Smarter CX: How contact centers are transforming customer experience with AI

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Introduction

Delivering an effortless customer experience is the best way to gain loyalty, with brands like Netflix and Amazon, leading the way.

Consumers worldwide have grown accustomed to personalized and frictionless journeys. Yet, many are unaware that Artificial Intelligence (AI) raises the bar for this gold standard customer experience. Having a connected brand experience across the entire customer journey is essential to transform CX the right way.

This ebook explores AI-driven CX outcomes in contact centers, and how to create a Netflix-like customer experience, with five crucial steps to successfully embark on an AI journey.


Who's watching?
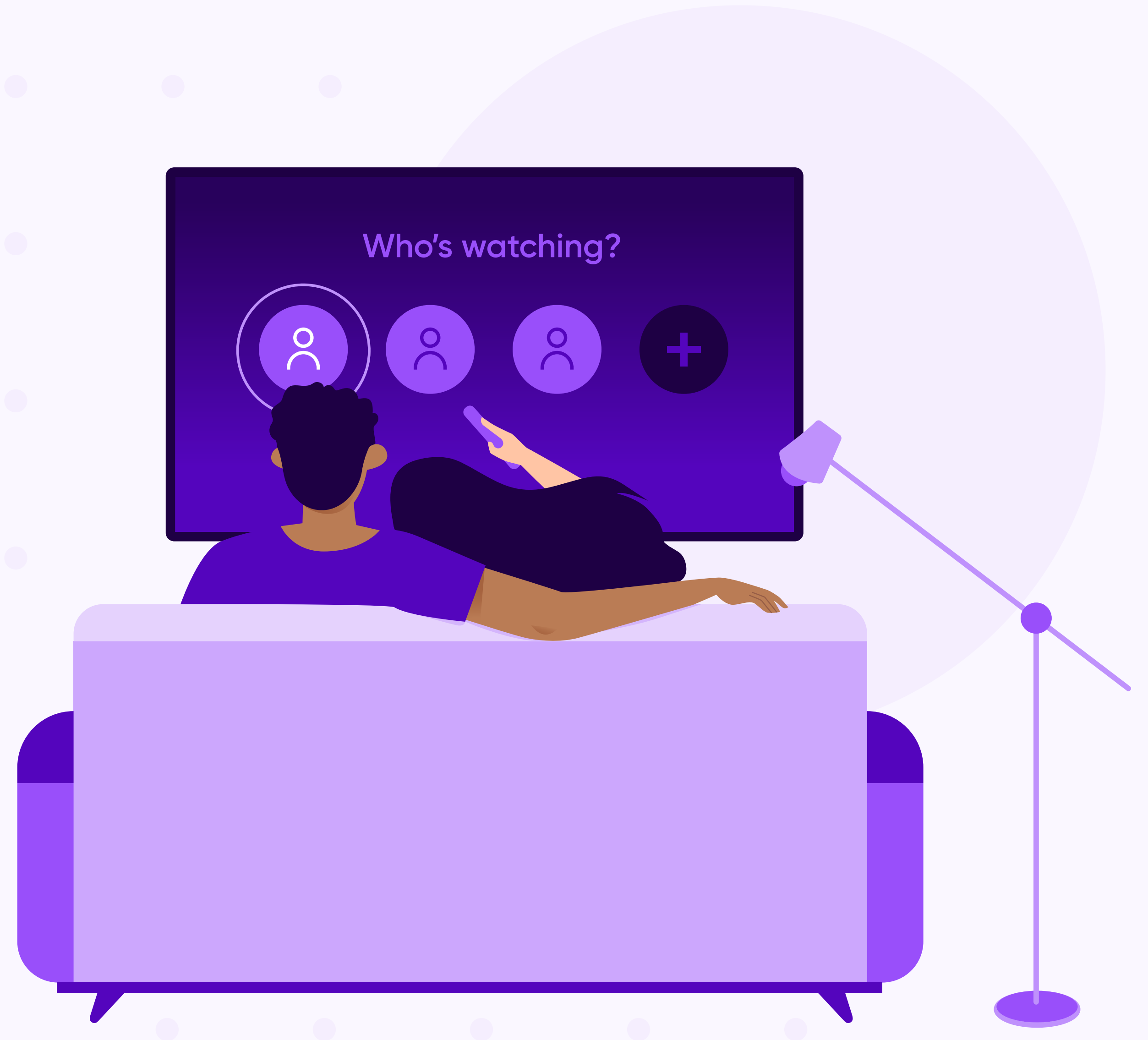
I. How AI is delivering on its potential

In simple terms, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is processing large amounts of data to "learn" solutions to problems. One of the founding pioneers of AI, professor John McCarthy from Stanford University, described it as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines". But it took many years for AI to overcome its biggest obstacle: the lack of computer storage and processing power required for the vast amounts of data for AI systems to function well.

Thanks to computing power and data storage advancement through cloud computing, AI is now well-positioned to do incredible things and can be usefully deployed in practically every industry. Yet, there is plenty of hype, jargon, and abstract technology, making it difficult for non-experts to identify the most interesting opportunities to apply AI in everyday use cases.

Transforming workforce productivity is an important area where AI delivers excellent value through automation.

25%   40%

2018   2023
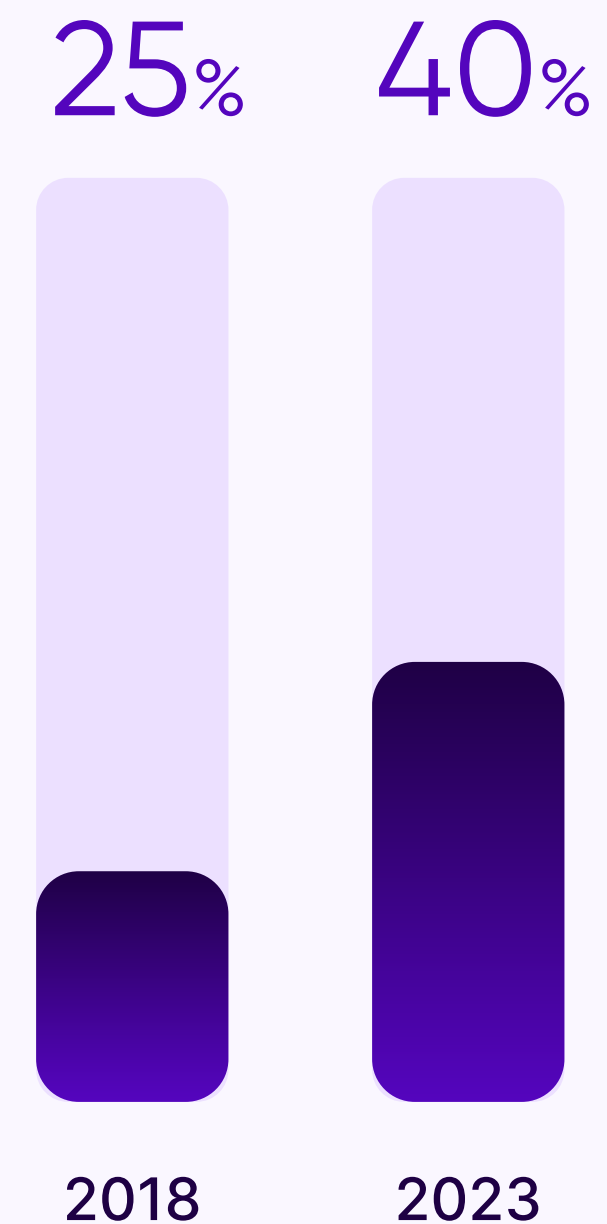
Gartner predicts that **40%** of interactions will be fully automated using AI and self-service in 2023, up from around **25%** in 2018. Automation is key to CX excellence, and brands must act now to uncover the opportunities.

The purpose of automation is not about replacing humans with machines; it's about changing the tasks usually carried out by humans who can focus on more purposeful work and optimize workplace productivity.

II. How AI-led operational precision improves CX

The best AI tools leverage cloud technology and data to deliver powerful support solutions and an incredible level of operational precision in contact centers across some key areas:

Discovery

Discover patterns hidden deep in the <u>vast amounts of customer interaction data</u>, and boost performance results with predictive recommendations.

Prediction

Better predict future outcomes using AI to analyze patterns and historical data. Create models that can predict customer behavior more accurately.

Automation

Resolve more cases with improved accuracy, automating repetitive processes, allowing agents to focus on higher-order tasks. The cost per case decreases and customer satisfaction improves.

Assistance

Deliver faster service, reduced escalations, and enhanced performance. Arming agents with AI practical assistance reduces handle time, mitigates agent errors and improves first contact resolution.

Optimization

Reduce agent stress by eliminating search and browsing tasks with AI recommendations - driving higher value customer interactions.

Prescription

Provide agents with <u>intelligent guidance</u>, recommending next best actions to resolve customer issues quickly.

Recommendation

Simplify how agents receive recommended next steps or next best actions by <u>proactively delivering information</u> in a single interface, thereby preventing agents from being scattered between several data sources.

Alert

Detect and react quickly when something goes wrong without any manual intervention. Get alerts about specific data points, detect anomalies and unusual deviations from the norm to trigger <u>real-time notifications</u>.

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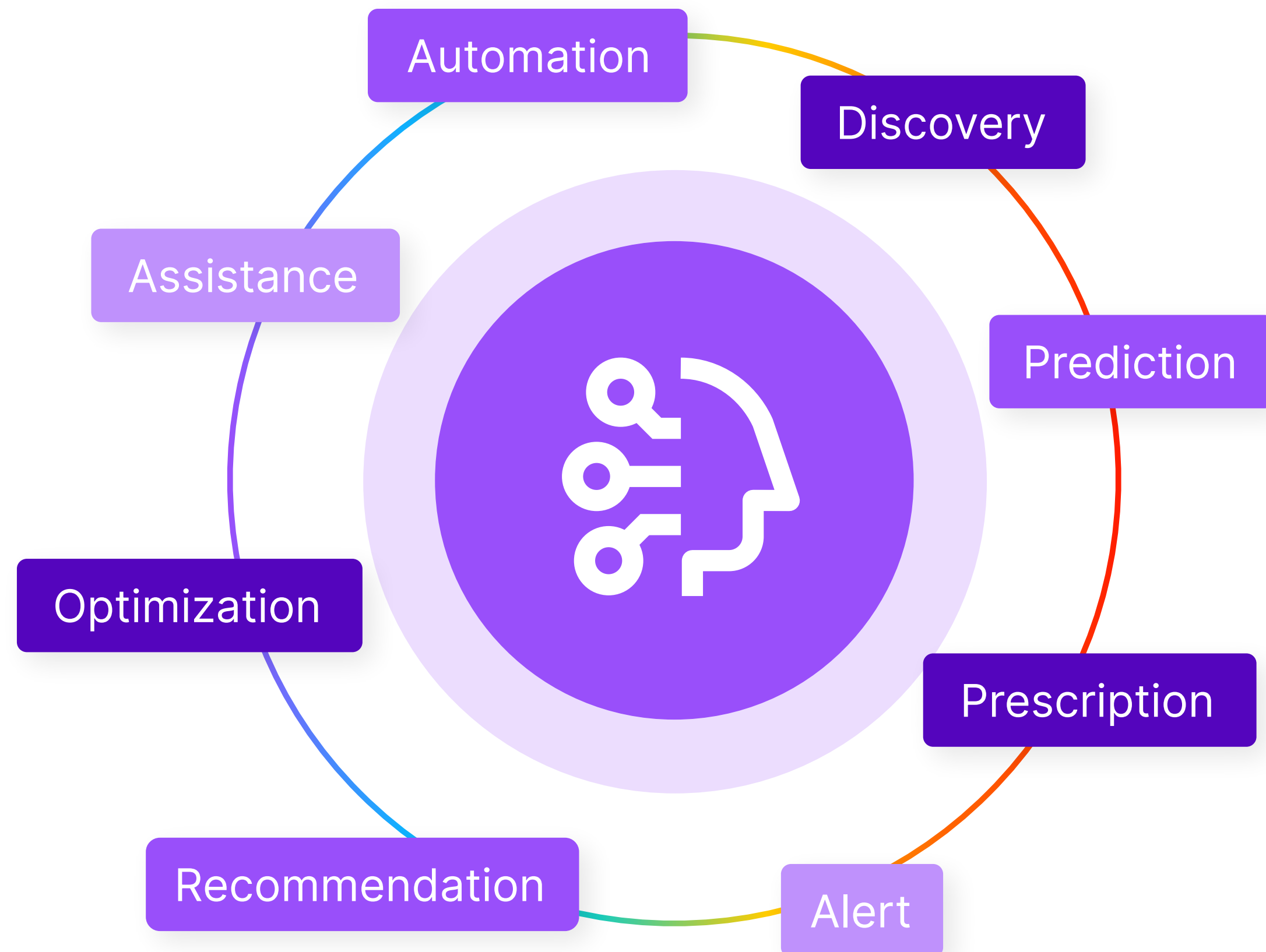
III. How the path to a Netflix-like CX must include contact centers

Netflix relentlessly focuses on personalization and customer experience, making it one of the world's leading online entertainment providers and valuable brands. Companies across all industries can benefit from understanding how Netflix uses AI to transform CX.

Customers love the speed and simplicity, for which Netflix uses AI to go beyond personalization by focusing on customer interactions, identifying friction points, and working hard to remove them. Netflix understands that customer adoption requires eliminating unnecessary human interaction or human control, providing a baseline for frictionless customer experience.

Contact centers can support every piece of the CX value chain by implementing and operationalizing AI across all customer interactions.

Female, age 22 to 25

Emotion: Happy

Let´s see what you have
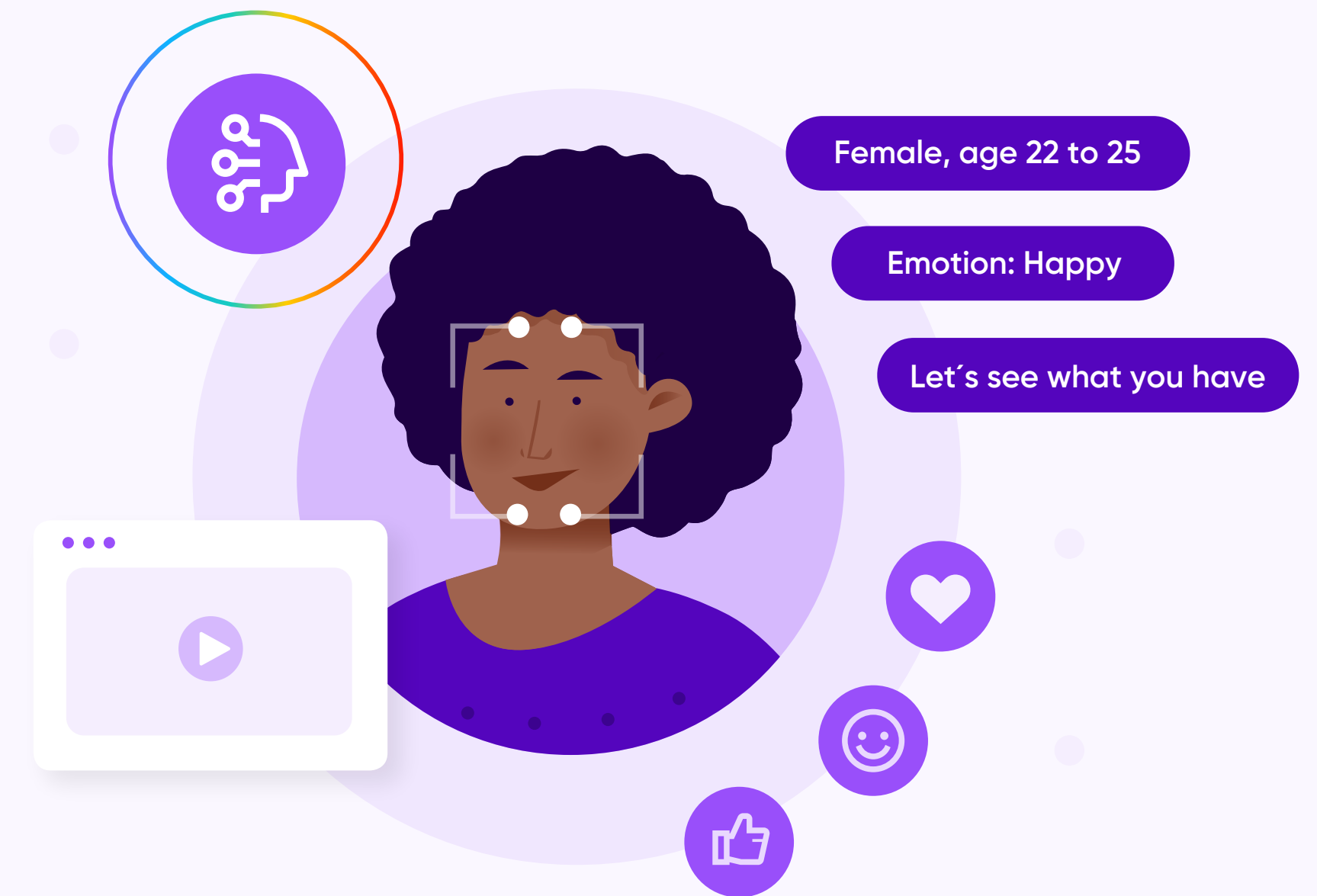
Excellent customer experience requires finding automated ways to collect data points across various customer touch points, including complaints, support requests, transactions, and feedback.

IV. The five crucial steps to embed AI into contact centers

Contact centers are a large source of customer information. They can generate enormous quantities of data through interactions and integrations with applications across the entire CX ecosystem, including a CRM, ticketing tool, and an eCommerce platform.

Implementing the right AI tools will help to harness data to make fast decisions or quickly deduce conclusions. Contact centers can take more proactive actions, moving away from complicated IVRs and long wait times that cause customer frustration and damage brand value.
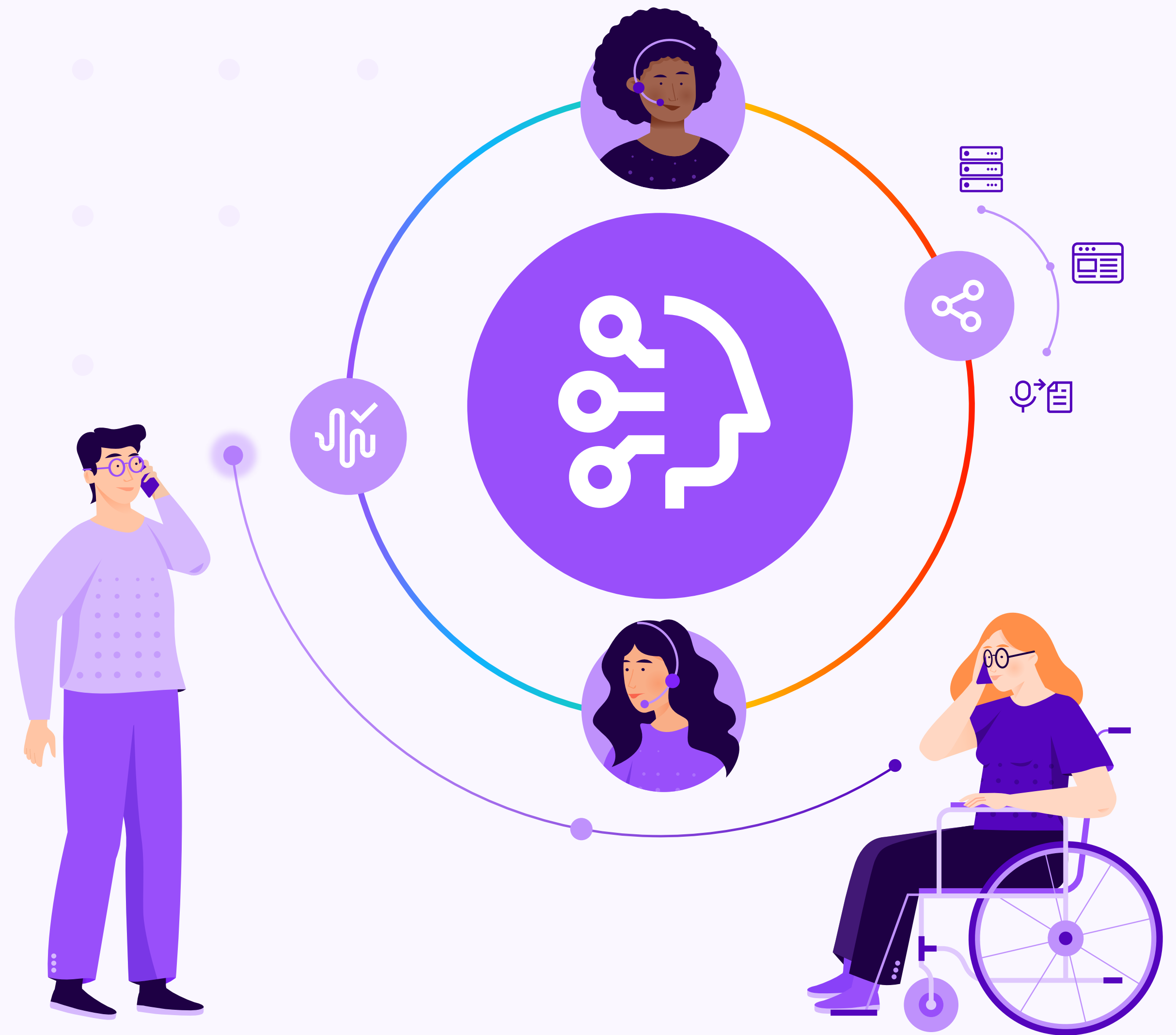
STEP 1:
Setting the stage for AI success

Cloud APIs make it easier to collect data that allows AI to solve problems effectively. **With data points 'everywhere', contact centers need to capture data across channels, interactions, and users.** Robust integrations help to combine services and data from diverse systems and applications.

Many enterprises consider AI as a core part of Digital Transformation programs, providing extensive opportunities across key areas, such as:

Automation and optimization

AI follows pre-programmed rules to handle simple and often repetitive tasks in an expedited manner, automating the most repetitive tasks and letting agents focus on delighting customers. Recommendations from AI also lead to optimization of the primary metrics that define contact center's day-to-day operation performance. For example, improving Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) and Net Promoter Score (NPS) to reduce agent stress by eliminating search and browsing tasks to simplify agent effort.

Detection and discovery

Relying on AI to cultivate data from billions of interactions leads to actionable discoveries and customer insights that drive predictive recommendations and optimize agent and contact center efficiency. Additionally, if something goes wrong, the AI "brain" should send an alert about specific data points, reducing short and long-term training efforts through real-time error identification, for example.

Prescription and assistance

Directly or indirectly, every persona in the contact center can benefit from AI practical assistance. AI should recognize new patterns and suggest the next best steps based on that recognition, empowering agents with intelligent guidance, recommending the best actions to solve customer issues. Proactively delivering information in a simple interface also prevents agents from being scattered between several data sources. Similarly, contact centers should reduce manual supervision, leveraging automated guidance to trim down agent-supervisor ad-hoc interactions, giving supervisors more time to focus on workforce engagement activities and agents more quality time with customers.

STEP 2:
Using Speech Analytics to improve humanized automation

The COVID-19 pandemic forced contact centers to reinforce their staffing and divert interactions to digital channels like chatbots. But there were worries about the lack of human empathy that can arise from automated conversations coupled with the impact of process automation that could threaten job losses in contact centers.

Natural Language Processing (NLP) analyzes hundreds of millions of calls, learning why people call the contact center and categorizing all conversations from customer-agent interactions.

NLP infused tools like Speech Analytics uncover opportunities for process automation for multiple use cases, relying on capabilities like:

Sentiment analysis

By analyzing customers' voice tone and listening for keywords during the conversation, AI helps identify process automation enhancements for a better customer experience.

Topic and intent analysis

By revealing topics and keywords that are being discussed to holistically approach customer demands faster.

Call transcription cards

By using speech-to-text and NLP for better and faster on-call answers and after-call work.

Customers are now more familiar with digital engagement channels, and business leaders are following the trend recognizing the potential cost benefits of automation. In 2020 digital channels accounted for 80% of marketing budgets.

Speech Analytics data can positively impact critical metrics, like Average Handle Time (AHT), First Call Resolution (FCR), and cost per contact (CPC), by:

- **Identifying the best IVR setup (e.g., new IVR exits)**

- **Making agents more knowledgeable**

- **Empowering customers**

Humanizing automation in CX is a fine balance. Before jumping into automated environments, contact centers should consider developing a set of customer journey maps and identifying how customers navigate them. Then, separate repetitive tasks from the more complex ones to evaluate automation opportunities and set tasks that benefit from agents' human touch, assisted with AI.
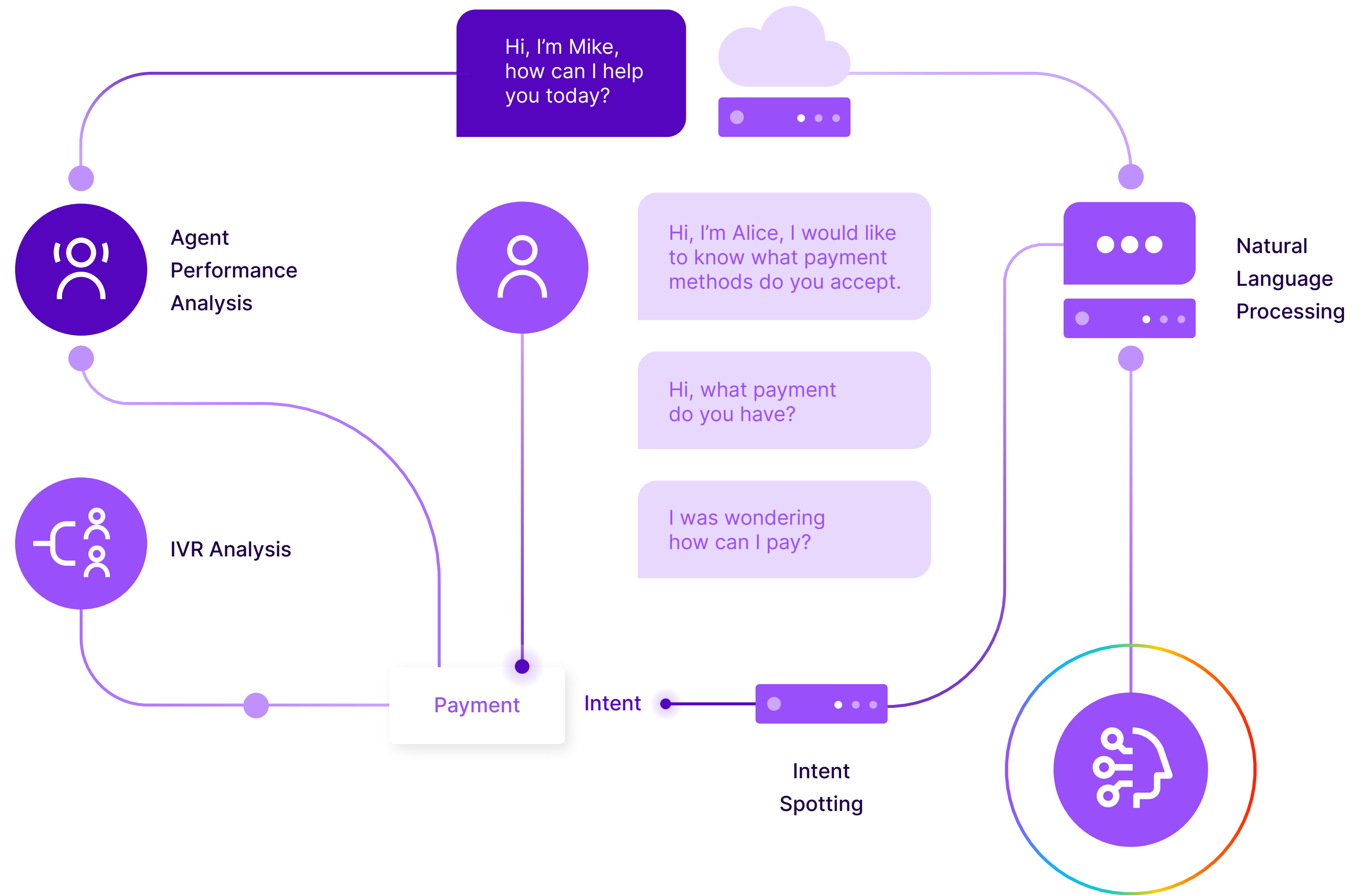
STEP 3:
Introducing Agent Assist to workflows

AI can empower agents with a personalized assistant that listens, learns, and provides intelligent recommendations in every conversation to help resolve complex customer issues faster.

An AI-powered agent assistant can browse a knowledge base, whole conversations, and all the available data to fetch the most relevant documents related to a customer query and present it to the agent.

For Contact Centers with a transient workforce, an AI-agent assistant tool will simplify onboarding processes and ramp-up new hires with contextual information during calls, reducing the need for manual supervision and assistance. Features include:

- **Real-time actions and quick shortcuts:** Reduce the need to leave the customer on hold or transfer the call to a different agent or a supervisor.

- **Smart notes:** Summarize the entire conversation and show the agent's transcript to accept or modify it.

- **Automatic data entry:** When someone calls, an agent assistant can make the right application pop-up with the customer's name and address, so the agent is not delayed by having to type in any data.

- **Escalation assistance:** It is nerve-racking for the customer when their call is transferred and they have to describe the entire situation all over again. With a powerful agent assist, the complete customer record is summarized, extracted, and delivered in just a couple of bullet points to the next agent or supervisor.

- **Real-time analytics and error detection:** the agent assist can monitor the call to ensure the agent goes through the standard protocol and follows the established script.

The information extracted from this monitoring can later be used to offer training recommendations in real-time or after the call.

Customer   Agent

Agent Assist

Knowledge Base   CRM/CSM   Conversational Transcript
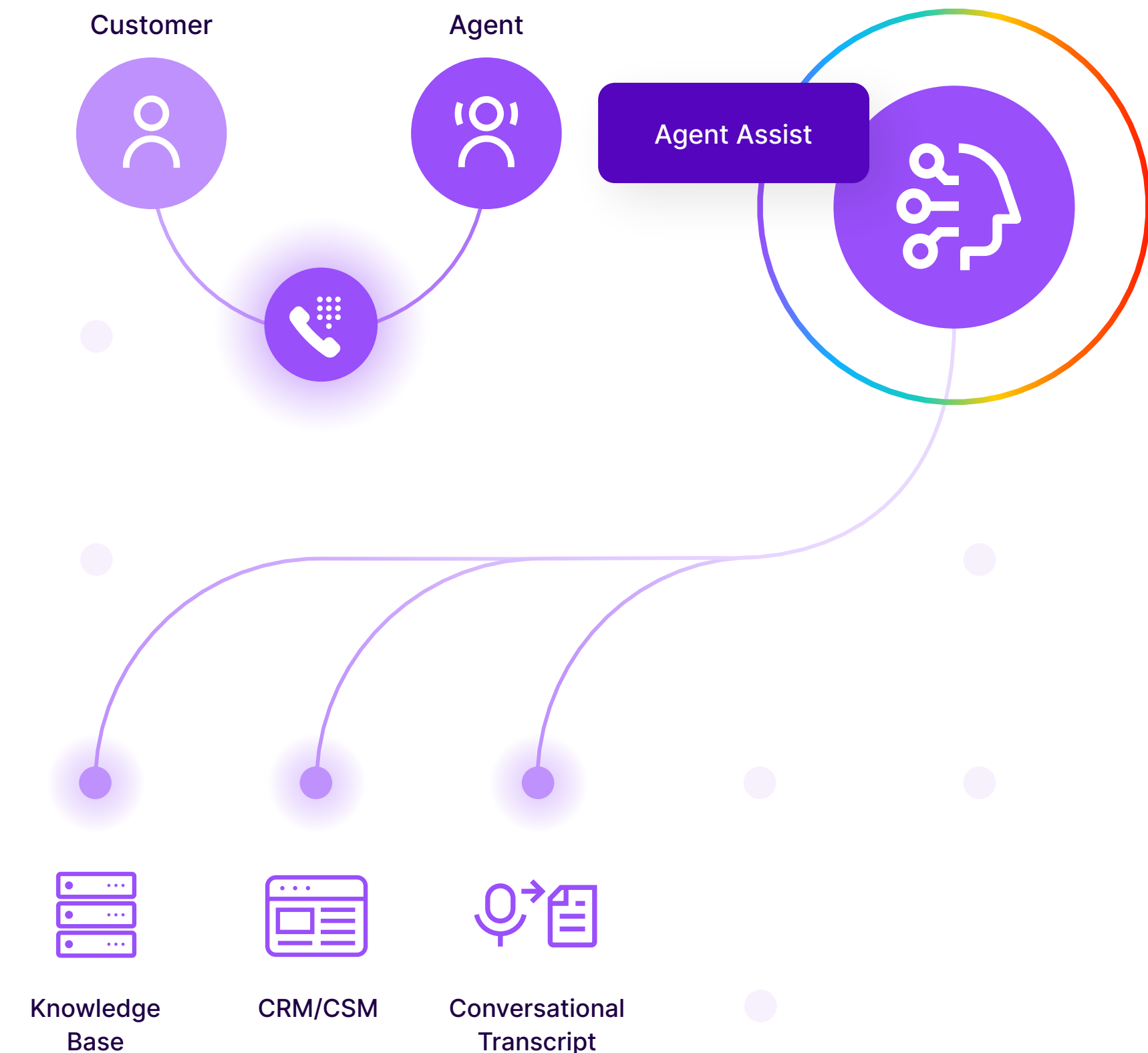
STEP 4:
Powering virtual agents for customer conversations

AI-powered conversational assistants, or "virtual agents," can instantly deliver the answers and outcomes over voice-enabled channels. They provide contact centers with a cost-effective and scalable self-service solution to meet the ever-changing customer needs and provide human-like service, even outside of business hours, to ensure consistent quality in customer experience.

A virtual agent is ideal for resolving common issues and automating routine tasks when agents are not available after hours or free-up agents during peak traffic periods, allowing them to focus on more complex issues. The main benefits of implementing a virtual agent in contact centers include:

- **Always-on support:** Enable customers to solve routine and basic service issues any time of day, automatically scheduling follow-up calls during after-hours interactions. Reduce customer frustration and improve satisfaction by leveraging intelligent voice with around-the-clock conversational support. Create a future where routine tasks are automated and agents are free to solve more complex issues.

- **Operational efficiency through conversational routing:** Analyze customer intent and route to the correct virtual agent capability, thus improving contact center operational efficiency by solving issues effortlessly, with minimum or no live agent interaction.

- **Improve self-service KPIs:** Shorten the amount of time required for customers to get answers and resolve issues. Correctly and consistently answer questions to improve key metrics, such as First Call Resolution (FCR), Average Handle Time (AHT), Average Speed of Answer (ASA), and Customer Satisfaction (CSAT). Talking to a live agent should always be a fallback option for customers along their entire contact center journey. A virtual agent's advantage is to have a 24/7 AI-powered assistant to address the most frequent issues at any time of the day or night. If a customer wants to ask a question, there is always an answer to it.
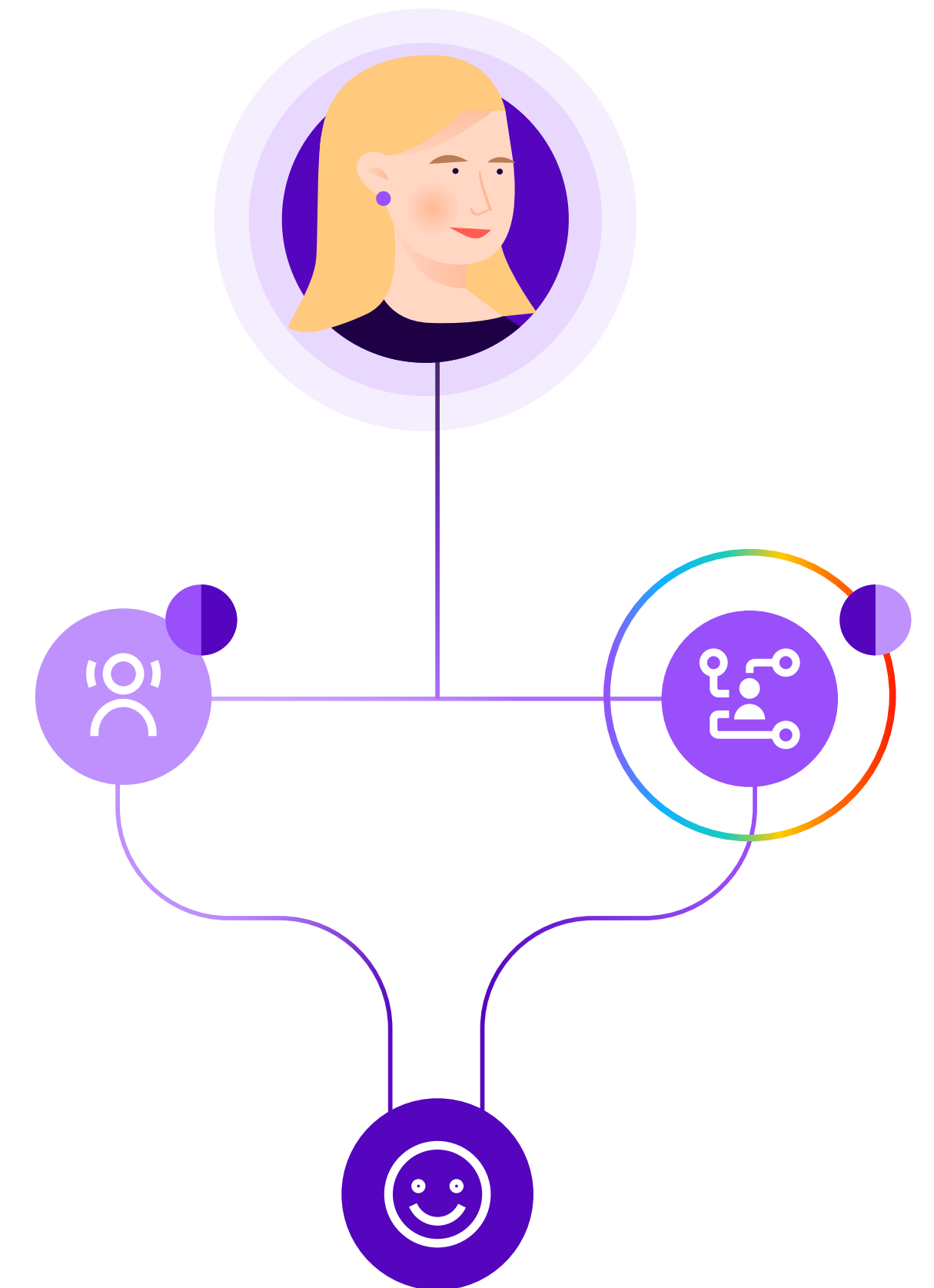
STEP 5:
Operationalizing AI with an agent's touch

AI is not a static, one-off technology; it must continually update and evolve. AI projects can avoid most implementation pitfalls by operationalizing the AI models' ongoing performance in a practical and cost-efficient way.

The accuracy of AI models powering tools like agent assistance and virtual agents needs continuous attention to compensate for changes in contact center interactions and its business environment, like a new market, product or pricing plan.

Every time a model loses its predictive power, it needs to be updated. One of the most significant barriers to AI adoption has been the requirement to hire highly specialized data scientists to program AI models.

But with the rise of 'human-in-the-loop' technology, the process to improve the accuracy of AI models is made easier and cost-effective by operationalizing non-technical staff, like agents and supervisors, to do the work with a no-code, simple interface.
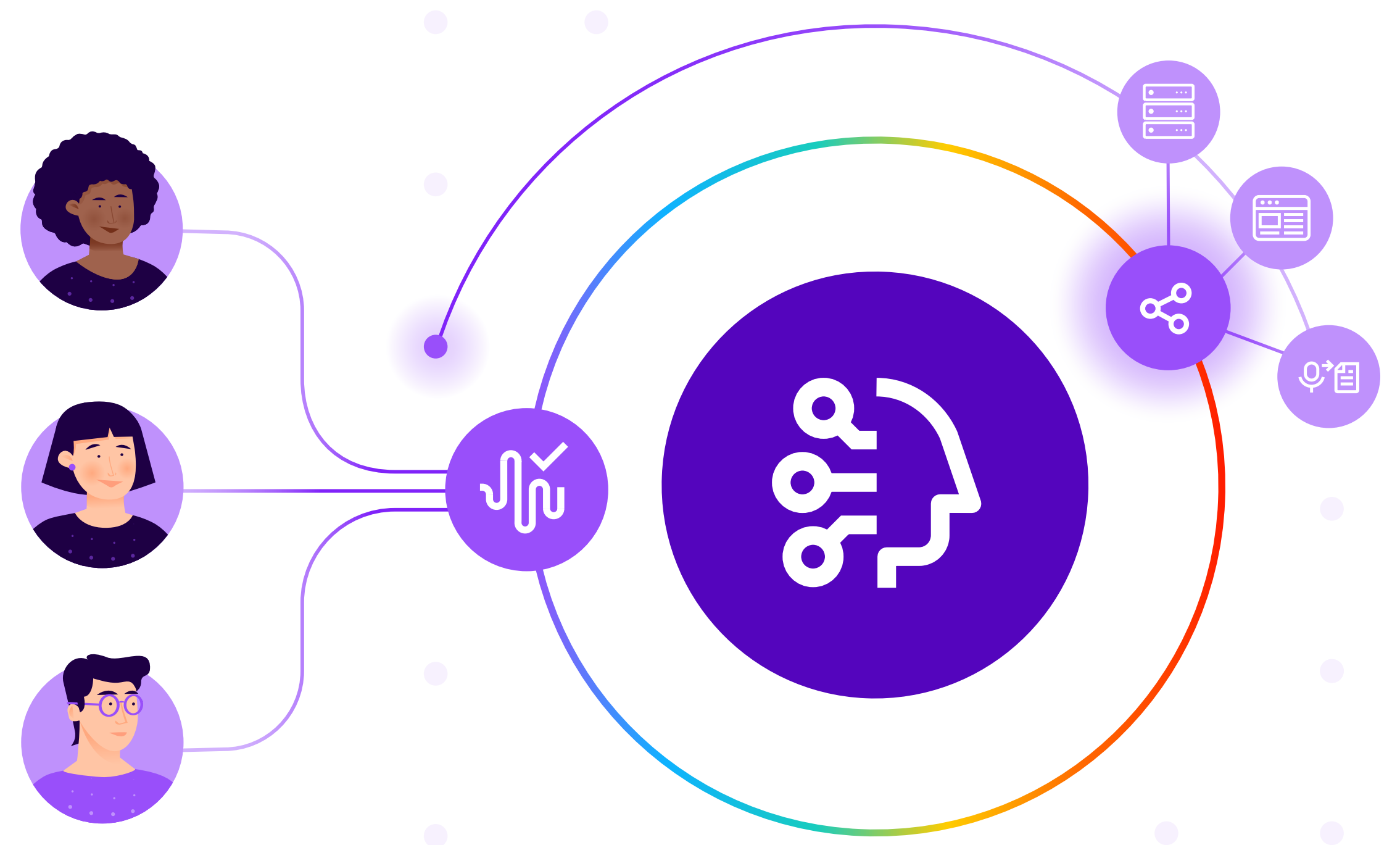
Conclusion

Leverage AI-powered CX to build a branded experience that customers love

Just like Netflix, many other brands can embrace AI to build customer experiences that create brand value. Customers want frictionless and instant responsiveness, indicating expectations are likely to be outpacing the reality of most contact centers. Successfully leveraging AI will lead to a better customer experience on par with brands already there.

If you'd like to know how you can begin your AI journey, __get in touch__ with us or __request a demo now__.

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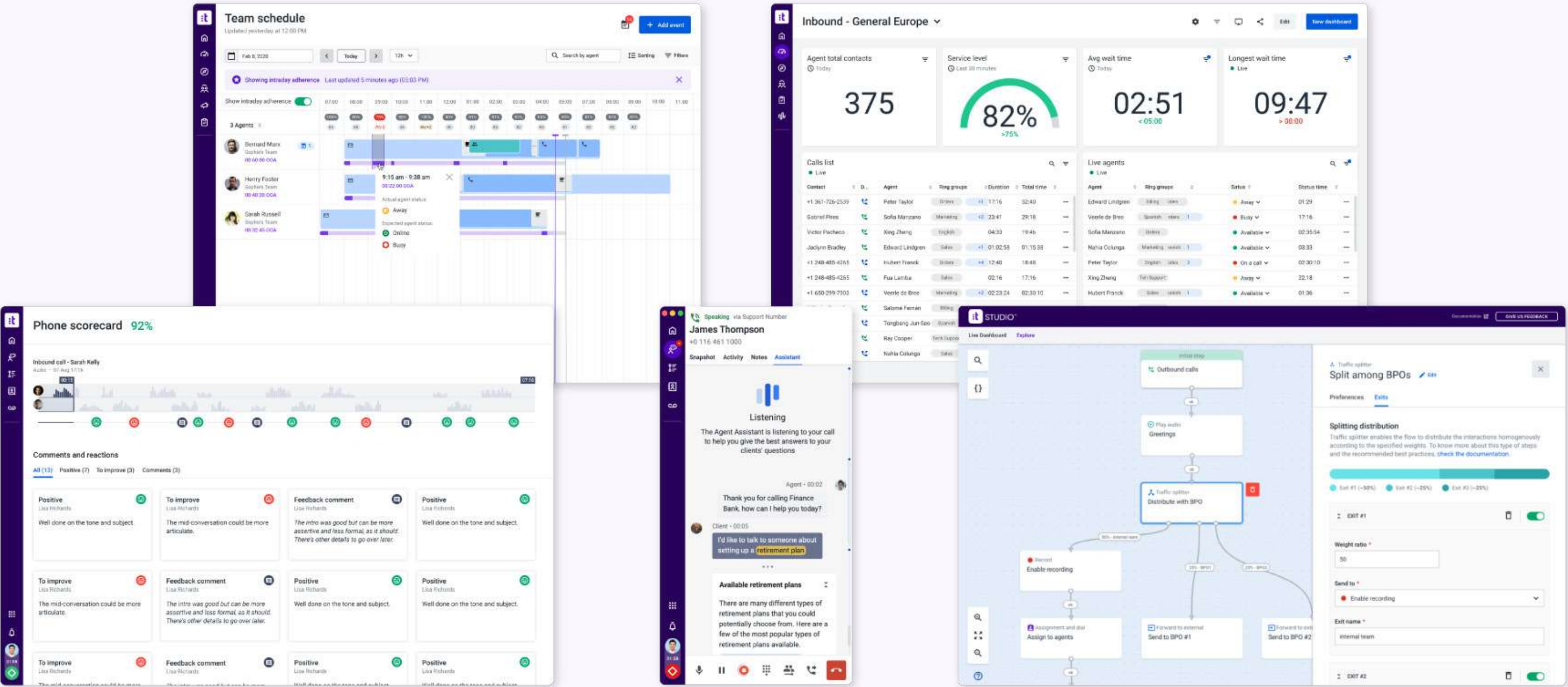
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