn from every interaction exactly what it takes to address customers' needs. Then, use that information to guide agents through every conversation—suggesting what they say and do, and making the information they need readily available to them as they talk with the customer.

Modern AI-driven systems are far more advanced than legacy rule-driven systems. They don't require programming, so they don't grow brittle over time. Self-learning technology ensures the guidance these systems provide is always current.





AI can automate some of the agent's work

Virtual agent or live agent? It doesn't have to be either/or. As mentioned earlier, automation can be integrated into an agent's workflow to save time and reduce cognitive load throughout a customer interaction.

Here's how that might look:

Customer: Initiates contact

Virtual agent: Authenticates customer, learns customer need (intent), provides a warm hand-off to the agent

Live agent: Greets customer personally with context provided by virtual agent
Uses AI-driven suggestions to compose replies and respond to customer needs, hands back to virtual agent temporarily

Virtual agent: Collects customer information (for example a new address or payment) and automatically enters it into the systems where it's needed

Live agent: Reengages to address second customer intent, sends on-topic KB article suggested by AI system, confirms resolution

Automation: Crafts disposition notes of the contact, sending analytics-ready version to your business intelligence system and human-readable version to your CRM.

In this scenario, AI and human work together seamlessly to take good care of your customer in a highly efficient way.

Good training and coaching can have a significant impact on agent efficiency. Agents need onboarding that brings them up to speed fast and builds proficiency quickly. Once they start fielding requests, continued coaching can help them adapt to changing needs, grow their skills, and maximize productivity. AI technology can help leaders ensure agents are well-prepared to serve customer needs.



Agents have a challenging job, handling contact after contact, many times dealing with complex issues and/or frustrated customers. They want to feel competent and confident as they engage and work to address customers' needs. Brief training and feedback based on occasional review of call recordings or transcripts is not enough. Leading consumer companies are discovering the power of AI to build strength in this area.

AI can help you identify and serve training needs

Machine learning from all your interactions can highlight intents and processes that are troublesome to new agents. Plus, it can see how your best agents handle these situations so you can proactively share this knowledge in new agent training. With rich data from past interactions and advancements in natural language processing, companies are also looking to AI to simulate customer scenarios to help with onboarding. They like the idea of training agents in a dynamic, real-world setting before they get on their first calls or chats with real customers.

AI can coach your agents on what to say and do

As mentioned earlier, advanced AI systems can learn from every interaction, then guide your agents in real-time. They can predict what words the agent should use, what actions they should take, and what information they need to serve the customer as each conversation unfolds. It's a bit like having your very best agent whispering in every agents' ears. This helps new agents get up to speed and gain proficiency faster, builds confidence, and helps ensure customers get the care they need even from your newest agents. This technology also helps keep your more experienced agents current as things evolve.

AI can provide insight for timely and meaningful feedback

Analysis of transcripts from every contact, voice or digital, gives leaders the visibility they need to provide better coaching for their teams.

- Broad, historical perspective can offer insight on coaching needs on specific topics and across teams, as well as highlight changes over time.
- A closer view can point to both exemplary and problematic performance by individual agents—and the ability to quickly drill down into contact specifics.

The sooner agents receive feedback, the sooner they can put the guidance into action, improving productivity.

Agent efficiency and customer satisfaction are deeply intertwined.

Every company's aim is to elevate both, to have higher productivity and happier customers. AI can help to create this virtuous circle.



This brief has highlighted many ways AI can help improve agent efficiency. It's notable that engaging these means of using AI can also raise CSAT scores. Customers appreciate the benefits of working with an AI-empowered CX team:

- Shorter wait times
- Personalized service
- Agents who can capably address their needs
- Successful resolution on first contact

Happy customers can, in turn, contribute to improved productivity.

For example, many companies seek to shift some support from voice to lower-cost digital channels. And many customers prefer digital interactions—but have been turned off by getting stuck in bad bot loops that don't serve their needs, or get connected with agents that keep them waiting and fumble in providing the help that they need.

If a customer messages with a company and has a positive experience they're likely to continue to message, helping the company meet its productivity goals.

**Maximize efficiency and deliver
the best outcomes**

Take agent productivity to new heights.
ASAPP AI services can help your organization
elevate human performance and empower
every agent to be their best.

Ready to learn more?
Contact us at ask@asapp.com.

