PILOT SCOPING EXERCISE

AI Leadership & Project Management Masterclass

Curtin University

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Case Study: RetailFlow Customer Service Challenge (Revised)

BACKGROUND

RetailFlow is a regional fashion retail chain with 50 physical stores across Australia plus a growing e-commerce platform. Customer satisfaction scores have dropped significantly from 78% to 68% over the past year. The primary complaint? Painfully slow customer service response times.

Leadership has approved an AI pilot to address this problem, and you're leading it.

CURRENT STATE: THE PROBLEM

Customer Service Metrics

Metric	Current Performance	Industry Benchmark
Average email response time	26 hours	12 hours
Average phone wait time	12 minutes	4 minutes
Customer satisfaction score	68%	78%
First-contact resolution rate	61%	75%

Team & Operations

- **Customer service team:** 25 people across 3 shifts (8am-10pm, 7 days/week)
- **Weekly ticket volume:** Approximately 2,500 customer inquiries
- **Cost per ticket resolved:** $18 (including labour, systems, overhead)
- **Annual customer service cost:** ~$2.3M

Common Customer Query Types

Query Type	% of Volume	Current Avg Handle Time
Order status/tracking	25%	4 minutes
Returns/refunds policy	20%	8 minutes
Product care & sizing	30%	10 minutes
Website/app technical issues	10%	12 minutes
Complaints/escalations	5%	20+ minutes
Other	10%	6 minutes

Note on Product Care & Sizing queries (30%): - How to wash/care for fabrics - Sizing guidance and fit advice - Material composition and durability questions - Alteration and customization options - These require product knowledge and judgment, not just information lookup

Current Process

1. All queries arrive in shared inbox (email, chat, phone notes)
2. Team members manually triage based on subject line
3. Agents search knowledge base (often outdated) while responding
4. Complex issues escalated to team leads (unclear process)
5. No automated responses or routing
6. No quality consistency across agents

Pain Points Identified

From customers: - "I asked a simple question and waited 2 days for an answer" - "Got different answers from different agents" - "Had to explain my issue three times" - "I need sizing help but the chatbot won't understand my body type"

From customer service team: - "We answer the same questions 50 times a day" - "Finding information takes longer than actually helping" - "We're drowning in simple queries and can't focus on complex problems" - "Sizing and care questions need real expertise - can't just automate those"

THE CHALLENGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Your Executive Sponsor (CEO) has said:

> *"We need to fix our response times. I saw competitors at the AI conference doing amazing things with customer service automation. Let's run a controlled pilot to see if AI can help us. I want to know if it's worth the investment before we commit big money. Get a pilot running by Q4."*

You've been allocated: - **Budget:** $150K for the pilot phase - **Timeline:** 6-8 weeks to pilot, then decide to scale, pivot, or kill - **Team:** You (project lead), 1 data analyst, access to IT support as needed, customer service manager as advisor - **Constraint:** Must not disrupt ongoing operations

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YOUR TASK: SCOPE THE PILOT

Design a pilot that's **"Goldilocks perfect"** - not too ambitious (guaranteed failure), not too timid (learn nothing), but just right (prove value within constraints).

You have **30 minutes** to work with your group.

PILOT SCOPING WORKSHEET

SECTION 1: PILOT SCOPE DECISIONS

What will the AI pilot actually DO?

Check all that apply and specify details:

- ☐ **Automate responses to ALL query types** *(High risk - probably too ambitious)*
- ☐ **Automate responses to SPECIFIC query types only** Which ones? _____
  Why these? _____
- ☐ **Assist human agents with AI-suggested responses** *(AI drafts, human reviews and sends)* For which query types? _____
- ☐ **Automatically triage and route queries** *(AI categorizes and assigns to right agent/team)*
- ☐ **Build/update intelligent knowledge base** *(AI helps agents find answers faster)*
- ☐ **Other approach:** _____

Your chosen approach:

Primary function of the AI pilot:

Rationale for this scope:

SECTION 2: SUCCESS METRICS

Choose 3-5 metrics that will prove this pilot succeeded. Be specific and measurable.

Metric	Current Baseline	Pilot Target	How You'll Measure It
Example: Avg response time for order tracking	26 hours	4 hours	Ticketing system timestamps
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Primary success criterion (the ONE metric that matters most):

_____

SECTION 3: PILOT BOUNDARIES

Be explicit about what's IN and OUT of scope.

What's IN SCOPE for this pilot:

Query types covered: _____

Volume of queries: How many queries per day/week will go through the AI? _____

Time period: How long will the pilot run? _____

Team members involved: Who's participating? _____

Customer segments: All customers, or specific segment? _____

Channels: Email only? Chat? Phone? All? _____

Other: _____

What's explicitly OUT OF SCOPE:

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1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Why these boundaries?

_____

SECTION 4: RISK MITIGATION

Identify risks and how you'll manage them.

Risk	Likelihood (H/M/L)	Impact (H/M/L)	Mitigation Strategy
AI gives incorrect information to customers			
AI gives poor sizing/care advice that damages reputation			
Customer service team resists using it			

Risk	Likelihood (H/M/L)	Impact (H/M/L)	Mitigation Strategy
Customers hate interacting with AI (want human for complex questions)			
Budget overrun			
AI can't handle query complexity/nuance			
Data privacy/security issues			

Your top 3 risks and detailed mitigation plans:

Risk #1: Mitigation:

Risk #2: Mitigation:

Risk #3: Mitigation:

SECTION 5: RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Budget Breakdown ($150K total)

Category	Allocation	Rationale
AI platform/software (licenses, subscriptions)	$	

Category	Allocation	Rationale
Implementation services (consulting, integration)	$	
Training (team training, change management)	$	
Data preparation (cleaning, labeling)	$	
Testing & QA	$	
Contingency reserve	$	
TOTAL	**$150,000**	

Timeline & Milestones

Week	Key Activities	Success Criteria	Deliverables
Week 1-2			
Week 3-4			
Week 5-6			
Week 7-8			

SECTION 6: GO / NO-GO DECISION CRITERIA

After 4-6 weeks (mid-pilot), what evidence would lead you to:

SCALE IT (recommend full rollout)

Criteria: 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

PIVOT IT (change approach but continue)

Criteria: 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

KILL IT (stop the project)

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Criteria: 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

SECTION 7: STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

How will you keep key stakeholders engaged and supportive?

Stakeholder	Their Main Concern	Your Engagement Strategy	Communication Frequency
CEO (Executive Sponsor)			
CFO			
Customer Service Manager			
Customer Service Team			
IT/Security			
Customers			

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What makes your pilot scope "just right"?

What's your biggest uncertainty about this plan?

If you had unlimited budget and time, what would you do differently?

What's the one thing that could make this pilot fail despite good planning?

FACILITATOR NOTES

After groups complete worksheets, some will receive CONSTRAINT CARDS that force them to adapt their plans. This simulates real-world project changes and tests their flexibility.

Debrief will compare different approaches and discuss trade-offs.

Key Teaching Points: - Product care/sizing queries (30% of volume) require different handling than order tracking - Not all query types are equally suitable for AI automation - Choosing scope based on feasibility, not just volume, is critical thinking - Recognising what AI CAN'T do well is as important as what it CAN do