

A FRESH APPROACH TO OMNICHANNEL FOR 2025

Double down on your omnichannel challenges and make 2025 the year of integrated data and seamless experiences



RESEARCH
REPORT

INSIDE

- What's holding omnichannel back – and how cohesive experiences can solve CX's biggest challenges
- The factors that are set to drive omnichannel adoption to 2027
- From craft shops to fintech, the organizations driving customer satisfaction with omnichannel

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Foreword

The idea of an omnichannel customer experience emerged following widespread access to the internet in the 1990s and the early days of ecommerce, when major brands including Target, Barnes & Noble and even Pizza Hut took their offline brands and services online.

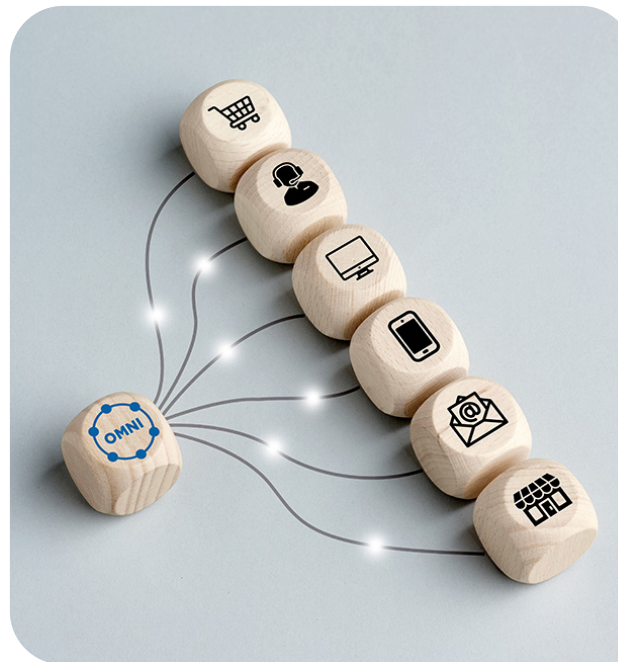
The idea of meeting a customer on the channel of their choice was born, but it wasn't until 2003 that electronics retailer Best Buy coined the term omnichannel CX. As more consumer tech emerged – from mobile phones to social media – so did even more touchpoints to incorporate into the customer journey, along with the capabilities to link the data that powered these touchpoints. For the first time, it was possible to not only converge offline services and products online, but to deliver a seamless, efficient and effective customer experience in the process.

Yet more than 20 years after the term omnichannel CX first emerged, CX Network's research has repeatedly confirmed that a huge number of brands are still working to connect their multichannel experiences into a cohesive omnichannel CX strategy.

Through expert insights, research data and case studies from major brands, **A fresh approach to omnichannel for 2025** assesses the long-standing barriers organizations have faced when introducing an omnichannel suite, and the disadvantages this

has created in terms of data capture, customer satisfaction and agent retention.

With insights from practitioners at Bank-Al-Etihaad, 1CG, Xperiente, Cambridge University Press & Assessment, Hobbycraft, Jupiter Money and Freshworks this report breaks down the opportunities and pain points that exist around omnichannel CX and explains how practitioners can overcome their omnichannel challenges in 2025 to reap the benefits of a truly connected, seamless customer experience.



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The barriers to omnichannel adoption

Today, the majority of customer journeys occur across multiple channels and touchpoints, often transitioning between apps, websites and social media, pre-, during- and post-purchase. Sometimes journeys also incorporate offline touchpoints and experiences.

While multichannel is now a standard element of CX, the use of multiple unconnected channels does not deliver seamless and cohesive journeys. This demands omnichannel capabilities. More businesses are recognizing this difference and making efforts to progress from a multichannel model to an omnichannel model, whether that is across the entire customer journey or in service. As such, the omnichannel experiences now provided by the likes of Amazon, Starbucks and Disney set a standard for other brands to follow.

Yet according to CX Network's research into the Global State of CX, only 16 percent of 282 CX practitioners have a fully implemented omnichannel model and strategy – a mere three percent increase on 2023 – while the majority (35 percent) have a multichannel model but the connections between them remain fragmented (see Figure 1).

According to Wasim Mushtaq, founder of ICG and the former transformation lead in financial markets for Standard Chartered, there are three primary reasons for omnichannel's slow adoption. First, he says the

integration of legacy IT infrastructure and modern digital solutions demands "significant resources, time and technical expertise".

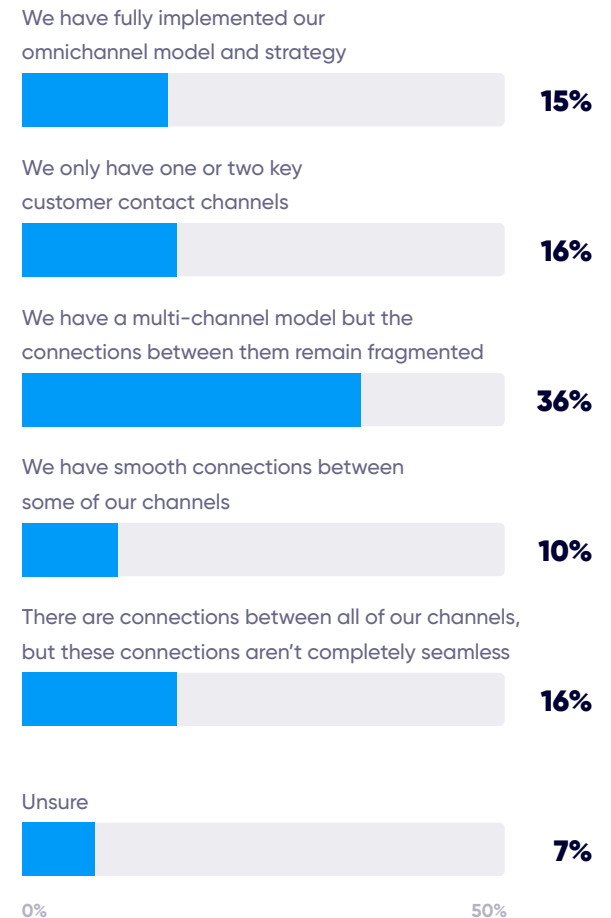
"Many financial institutions struggle with data silos, where customer information is fragmented across departments like lending, wealth management and payments. This fragmentation creates roadblocks to delivering a seamless experience across touchpoints," he says.

The associated implementation costs of upgrading systems creates another barrier, and this means traditional banks often prioritize short-term compliance needs or product-specific projects over comprehensive CX initiatives, thus delaying progress. "Building a consistent omnichannel strategy requires not just technology investments but also a shift in organizational culture and processes," he explains.

As such, internal resistance is also a factor. "Established hierarchies and siloed structures impede the cross-departmental collaboration needed for a unified strategy. The result? Fragmented customer journeys where the online experience doesn't align with in-branch services or contact center interactions. The struggle is real but so is the opportunity for those willing to tackle these barriers head-on and lead the charge towards a truly integrated customer experience," Mushtaq explains.

Figure 1

How close is your organization to providing a full omnichannel model?



Source: CX Network's Global State of CX 2024, completed by 282 CX practitioners around the world, January-March 2024.



The impact of being multichannel vs omnichannel

The low adoption rate poses many challenges for organizations that deliver multichannel experiences but cannot link between them.

Jennifer Petersen, senior director of product management for Freshworks says: "As customers have adapted to more technology and channels, companies have responded, but this has created an assortment of disconnected support tools and has fragmented customer experience, as well as the organization's ability to improve experiences. The expectations of customers have increased they wish the support knows their state and provide a rapid solution, less tolerance for bad experiences.

"Any delay or misstep in serving customers can lead to dissatisfaction that customers publicly convey over social media. Meanwhile, companies face constant pressure to do more with less, resulting in overwhelmed agents who struggle to meet these heightened customer demands," she continues.

As many in CX know, the result of this is frustrated customers. However, the biggest of all the challenges is that fragmented experiences lead to fragmented data. "This situation hinders managers and leaders from capturing the holistic insights needed to make

more informed, timely decisions. Of course, managing siloed support tools also places a heavy burden on IT departments in terms of both cost and human resources," Petersen adds.

Those who operate a full omnichannel model and strategy generally tend to have a more mature CX strategy and function, as confirmed by deeper analysis of our research into the Global State of CX in 2024.

Of the 16 percent of respondents who reported a fully implemented omnichannel model and strategy, it emerged the majority of these respondents regard their CX strategy as advanced (42 percent)

while a further 27 percent said it is mature. When we asked the omnichannel adopters which statement best describes their business culture, 51 percent selected "CX underlines everything we do and is everybody's responsibility".

"While omnichannel adoption is often seen as a sign of CX maturity, it's important to note that omnichannel is not exclusive to fully mature organizations," says Petersen. "While more mature companies typically have the resources and strategic alignment to implement a seamless omnichannel experience, organizations at different stages of CX development can also benefit from adopting an omnichannel strategy."

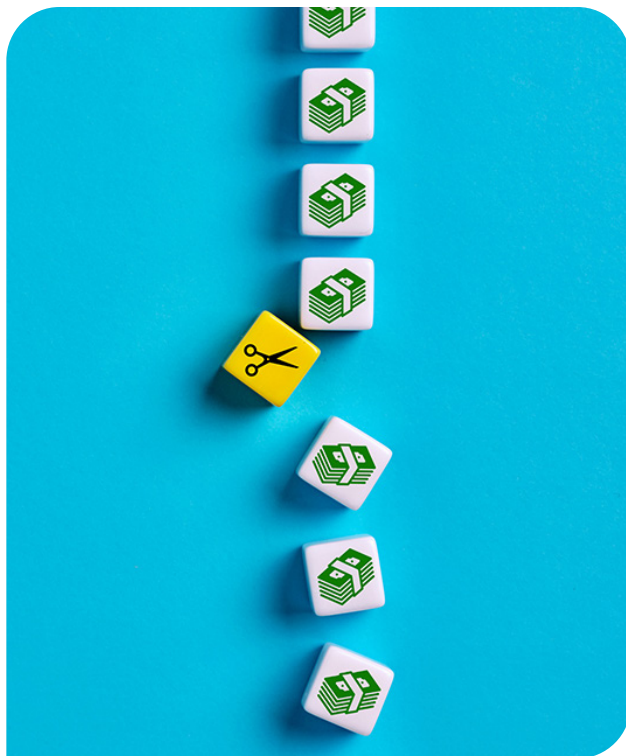
"The struggle is real but so is the opportunity for those willing to tackle these barriers head-on and lead the charge towards a truly integrated customer experience."

Wasim Mushtaq, founder of ICG and the former transformation lead, financial markets for Standard Chartered

The barriers to omnichannel adoption

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As such, Petersen says organizations that are still developing their CX capabilities can use omnichannel as means by which improve customer interactions, unify communication across channels and better leverage data. "In fact, implementing an omnichannel approach can help these organizations accelerate their CX maturity by streamlining operations, reducing silos and enhancing customer engagement across all touchpoints," she says.



The appetite for change

Despite the evidence of low omnichannel adoption, there is appetite for change. When CX Network's Global State research turned to spending priorities, there was a clear appetite to drive progress in such areas as data analytics, digital CX and staff retention – all of which omnichannel can support.

Practitioners were given a list of nine CX technologies and asked to disclose if they plan to spend more, less or the same on each, or to disclose if they were not planning for this cost in 2024. One quarter (25 percent) of respondents said they expect their spending on contact center to increase, while 54 percent said they expect spending on data and analytics to increase and 20 percent said they expect spending on staff retention to increase.

Despite the cost barriers that are perceived to exist around omnichannel implementation, Petersen says consolidating these spending plans into an omnichannel investment can be more efficient than investing in all three areas separately.

"For decision-makers, AI-powered insights and analytics offer a fresh approach to understanding customer behavior. Leaders can make data-driven decisions that optimize both quality of experience and resource allocation. It also fosters a culture of continuous

improvement, as teams can quickly identify areas for growth and act on them," she says.

Additionally, omnichannel support enhances staff retention: service agents are more productive, more satisfied and less likely to experience burnout, while CX teams are able to work more effectively to drive the customer results that power their job satisfaction. "This fresh approach to supporting employees results in a more engaged and loyal workforce, which is critical for long-term success in contact center operations who provide good service to customers," Petersen continues.

The next section of this report assesses the strategic aims and top challenges practitioners are reporting at present and asks why omnichannel is not recognized by practitioners as a route to success.

"While omnichannel adoption is often seen as a sign of CX maturity, it's important to note that omnichannel is not exclusive to fully mature organizations."

Jennifer Petersen, senior director, product management for Freshworks

Achieving strategic aims and overcoming challenges with omnichannel

When we asked practitioners to select their organization's top three strategic CX aims for 2024, developing an omnichannel platform and transitioning to a virtual or hybrid contact center model attracted only 21 percent and 11 percent of votes, respectively (see Figure 2). Yet 55 percent said they want to enhance user experience (UX) across devices/ channels and 37 percent said they want to reduce handle, wait times and lost inquiries.

Practitioners were then asked which three areas they plan to invest in to achieve these goals in 2024 and omnichannel/ multichannel emerged as one of the least selected choices, with only 11 percent of practitioners recognizing it as a route to achieving their goals.

"It seems paradoxical that practitioners recognize the importance of enhancing UX across devices and reducing handle times, yet don't associate omnichannel platforms with achieving these goals," says Ledi Lapaj, director of CX for Bank-al-Etiihad. She says several reasons could explain this disconnect.

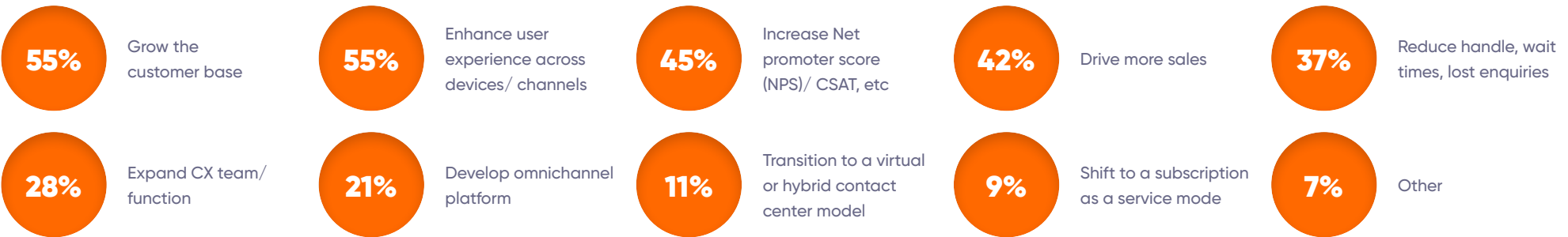
First, as outlined in section one, implementing a true omnichannel platform is often seen as complex and costly, involving significant infrastructure changes, time and expertise.

"This perception may lead organizations to focus on more immediate, lower-cost CX improvements like

process optimization or upgrading specific channels. Additionally, many companies still operate in silos, with separate teams managing different customer interaction channels, for example call centers, social media and digital platforms. This fragmentation can hinder a holistic view of omnichannel's potential, as each team may focus on optimizing its own channel rather than integrating data across all touchpoints," she explains.

Furthermore, Lapaj says misalignment between CX and data teams can contribute to the problem. "Practitioners may not realize how omnichannel integration can unify customer interactions and support a more predictive, personalized data strategy."

Figure 2
What are the top 3 strategic CX aims for your organization in 2024? *(Respondents could select multiple options)*

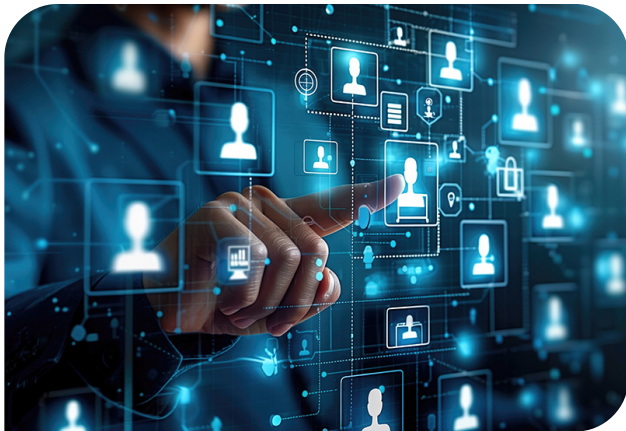


Source: CX Network's Global State of CX 2024, completed by 282 CX practitioners around the world, January-March 2024.

Lastly, Lapaj says shifting priorities in a rapidly changing environment “often leads companies to opt for more visible, iterative improvements rather than committing to large-scale omnichannel projects, tackling smaller aspects of the omnichannel puzzle incrementally instead”.

Petersen agrees that a siloed approach to customer operations is a common barrier to realizing omnichannel’s potential. “This lack of integration leads to a fragmented understanding of customer journeys, how UX impacts service efficiency and how omnichannel tools can bridge these gaps,” she says.

Another challenge is the perception that UX is primarily about website design or digital interfaces, rather than the end-to-end customer journey. “When organizations



view UX too narrowly, they miss the opportunity to enhance CX by aligning it with omnichannel support, where customer support plays a pivotal role in delivering seamless, consistent experiences across multiple touchpoints,” Petersen explains.

“When data are not shared effectively between channels, it negatively impacts both UX and customer support teams,” Petersen says. “The failure to harness omnichannel’s full capabilities – such as personalized customer interactions, AI-driven insights and smooth transitions between channels – leads organizations to overlook its benefits for both UX and efficiency.”

There are also challenges that omnichannel can help mitigate. We presented our Global State respondents with a list of more than 20 established CX challenges and asked them to select their three biggest. The ability to build a customer first culture was the third most selected option overall (35 percent) and immediately followed by “creating actionable insights from data” (29 percent). Other challenges include insufficient customer data (12 percent) and upgrading or working with legacy systems (10 percent).

Vanessa Milan, head of VoC, global operations, for Cambridge University Press & Assessment says: “Technology is an enabler; the technical expertise and change management skills of the omnichannel team

are key to harnessing the reporting capabilities of the omnichannel service. Disseminating actionable insights across various departments and stakeholders to build a cross-functional collaborative culture based on continuous improvements of people, products, systems and policies is the call to action.”

To achieve this, she says practitioners must:

- 1 Plan and build the data architecture behind the tool to enrich analysis and reports that can be sliced and diced by product, customer segment, region, financial data, voice of the customer data, and so on.
- 2 Embed a change management plan that fosters cross-functional collaboration and alleviate resistance.
- 3 Focus on employee experience improvement as a result of automating boring, repetitive tasks and the career opportunities and professional skills development that the tool will open up.



Is omnichannel the answer to staff retention?

The ability to retain both customers and staff is paramount in modern business and the plight of CX and service teams in recent years has been well documented.

Omnichannel capabilities increasingly draw on artificial intelligence (AI) and, according to Musa Hanhan, founder and managing partner of the CX consultancy Xperiente, frontline employees “reap a multitude of benefits from an AI-powered omnichannel experience”.

He says: “Leveraging AI equips frontline employees with the tools and insights they need to perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively. This not only enhances their experience and job satisfaction but also leads to improved customer service outcomes and overall operational efficiency.”

Across both CX and service, this drives three benefits: improved first contact resolution (FCR), reduced manual data entry and therefore errors, and better employee engagement.

On how these benefits extend to both CX teams and customers, Petersen says: “Personalized and omnichannel engagement strengthens relationships, increases lifetime value and reduces churn by fostering long-term loyalty. For staff, omnichannel platforms streamline workflows by consolidating interactions into a unified view, keeping them informed, improving

efficiency and reducing the need to switch between tools. Advanced AI tools enhance productivity, allowing agents to focus on complex tasks, which boosts morale and retention.”



The factors that could drive omnichannel adoption to 2027

The ability for omnichannel to help practitioners and organizations solve their challenges, retain staff and achieve their strategic goals presents a strong case for omnichannel adoption. But over the coming years, other factors will also come into play.

Mushtaq says the pressure to adopt true omnichannel strategies “will intensify to 2027”, driven by evolving customer expectations, technological advancements and regulatory changes.

The first driving factor will be the exemplary experiences provided by digital native organizations, for example in the fintech space.

“As fintechs continue to redefine what seamless experiences look like, customers will increasingly expect that all touchpoints, digital or physical, operate in perfect harmony. Established financial institutions will feel the urgency to match or exceed the fluidity offered by their digital-native competitors,” he says.

“It seems paradoxical that practitioners recognize the importance of enhancing UX across devices and reducing handle times, yet don’t associate omnichannel platforms with achieving these goals.”

Ledi Lapaj,
Director of CX for Bank-al-Etihad

Technological progress in AI, automation and data analytics will also provide opportunities for organizations to overcome the integration hurdles explained earlier in this report. "These advancements will simplify merging channels, enabling unified customer journeys that are tailored in real time to individual needs. Additionally, in finance, open banking and data portability regulations will push financial institutions to interconnect systems securely, making the flow of data across platforms a necessity," he says.

The push for omnichannel will also be powered by a shift in customer behavior, with digital-mobile becoming the default for most interactions. On how to prepare for this shift, Mushtaq says: "Institutions must ensure their platforms are accessible, user-friendly and capable of delivering a consistent experience across all devices and services. Those that can integrate physical and digital experiences seamlessly will not only meet expectations but set new standards in customer engagement."

As Lapaj outlined earlier in this chapter, omnichannel adoption is increasingly seen as an incremental, iterative effort rather than a large-scale implementation. Looking ahead to 2027, she says it is crucial for leaders to have a clear vision of what their omnichannel experience should look like and then use that vision to guide short-term efforts while building toward long-term goals.

"Customer expectations will drive this process, as they continue to evolve, demanding simpler, more seamless experiences across channels – following the standards set by companies leading in CX," Lapaj says. "Furthermore, the continuous growth of mobile commerce, social commerce and new digital channels like voice assistants and AI-powered chatbots will push companies to integrate these into a cohesive omnichannel strategy," she adds.

Meanwhile, Lapaj says technologies such as AI and machine learning will further enhance personalization, real-time analytics and automations in customer service, while also creating potential market disruptions – and this means businesses must stay agile and responsive.

"As competition and disruption intensify across industries, companies must differentiate to survive. In an era where product development is easily replicated, delivering superior customer experiences remains a key differentiator. Omnichannel strategies will be essential for sustaining customer loyalty, increasing lifetime value, and reducing churn by providing smooth, convenient, and personalized interactions across all channels.

The next section of this report showcases how omnichannel adoption can be a transformative force for both traditional brick-and-mortar retailers that initially built their brand offline, as well as those that are digitally

native. It also explores the role of AI omnichannel capabilities and how generative and agentic AI will drive this in 2025 and beyond.

"Technology is an enabler; the technical expertise and change management skills of the omnichannel team are key to harnessing the reporting capabilities of the omnichannel service."

Vanessa Milan, head of VoC, global operations, for Cambridge University Press & Assessment



Omnichannel in action:

The organizations that changed their fortunes with omnichannel

As highlighted throughout this report, omnichannel experiences can improve outcomes for both the organizations that converge offline experiences online, as well as digital natives.

Falling into the first category, UK-based arts and crafts retailer Hobbycraft has built its brand on the hands-on, personalized approach it delivers to customers across a network of more than 120 stores. As customer service manager Simon Birch says: "Our colleagues are not just selling a product – they're artists and crafters who understand the materials we offer and can recommend their best use."

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Hobbycraft became one of thousands of businesses that needed to quickly replicate its high service standards online, but even 2,000 employees couldn't work their way through a shared inbox that received more than 250,000 inquiries. Hobbycraft needed a more advanced solution; one that could support all its customers' preferred channels while enabling staff to deliver the same high-touch service offered in-store.

In 2020, Hobbycraft switched to Freshworks' AI-powered omnichannel solution, using a staggered approach to ensure agents did not become overwhelmed by the new

technology. First, Freshworks was implemented for social channels including Facebook and Twitter, then it was rolled out to email and a web contact form, replacing the overflowing centralized inbox.

Next, Hobbycraft adopted Freshworks' voice support. Additionally, AI chatbots from Freddy AI Agent allowed Hobbycraft to easily create and deploy chatbots, freeing up employee time to answer important questions.

When Freddy AI Copilot came on the market, Hobbycraft added AI for agents to boost productivity. Freddy's Summarize feature has helped the company upskill employees and speed up onboarding. "It was truly a game-changer for the team," Birch says.

Freddy AI Copilot's Solution Article Generator made it easier for colleagues to find information relevant to common customer questions. With just a few clicks, agents could read up on crafts they weren't familiar with or see how-to guides for common products.

Freshworks' AI-powered omnichannel solution resulted in a 25 percent increase in customer satisfaction, as well as quicker response times and more engaged employees. Freddy AI chatbots now answer up to 30 percent of questions, helping Hobbycraft free up agents to spend

more time sharing their crafting knowledge. Agents are more empowered to answer customer questions and 82 percent of tickets are resolved at first contact.



Out of this world results for Jupiter Money

While some businesses expand online, others exist exclusively online. India-based fintech Jupiter Money launched in 2019 aiming to make finance simpler. Counting more than 800,000 customers within three years of launch, Jupiter Money wanted to set the benchmark in customer support and so chose not to outsource as its competitors do.



Using Freshchat, Jupiter's 350 service agents can respond to customers in 20 seconds or less. Once the ticket is assigned and later closed, a CSat survey is sent out to the customer and this rapid, omnichannel support model has allowed fintech to achieve a CSat score of 88 percent.

"We have been using Freshworks software since day one. With tough regulatory requirements and a need for high-quality software, Freshworks was our first choice since we went live to the public in 2019," says Nikhil Godbole, group customer service head at Jupiter. "Apart from seamless onboarding, the simplicity of new-hire training and the many app integrations that the software offered were quick wins for the team."

The solution integrates with Jupiter's other business critical systems. For example, tickets requiring product support were resolved faster as they could now be immediately routed to engineering. Integrations with Ozonetel for telephony and Knowmax for knowledge base, have helped avoid silos and make Freshdesk the central nerve center of Jupiter's approach to customer support.



Omnichannel in 2025 and beyond

As outlined in section two, although omnichannel adoption is slow there is an appetite to change the current situation and AI is playing an ever

more important role in the delivery of omnichannel experiences. This is driving distinct benefits for CX teams and customers.

Today, with generative AI and now agentic AI powering a growing number of CX tools, Petersen says this paves the way for more automation and faster, more personalized customer interactions in 2025 and beyond. While generative AI can generate its own content from the data an organization allows it to access, agentic AI has agency and can therefore devise and execute its own processes, enabling use cases across the organization.

"With the arrival of generative and agentic AI, businesses will be able to deploy AI solutions that not only handle routine tasks but also make autonomous decisions,

significantly enhancing customer experiences," she says. "AI agents will continue to evolve in their ability to deliver hyper-personalized, always-on support across multiple channels, learning autonomously from existing resources, accessing enterprise system to improve time to value."

She adds: "With AI taking on a more autonomous role, we expect to see businesses achieve quicker deployment times and more secure, scalable solutions. AI is not just a tool anymore – it's a key driver of business outcomes, and this trend will only accelerate in 2025." She adds: "With AI taking on a more autonomous role, we expect to see businesses achieve quicker deployment times and more secure, scalable solutions. AI is not just a tool anymore – it's a key driver of business outcomes, and this trend will only accelerate in 2025."

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Jennifer Petersen, Senior director, product management for Freshworks



Conclusion

As more consumer and business technologies have become available, organizations have rightly moved with the times and bolted on new capabilities to meet evolving customer demands. However, this has led to a situation where systems – and therefore experiences – become fragmented, leading to low customer satisfaction, complex IT infrastructure and frustration among teams.

CX Network's research repeatedly found low omnichannel adoption and awareness, with the majority of organizations operating multichannel models. At the same time, practitioners face many challenges, from leveraging data and improving UX to retaining staff, but most do not see an investment in omnichannel as the solution.

Instead, practitioners are investing in multiple capabilities to achieve multiple targets and outcomes – all while their budgets are often squeezed or capped – and as outlined by Lapaj there is a disconnect in practitioners seeing omnichannel capabilities as a means by which to tackle their strategic aims and challenges. The ability to consolidate this spend into a technology suite that can support multiple targets will no doubt become more attractive in future.

As the case studies in this report demonstrate, whether omnichannel is the only choice for a brick-and-mortar retailer, or the logical route for a digital native, there is

strong evidence it drives the attainment of strategic goals, as well as customer and staff satisfaction.

Despite the challenges and disconnects, change could be around the corner. Mushtaq says there is a strong likelihood the pressure to adopt true omnichannel strategies “will intensify to 2027”, as digital native organizations set ever higher standards. For the brands

that initially built their names offline, this shift will be fueled by further advances in consumer and business tech, regulatory changes and customer demand.

When practitioners take a fresh view of their challenges and resulting investment plans, omnichannel CX and service quickly emerges as the answer, rather than an insurmountable tech challenge.



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