The manufacturing industry is under enormous pressure to change.

As the pandemic fades in our rear-view mirror, manufacturing companies are looking ahead to advances in digital technology to modernize their operations.

Meanwhile, the economic climate is still uncertain, with inflationary pressures driving up the cost of goods and logistics. The digital transformation of the global industry is well underway, and companies are looking for ways to cut costs while maintaining quality. With tight competition and shortages in parts and labor, there’s a golden opportunity to stand out with great service.

Our research reveals that manufacturing leaders are right to be optimistic – CX is a key driver on the road to growth in uncertain times. It’s no longer enough to produce great products, because customers have infinite choices. Companies that invest in customer relationships are the ones that will thrive.

*In this guide, you’ll get actionable CX insights built for manufacturers in today’s ultra-competitive environment.*
Unlock the power of intelligent CX

Digital transformation has opened up an entire world of possibilities for manufacturing. Customers in previously unreachable places, access to new sources of data, and advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) are ushering in a new era of opportunity. As manufacturers expand into selling direct-to-consumer, there is heightened demand for more conversational service.

Over the past few years, AI has improved tremendously – from the early days of automated responses to today’s seamless conversational capabilities. This empowers companies to create hyper-personalized customer experiences at scale – by answering questions in the moment, fueling efficient workflows, and mining data to improve every interaction.

However, the true potential of AI has yet to be realized. Our research found that 55% of manufacturing leaders worry their company is lagging behind in AI and chatbots, and 59% are concerned their approach has been ad hoc rather than strategic. On the upside, nearly two thirds are prioritizing the expansion of AI in 2023. This means it’s no longer enough to simply make great products – manufacturers need to focus on service to compete. Today’s customers demand the same frictionless, omnichannel experiences they get from companies they do business with in their personal life.

Use artificial intelligence to create better customer experiences

- 74% of manufacturing leaders expect increased AI spending in 2023
- 73% agree that CX is a key reason customers purchase their products
- 71% are making access to data for AI-powered personalized service a priority this year
- 69% are working to align AI / bot appearances and behavior with brand value
Conrad Electronic had to close stores and decentralize work during the pandemic. At the same time, the company was seeing an influx of new customers. School administrators were scrambling to set up virtual learning environments for K-12 students and needed immediate technical solutions.

Through this challenging time, Conrad delivered customer care without extended wait times or a decline in quality. Zendesk bots were already handling most questions that had predefined answers. For the more complex queries, Conrad offered video calls, and new digital channels like WhatsApp were deployed for B2B customers.

“Zendesk has given us a complete, one-stop solution that provides a 360-degree view of all our customers. It also allows us to interact with one another across departments, for example between Sales and Support. You can’t get much more transparent than that.”

*Sven Wachtel, Senior Director Customer Care DACH at Conrad Electronic*

### After switching to Zendesk:

- **35K** Monthly self-service interactions
- **+30%** Improvement in first response time
- **160K** Monthly tickets
2 Connect your CX to the value chain with AI

There's no question that AI is helping manufacturers deliver more seamless, convenient experiences, and they will increasingly differentiate their CX with AI.

When manufacturers deploy smart tools for diagnostics and self-service software, customers can often resolve issues on their own. The expansion of IoT to embed connectivity in more devices along the value chain is showing promise – many teams are seeing a decline in the number of in-person repair visits. When AI is introduced into the ecosystem, customers can get help when they need it, on their own terms.

AI and automation also help reduce manual work for warranty claims and order processing. A simple form submission can connect all the necessary customer information up front, including uploaded photos and customer details, to kick off the back end process automatically. This efficiency is critical to manufacturers who want to scale up their business without adding excessive cost and complexity.

65% of manufacturing leaders agree their AI use has evolved past simple deflection

52% use AI to make product and content recommendations to customers

49% deploy AI-powered bots to provide 24/7 customer support

47% currently use AI for order management, including returns or exchanges
Impossible Foods is a manufacturer best known for its Impossible Burger. The company used AI-powered bots to quickly scale support when a new partnership with Burger King introduced the Impossible Whopper and brought in a landslide of new customer communications.

After the Burger King launch, Impossible Foods focused heavily on ticket deflection initiatives and introduced Zendesk bots. The results? 50 percent of ticket volume was deflected through the help center, ticket forms, and bots.

“Our base support volume basically was halved because a lot of the noise was just making sure consumers had the right information about our product. Those are the types of questions the Zendesk tools are able to help address and really give our team a lot of time back.”

Gabrielle McCobin, Senior Manager of Customer Advocacy at Impossible Foods

After switching to Zendesk:

17,000
Restaurants served

50%
Tickets deflected with bots

CSAT
94%
3 Boost profitability with deeper customer relationships

Customers want to be treated like people, not tickets. This holds just as true in the manufacturing sector as it does in luxury retail, and many companies are making the leap.

Manufacturers are sitting on mountains of data – many say it’s more than they know what to do with. And often, that data exists in disconnected silos, so support teams don’t have access to crucial insights. Bringing together these disparate systems can create better experiences across the board.

Our research shows that most manufacturing leaders agree that the optimal customer experience lets them move seamlessly across channels, between physical and digital places. This exciting shift in thinking is fundamentally changing the way manufacturers build their business, both on the production line and in the contact center.

Six out of 10 manufacturing leaders are seeing above average or high ROI personalization investments

80% agree that personalization increases customer retention

77% agree that customers expect experiences to be unified across channels
Polaris has been evolving its relationships with its consumer customers since 1954. With the launch of its subsidiary, Polaris Adventures, in 2017, the $8 billion public manufacturer ushered in a new era of approachability to the powersports world.

With business doubling on a yearly basis, Polaris Adventures partnered with Zendesk to scale up their customer support and sales solutions.

“A unified customer view means richer customer conversations with deeper communications.”

Sven Wachtel, Senior Director Customer Care DACH at Conrad Electronic

After switching to Zendesk:

30 minutes
Average first-reply time

86%
One-touch tickets

10 hours
Average resolution time
How Zendesk can help

✔️ Break down data silos

Data silos and costly enterprise software prevent many manufacturers from implementing CX personalization. Brands can connect all their existing data sources through Zendesk’s open, flexible platform. Zendesk lets you connect and understand all your data—wherever it may live—and use it across your business, giving you a central place to create a single view of the customer.

✔️ Unified agent workspace

A single ticket interface gives your agents a full view of the customer, eliminating the time-wasting need for multiple apps and screen-toggling. This empowers your team with a single source of truth for relevant and real-time data, including their past interactions, order history, and troubleshooting steps already taken before reaching out for assistance. That helps agents recommend solutions the customer hasn’t already tried, and get to the right answer faster – a better experience for everyone.

✔️ Leverage AI to work alongside your team

Use machine learning to help answer your customers’ questions. When an agent is required, the AI–powered bot collects relevant customer information up front and intelligently routes to the appropriately skilled agent with all the context they need to jump in and resolve issues quickly. Our conversational data orchestration enables deeper personalization by powerfully integrating systems and tailoring experiences via automation.

Methodology

We surveyed more than 1000 global manufacturing leaders, agents, and technology buyers from 20 countries and organizations ranging from small businesses to enterprises during July and August 2022. Results from the survey were weighted to remove bias from the survey sample.

Countries surveyed include: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
Supercharge your CX

Zendesk helps manufacturers that want a modern service solution with complete visibility into customer profiles and engagements, easy collaboration across departments, and the ability to monitor and meet service SLAs. Our CX solution is easy to get up and running quickly. Unlike other support solutions, Zendesk can be deployed in a matter of weeks, with integrations built into front and back-office systems.

Our out-of-the-box solution doesn’t require a team of developers to get up and running. Your agents can be trained in just one day, so you can maximize cash flow and focus on your customers.

Learn about Zendesk for Manufacturing ➔