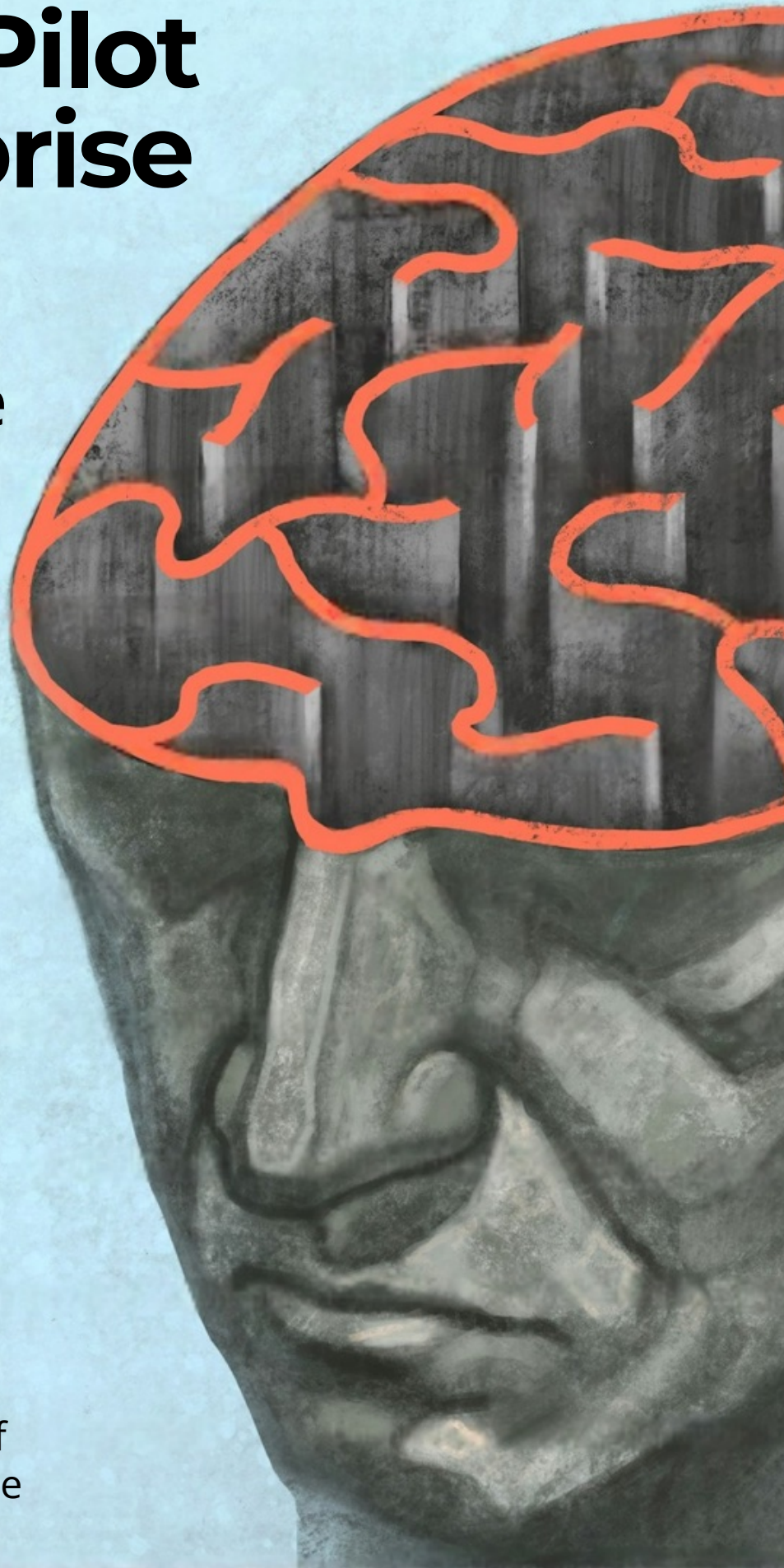


From AI Pilot to Enterprise Strategy

Addressing the Realities of AI-driven CX



Success in the AI era requires leaders to cut through the complexity of the current tech landscape

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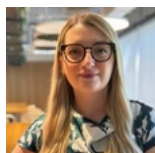
Executive Summary

In 2026, Australian customer experience has reached a critical inflection point. The era of AI experimentation is concluding, replaced by a mandate for enterprise-wide integration. While **AI agent adoption in Australia surged by 119% in early 2025**, the transition from pilot to production remains a hurdle for many.

“

To understand the mandate for AI, we need to take a step back and look at the context of what AI means for the economy, both globally and here in Australia. While global headlines often focus on trillion-dollar figures with productivity as the primary driver, it's important to remember that the impact is very real and tangible for Australian businesses of all sizes, from SMEs to large enterprise organisations.

Jessica Dawson,
Head of AI Enablement,
NAB



”

Successful Australian brands are no longer treating AI as a standalone ‘bot’ project. Instead, they are architecting unified ecosystems where human ingenuity and automated intelligence coexist.

The primary barrier is no longer a lack of ambition—**78% of Australian boards now view AI as a core strategic pillar**—but rather the Achilles' heel of fragmented, legacy data. To move forward, leaders must link CX metrics directly to business outcomes, transition from ‘data-rich’ to ‘insight-ready’, and implement rigorous human oversight through new roles like AI Orchestrators and Algorithmic Auditors.

Swiss

Key Statistics

2025 – 2026 AUSTRALIAN AI CX LANDSCAPE

Customer & Employee Sentiment

Consumer Skepticism



90% of Australian consumers will actively share negative experiences if AI is inaccurate, and only **29%** currently trust AI-generated summaries.

[2024–2025 Adobe Trust Report.](#)

Internal Momentum



86% of employees involved in AI trials (particularly in the public sector and services) express a strong desire to continue using these tools to reduce administrative load.

[Australian Government trial of Microsoft 365 Copilot.](#)

Human Advantage

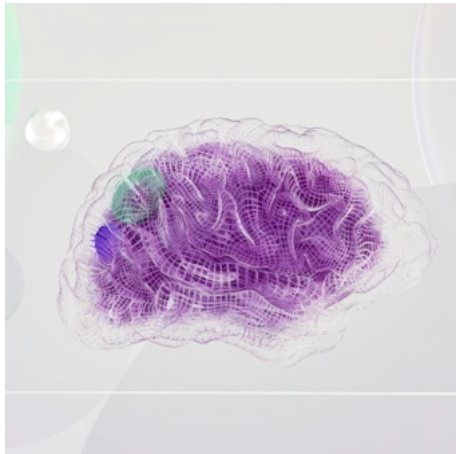


58% of Australians fear losing access to a human agent, highlighting that "Human-in-the-Loop" is a requirement, not an option.

[Trust, Attitudes and Use of Artificial Intelligence: A Global Study 2025, KPMG International & The University of Melbourne.](#)

Adoption & Strategy

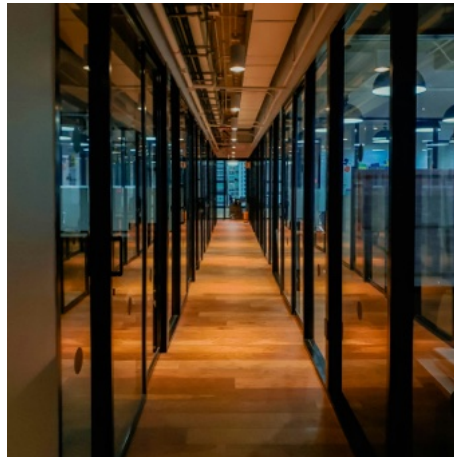
The Adoption Surge



AI agent adoption in Australia increased by **119%** in the first half of 2025. Deloitte (2026).

[State of AI in the Enterprise.](#)

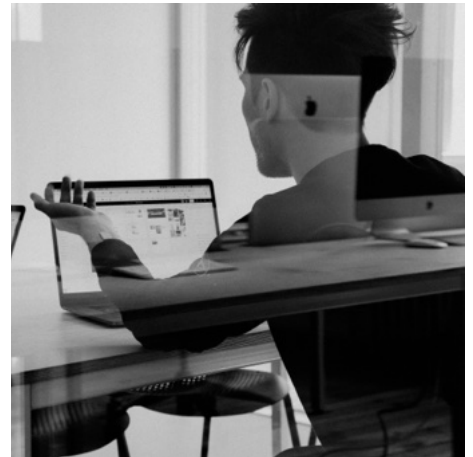
Strategic Priority



78% of Australian boards consider AI a strategic priority, yet only 10% of businesses are currently investing in AI in a truly holistic, enterprise-wide manner.

[Adobe Australia \(2025\).](#)

The 'Pilot Trap'

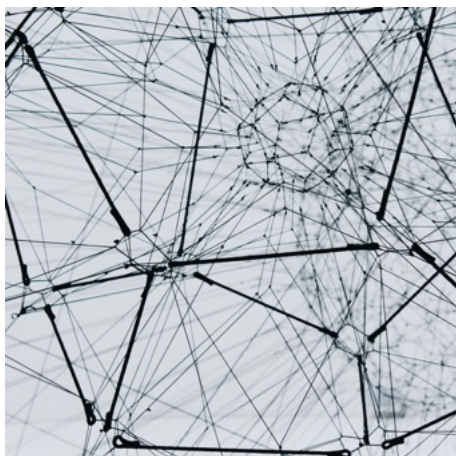


While many are experimenting, only **25%** of Australian organisations have successfully moved at least **40%** of their AI pilots into full-scale production as of early 2026. Deloitte (2026).

[State of AI in the Enterprise.](#)

Performance & ROI

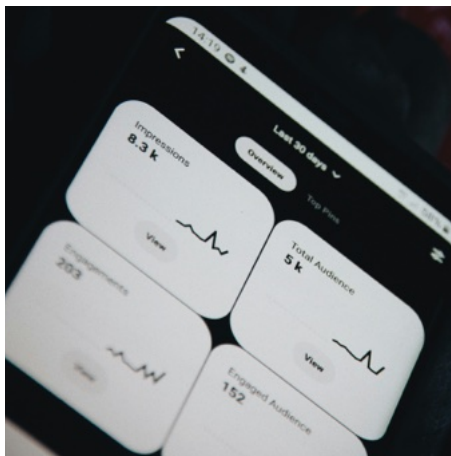
The Value Gap



72% of Australian CX and IT leaders report a failure to achieve measurable ROI from their initial AI investments.

[The State of Data & AI in Australia 2025, Adapt Research.](#)

Productivity Dividends



Among those seeing success, **61%** report improved operational efficiency, with mature adopters seeing a **38%** reduction in average call handling times.

[Reinventing financial services contact centres.](#)

Financial Impact

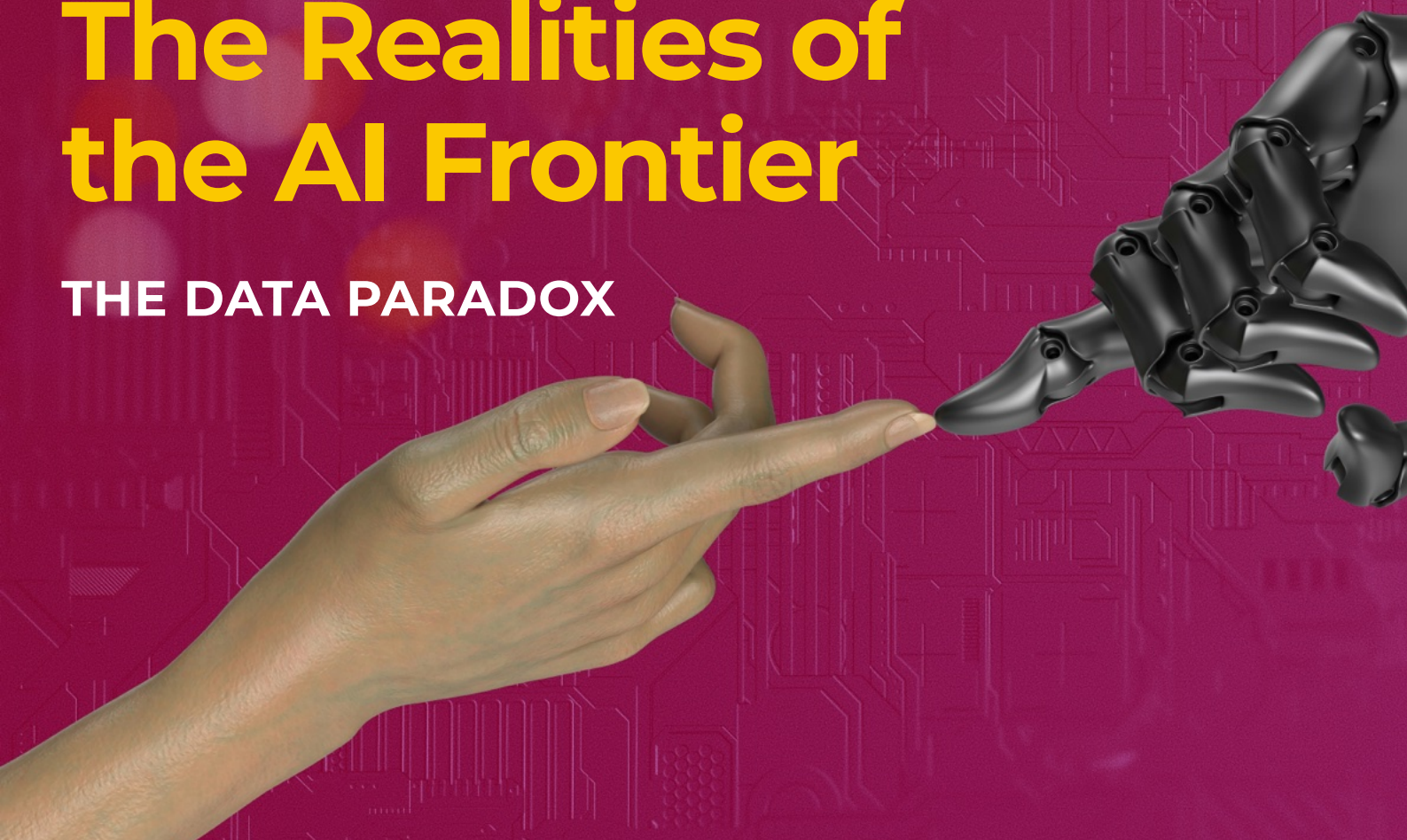


Median reported ROI for enterprise AI pilots currently sits at **~10%**, with projections to reach **29%** by 2028 as systems move toward autonomous agentic models.

[The 2025 State of AI Value and ROI Strategy, Gartner Research.](#)

The Realities of the AI Frontier

THE DATA PARADOX



90% Most Australian organisations are 'data rich but insight poor'. Despite high investment, only 24% of enterprises possess an AI-ready data architecture. This paradox stems from the gap between the volume of stored data and the actual ability to derive actionable intelligence from it.

In a customer experience led AI pilot or implementation, data serves as the fundamental difference between a tool that functions as a sophisticated digital mentor and one that acts as a significant liability.

This lack of AI-ready data impacts the ability to implement agentic AI systems and models. Without this foundation, AI implementations will suffer from:

- Data Latency: Insights arriving too late to impact decision-making.
- Fragmentation: Data trapped in silo's that cannot be accessed by unified AI.

Modernising legacy tech stacks to support zero copy architecture and unified data streams is now the primary technical requirement for 2026.

Unified Data Streams

Modern enterprises require interoperability to handle the huge amounts of real-time and historical data produced in an interconnected ecosystem. Unified streams treat data as a continuous flow rather than static batches, enabling:

Predictive Intelligence:

Using real-time pipelines to allow AI agents to act on the most current data ([Gartner, 2026](#)).

Agentic AI Integration:

Providing AI agents with a constant "nervous system" of live data to automate complex business workflows.

“

In an interconnected ecosystem, data shouldn't be a series of snapshots; it must be a continuous, living flow. Unified Data Streams allows you to break down the silos between historical archives and real-time events, treating them as a single, cohesive narrative for the enterprise.

”

Michael Buttsworth,
Associate Director,
Student Experience
Service Centre, Charles
Sturt University



From Disparate and Complex Tech Tools to Integrated Engines of Innovation

To power a resilient AI strategy, organisations must move beyond the noise of a crowded vendor market to architect a tech stack that transforms fragmented tools into a unified engine of innovation. Dawson highlights, “NAB scales AI by enforcing a common AI Platform that provides enterprise-wide guardrails for risk, security, and governance. Within these boundaries, the bank utilises a federated approach, allowing specific business domains to configure solutions that meet their unique needs”.

“A ‘plug-and-play architecture prioritises long-term interoperability over rigid technology choices, ensuring the bank remains agile as AI capabilities and requirements evolve”, she adds.

Uniting, the community services arm of the Uniting Church, similarly recognised the need to implement adaptable technology that can evolve over time. Andrew Dome, Uniting’s

Chief Customer Officer, explains how Uniting launched their AI Pilot called Buddy to transform how frontline aged care workers manage documentation and policy compliance. “This project transitioned from an incubation lab idea into a production-level AI agent used by thousands of workers, specifically designed to be a buddy at the point of care”.

“The pilot focused on moving away from fragmented systems to provide a “single front door; for employees. Through Voice-to-Text Progress Notes, workers can dictate notes into their phones immediately after a visit, which Buddy then translates from over 50 languages into English to update clinical systems directly”. Buddy allows staff to ask complex questions, such as procedures for child welfare concerns, and receive instant, actionable summaries”.

To move beyond 'vendor noise' and architect a resilient AI strategy, organisations must stop treating AI as a collection of independent tools and start treating it as a unified infrastructure. The most effective starting point is the technology stack you already possess. If you utilise major cloud platforms such as Microsoft, AWS, or Google, or modern cloud-based solutions like Genesys or ServiceNow, much of the foundational work is already managed, as these providers are rapidly embedding accessible AI capabilities into their software.

Furthermore, modern integration options and APIs allow you to share data and functions between legacy platforms, unlocking quick AI wins without the need to reinvent the wheel. Once the potential of your existing stack is maximised, you can then overlay new AI solutions or build custom tools where appropriate.

Resilience also depends on connectivity and data integrity. Every tool in your stack should communicate via a robust API layer to prevent data silos and allow you to swap individual models without rebuilding your entire workflow.

Because AI is only as reliable as the data feeding it, fragmented tools pulling from conflicting sources often lead to hallucinations or inconsistent outputs. To combat this, implement a data layer that standardises attributes and taxonomies across the company, ensuring that whether an AI is drafting a marketing email or a clinical note, it pulls from the same structured, validated source.

“

The most powerful AI strategy isn't about reinventing your infrastructure; it's about activating it. By building upon the technology stack you already possess—whether that's the scale of AWS, Microsoft, or Google, or the workflow depth of ServiceNow and Genesys—you are essentially stepping onto a moving walkway. These providers are embedding sophisticated AI capabilities directly into their fabric, allowing enterprises to bypass the 'build-from-scratch' phase and move straight to delivering value. ”

David Russell,
General Manager,
Enterprise Digital
Services (Corporate),
Nexon Asia Pacific



As the market moves past simple chatbots toward a 'unified engine of innovation', organisations are increasingly deploying AI Agents capable of executing tasks rather than just answering questions.

These systems should be designed to take actions, such as updating clinical databases or triggering supply chain orders, while maintaining human-in-the-loop verification for high-stakes decisions.

“ For high-stakes decisions, technology must act as a partner, not a replacement. Especially in industrial or highly regulated sectors, it is vital to deploy models that aren't just 'smart' in a general sense, but are deeply attuned to the specific physical and regulatory constraints of your particular field.

”

Steve Bosworth,
General Manager, ServiceNow
Consultant, Nexon Asia Pacific



“

The pilot focused on moving away from fragmented systems to provide a single front door for employees. Through Voice-to-Text Progress Notes, workers can dictate notes into their phones immediately after a visit, which Buddy then translates from over 50 languages into English to update clinical systems directly. Buddy allows staff to ask complex questions, such as procedures for child welfare concerns, and receive instant, actionable summaries.

”

Andrew Dome,
Chief Digital &
Information Officer,
Uniting, NSW & ACT



The Shift To Digital Labour

AI agents take on more customer-facing roles, organisations are re-evaluating their impact through the lens of human resource management. This entails an infrastructure of oversight, where the performance of an AI is no longer judged solely on uptime, but on the nuanced quality of its interactions and its ability to represent the company's mission.

Charles Sturt University (CSU) has developed an AI agent named Charlie, which serves as a cornerstone of their strategy to provide 24/7, empathetic support to students. Named after the university's mascot, Charlie is not just a traditional chatbot but is designed as an agentic AI that operates like a digital employee.

Charlie is subject to the same oversight as human staff. Managers use AI-driven QA tools to audit Charlie's conversations, ensuring the bot adheres to the university's conversation framework and brand voice.

“Quality assurance is a priority for us. Traditionally, QA involved manually auditing staff calls to check boxes on a script. Today, we use AI to perform that same oversight for our human agents—and we apply that exact logic to 'Charlie.' By ensuring the bot strictly adheres to our proven conversation frameworks, we can guarantee a consistently high-quality customer experience that often outperforms manual processes.”

Michael Buttsworth,
Associate Director,
Student Experience
Service Centre, Charles
Sturt University



By subjecting AI to the same scorecards as human agents, businesses can identify behavioural drifts or technical hallucinations, ensuring that the digital workforce maintains a high standard of service and emotional intelligence.

This new paradigm is also giving rise to specialised professional roles designed to bridge the gap between brand values and algorithmic output. The emergence of Prompt Engineers and AI Orchestrators reflects a need for experts who can fine-tune the personality of an agent and manage the complex intersection of code and culture.

These specialists ensure that while the AI operates with the efficiency of a machine, it delivers the empathy and brand-aligned messaging expected of a human employee, ultimately creating a seamless, unified workforce.

“

"To build trust in a digital workforce, we must move away from treating AI as a 'black box.' By subjecting AI to the same rigorous scorecards as human agents, we can proactively catch behavioral drifts or technical hallucinations. It's about ensuring that every digital interaction maintains the same high standard of service and emotional intelligence that customers expect from our best human representatives.

”

Anthony Gebbie,
General Manager,
Enterprise Digital
Services (Public Sector),
Nexon Asia Pacific



Risk, Ethics and AI Hallucinations



A primary hurdle in AI adoption is the hallucination —the tendency for large language models to deliver incorrect information with high confidence. When El Jannah launched its AI pilot in 2025 to automate WhatsApp conversations, it countered this risk through a rigorous grounding process.

To ensure the AI remained within brand guardrails, the El Jannah team front-loaded the system with an extensive set of pre-approved FAQs and structured knowledge articles. This foundation was critical for maintaining accuracy regarding menu nuances and specific store locations.

“

We gathered significant insights during the launch. What kept us within our guardrails was a thorough (Quality Assurance) QA process prior to publishing. We also loaded a large set of pre-approved FAQs from the outset to ensure responses were both accurate and on-brand.

”

Tyler Mason,
Chief Technology Officer,
El Jannah



The pilot phase revealed that the AI occasionally produced inconsistent responses when synthesising data from multiple knowledge sources simultaneously. In response, the data was restructured into formats the agent could interpret more reliably. Mason compares this to onboarding a new employee - it is a continuous cycle of training, monitoring, and refinement.

“We continuously monitor hand-offs to human agents and use these cases to build out more information for future interactions. The reality is that not all questions can be answered by AI, which is why we maintain a dedicated support team seven days a week ready to step in when needed”.

Redefining risk - The cost of the status quo

While the fear of AI error is a common industry sentiment, market leaders are beginning to weigh those risks against the inconsistencies of traditional methods.

“ While fear of AI hallucinations is high, market leaders are increasingly acknowledging the risks of the status quo—where human agents rely on outdated PDFs or siloed notes. Transparency and algorithmic auditing are becoming non-negotiable for maintaining customer trust.

”

David Russell,
General Manager,
Enterprise Digital Services
(Corporate),
Nexon Asia Pacific



Using AI to Fundamentally Change the Customer / Employee Journey

The integration of AI into customer and employee journeys has moved past simple chatbots and automation. The customer journey is transforming from a linear funnel into a fluid, hyper-personalised loop driven by real-time intent. Agentic orchestration is where AI doesn't just assist but actively manages the lifecycle of an individual's interaction with a brand or an employer.

AI agents like Charles Sturt University's Charlie are moving beyond simple automation.

In a recent poll conducted at the Customer 360 Symposium in March 2026, 60.71% of respondents said that using AI to fundamentally change the customer / employee journey is their top priority. AI journey orchestration that can autonomously handle refunds, re-book travel, or personalise a shopping cart in real-time.

The focus has moved from responding to requests to anticipating outcomes, creating a seamless flow where the friction of manual intervention is systematically removed. Looking toward the future, Crabb from Uniting envisions a shift where automation handles friction points, perhaps even involving personal AI agents interacting on behalf of customers. For the customer, this looks like a brand experience that breathes and adapts to their specific context, offering solutions and products precisely when the need arises rather than when a scheduled campaign dictates.

For the employee, it manifests as a career journey where the drudgery gap" of administrative tasks is closed by digital agents, allowing the human worker to focus on high-value creative and strategic tasks.

By unifying these two journeys through a single, intelligent framework, organisations are no longer just selling products or managing staff; they are orchestrating a living, breathing ecosystem that prioritises empathy, efficiency, and long-term loyalty through the power of autonomous intelligence.

“ We started seeing positive feedback like, ‘Good bot, thank you, Charlie’. It was fascinating to observe their interaction: although students knew it was a virtual agent, they were often treating it like a human being. ”

Michael Buttsworth

“ We adopted a cautious and safe approach to the rollout, which took us approximately three to four weeks due to extensive testing. Crucially, even after the initial deployment, we didn’t stop there. Before moving to the next phase, we spent time reviewing transcripts daily to understand real-world usage. ”

Michael Buttsworth,
Associate Director,
Student Experience
Service Centre, Charles
Sturt University



The Empathy Dividend

CREATING A NEW ROI FRAMEWORK

For years, the standard for technological ROI was purely defensive: efficiency, cost reduction, and hours saved. In 2026, leading Australian enterprises have shifted to an offensive metric - value reinvested.

When AI agents like CSU's 'Charlie' or Uniting's 'Buddy' absorb thousands of hours of administrative friction, the true ROI isn't found in reduced costs. It's found in what the organisation does with that reclaimed human capacity. Calculating this requires a shift in how performance is measured.

When AI handles the 80% of mundane queries, the remaining 20%—the high-stakes interactions—receive the full focus of a human's emotional intelligence. These are the moments where empathy is a requirement, not a luxury (e.g., insurance claims, aged care, or complex financial disputes).



From Volume to Velocity

Instead of tracking how many calls were handled, track how quickly a customer moved from problem to resolution across the entire agentic loop.



The Empathy Dividend

Measure the increase in Net Promoter Score (NPS) specifically in high-stakes interactions where human agents, freed from data entry, were able to provide deep, personalised support.

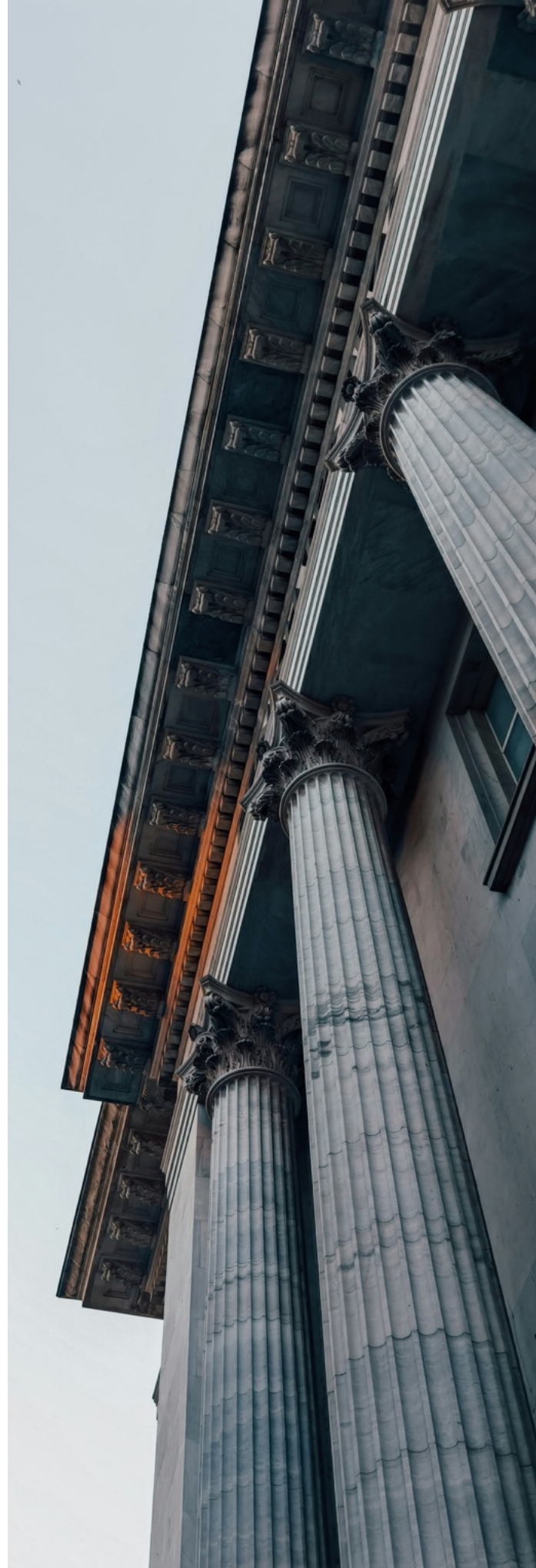
The NAB Four-Pillar Framework

To bridge the gap between experimentation and enterprise-scale value, NAB has put in place a four-pillar framework designed to transform AI from a technical novelty into a ubiquitous operational tool.

Central to this strategy is the 'Customer Brain'—a sophisticated AI decisioning engine led by Lisa Marchant, Executive for Customer Decisioning & Data Science. By synthesising thousands of distinct data points, the "Brain" moves beyond generic banking to deliver hyper-personalised, human-centric experiences.

Whether it is deploying advanced virtual assistants to slash wait times or surfacing bespoke financial offers, this capability ensures that every interaction—from a mobile app notification to a conversation with a banker—is uniquely tailored to the individual customer's needs.

Marchant comments, "The NAB Customer Brain is a cornerstone of our strategy. As we work toward our ambition of being the most customer-centric company in Australia and New Zealand, it is the engine helping NAB deliver, timely, relevant, and personalised experiences at scale".



Orchestrating the New Era of Intelligence



Infrastructure

Moving from disparate tools to integrated engines of innovation



Governance

Treating AI agents with the same rigorous QA and ethical oversight as human staff



Vision

Unifying the customer and employee journeys into a single, living ecosystem

With thousands of AI vendors promising revolutionary results, the primary challenge for CX / IT leaders is no longer finding technology—it is integrating it into a cohesive, resilient strategy. To move from a fragmented marketplace to a unified engine of innovation, organisations must shift their focus from the tools they buy to the structures they build.

The transition from isolated experiments to a unified enterprise strategy is no longer a competitive advantage—it is a requirement for operational survival. Success in the AI era requires leaders to look past the vendor noise and focus on three fundamental pillars.

As the median ROI for enterprise AI continues its trajectory toward a projected 29% by 2028, the window for strategic hesitation is closing. The Australian organisations that will thrive in the coming years are those that stop asking what AI can do and start defining what an AI-augmented enterprise should be: an entity that prioritises empathy through efficiency, builds trust through transparency, and turns every interaction into an opportunity for intelligent connection.

The Total Experience Advantage

**BRING CX, EX AND ESM TOGETHER
TO UNLOCK MEASURABLE VALUE**

Why Connected Experiences Matter Now

Expectations are Rising. Complexity is Rising Faster.

Customers expect instant, accurate and personalised responses. Employees expect the same simplicity they enjoy in their personal lives. Yet most organisations are still relying on disconnected systems, manual workarounds and incomplete data.

In 2025, 37% of Australian brands experienced a drop in their CX scores,* highlighting the growing risk of falling behind in customer experience. 73% of consumers now consider experience as their top factor when deciding where to spend,* making seamless engagement critical to business success.

The conversation is no longer about new technology. It is about whether your organisation can extract value from what you already have, align it with your priorities, and move the needle on outcomes that matter.

Modern CX, EX and service environments require a unified approach so platforms, teams and workflows operate as one ecosystem, ensuring your existing investments translate into measurable value.

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CXFocus, an independent online publication, authored this industry report, which was sponsored by Nexon. The contents herein reflect our conclusions drawn from ongoing research about the contact centre/customer experience space in the Asia Pacific market.