S&P Global
Market Intelligence

Agentic AI poised to disrupt the contact center and CX software business model

June 30, 2025

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As AI advances toward autonomous agents capable of completing increasingly complex tasks without manual intervention, vendors are considering alternatives to traditional contact center pricing, influencing a shift from conventional, per-seat pricing to more dynamic, usage- and outcome-based pricing models that align costs with performance metrics.

Introduction

Per-seat pricing has long been the dominant model for contact center technology. While it is a straightforward and predictable model that makes it easy for companies to budget and provides a steady and predictable revenue stream for vendors, per-seat pricing may not be the most cost-effective or flexible option for businesses. They may end up overprovisioning during peak times or paying for unused capacity during off-peak periods. By facilitating customer experience automation, self-service and 24/7 customer support at scale, the integration of agentic AI could help contact centers address varying levels of demand. This could make the seat-based pricing model obsolete, giving way to models that align costs with performance metrics.

THE TAKE

The integration of agentic AI (i.e., AI systems capable of autonomous decision-making and actions) will likely lead contact-center-as-a-service (CCaaS) and customer-experience (CX) software vendors to adopt more dynamic and outcome-focused pricing models, reflecting the value delivered through enhanced efficiency and customer satisfaction. This transition is ongoing. Agentic AI-enabled capabilities are rapidly becoming essential for CCaaS/CX software, but the industry still lacks a standard pricing approach. We believe that outcome-based pricing, combined with usage-based pricing, will become the predominant model. However, we do not expect this shift to happen in the near term. Rather, we believe that usage-based pricing will serve in the meantime as a stepping stone for vendors transitioning from per-seat to outcome-based pricing.

Factors influencing CCaaS/CX pricing

Given that agentic AI can enhance operational efficiency, the traditional per-seat pricing model is likely to be replaced by more dynamic outcome-based and usage-based pricing models. Reducing the need for human agents should allow contact centers to manage varying levels of demand and usage. This shift will necessitate more flexible pricing models, such as subscription-based or pay-as-you-go pricing.

Additionally, agentic AI could improve the quality and speed of service, potentially boosting customer satisfaction and retention. This may lead to outcome-based pricing models.

Another key factor influencing pricing for agentic AI-enabled CCaaS and CX software is the high level of computing resources required. Each additional interaction incurs an additional cost; this may prompt vendors to consider adopting a hybrid AI approach, combining large language models and agentic AI with rule-based systems or smaller, more specialized models that are less resource-intensive. Furthermore, integrating machine-learning operations (MLOps) practices could also contribute to cost reduction by automating the deployment, monitoring and management of AI models.

A combination of technical and operational measures can help organizations reduce the costs of using LLMs and agentic AI. This lends itself to adopting a flexible pricing approach, such as subscription or pay-as-you-go plans, in combination with usage-based pricing.

Are businesses ready for flexible pricing models?

Although per-seat pricing remains the dominant model for CCaaS, our research indicates that IT decision-makers are increasingly favoring flexible pricing models. According to our Voice of the Enterprise: Customer Experience & Commerce, Budgets & Organizational Dynamics 2025 study, among surveyed organizations allocating budgets for predictive and generative AI in CXC technology, 51% prefer enterprise-wide licenses (e.g., fixed cost for the entire organization, regardless of usage) over other pricing models. This includes subscription per user, which had the lowest favorability at 34% (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Organizations are more likely to favor flexible pricing models
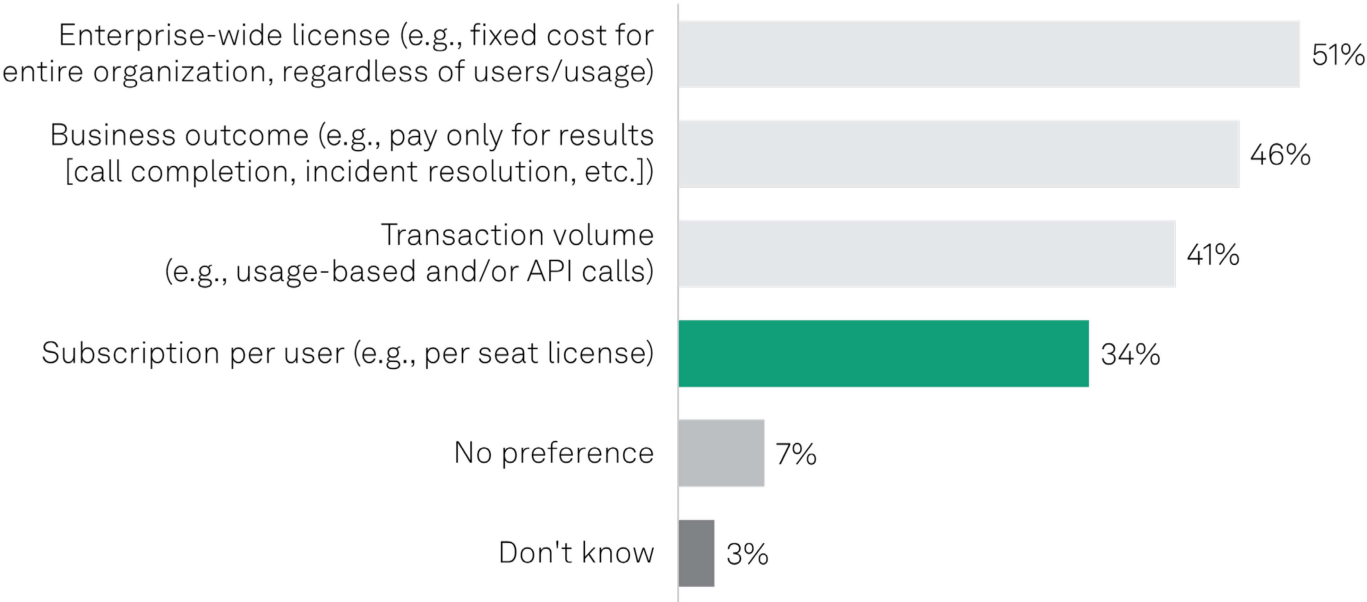
Q. And when it comes to pricing for predictive and generative AI, what are your organization's preferred pricing models? Check all that apply.
Base: Respondents whose organizations are likely to allocate budget for predictive and generative AI in CXC technology (n=534).
Source: 451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: Customer Experience & Commerce, Budgets & Organizational Dynamics 2025.

Agentic AI lacks a standard pricing approach

Agentic AI-enabled capabilities are rapidly becoming essential for CCaaS and CX software; however, the industry lacks a standard pricing approach. Some vendors continue to favor per-seat pricing, while others are experimenting with new approaches based on variable factors, such as usage- or performance-based pricing.

Below, we describe common pricing models used by CCaaS and CX software vendors.

Figure 2: CCaaS and CXC pricing models

Pricing model	Description
Per-seat	This model charges businesses based on the number of agents or users utilizing the CXC software. It is common for SaaS contact center solutions.
Usage-based	Pricing is based on the actual service. This can include charges per transaction, API call or data processed, making it suitable for businesses with variable workloads. Customers are billed after using the service, often at the end of a billing cycle, based on actual usage levels.
Pay-as-you-go	Pricing is based on consumption, but typically entails up-front payment and immediate access. It often involves a fixed rate for a certain amount of usage; customers can purchase credits or access on demand.
Tiered	Different pricing tiers offer varying levels of service, features or usage limits. This option can include a freemium tier.
License-based	Involves a one-time or annual licensing fee, along with optional maintenance or support fees.
Outcome-based	Some CXC vendors offer performance-based pricing, where costs are tied to specific outcomes, such as improved customer satisfaction scores or reduced average handling times, rather than the number of users or features utilized. This allows businesses to pay based on results, aligning operational expenses with business outcomes rather than operational inputs.
Flat-rate	Some CXC vendors offer a flat-rate pricing model where businesses pay a fixed fee for a set of features, regardless of usage or the number of agents.
Per-feature	Charges are based on the features or modules used. This model benefits customers who need specific functionalities, allowing them to tailor the software to their needs.
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Source: S&P Global Market Intelligence 451 Research.

Agentic AI pricing strategies for CCaaS and CX

CCaaS and CXC vendors began launching agentic AI-enabled capabilities as early as 2023. Over the past two years, vendors have experimented with various approaches, including outcome-based pricing. For example, Ada Support's generative AI agent offering, launched in 2023, initially used outcome-based pricing but later switched to usage-based pricing. Meanwhile, Zendesk's agentic AI pricing strategy introduced outcome-based pricing early on, charging customers only when AI agents successfully resolve issues autonomously (Figure 3).

The pricing strategy for assistive agents (i.e., tools designed to enhance productivity by supporting users with suggestions, automating repetitive tasks and offering insight) has also evolved over the past two years, with vendors trying out various approaches. For instance, Google Cloud Gemini (formerly Duet AI), available as an add-on for Google Workspace Enterprise customers, was initially priced for an additional $30 per user per month; the company later added Gemini Starter and Standard tiers. Similarly, Microsoft Corp. initially launched Microsoft Copilot 365 for $30 per user per month for Microsoft 365 E3, E5, Business Standard and Business Premium customers. It later added tiered pricing, including a free Copilot Chat available to Microsoft 365 subscribers.

In contrast to Google Cloud and Microsoft, Zoom Communications Inc. launched its Zoom AI Companion in March 2023 at no additional cost for users with a paid Zoom license. AI Companion is designed to enhance the user experience by working behind the scenes to boost users› productivity and collaboration, helping users manage a series of multi-step actions on their behalf — such as providing in-meeting assistance, scheduling new meetings and building the agenda, providing a meeting summary, and jump-starting next steps.

Figure 3: Agentic AI pricing strategies for select CCaaS and CX vendors

Company	Product	Pricing strategy	Details
Ada Support	In 2023, Ada Support expanded its AI customer service platform with the launch of a new AI agent designed to deliver autonomous support across key customer communication channels: messaging, chat and email. Positioned as a distinct offering, the launch marked a strategic expansion of Ada›s AI customer service platform.	Usage-based	Pricing for Ada's generative AI offering is usage-based: Customers gain full access to all capabilities and only pay for the conversations they use.
Deepgram	Deepgram's Voice Agent API is designed to minimize latency and enhance human-like responsiveness, facilitating real-time conversations between humans and machines at enterprise scale.	Pay-as-you-go	The company offers an initial free $200 credit. Tiered levels include Growth at $4,000 with pre-paid credits for the year; credits are redeemed against actual usage. Enterprise is $15,000-plus/year, with prepaid credits that are redeemed against actual usage.
DRUID	DRUID Conductor, launched with the platform's latest October 2024 release, enables businesses to deploy conversational AI agents, as well as create and orchestrate new AI agents dynamically based on enterprise workflows. Integration with Microsoft Copilot offers bidirectional data exchange and model fine-tuning via prompt engineering.	License-based	The company's pricing strategy comprises a flat-rate subscription model and unlimited usage, starting at $50,000 per year. While it does not include a freemium version, businesses can sign up for a free trial.
Google Cloud	In August 2023, Google Cloud made Gemini for Google Workspace (formerly Duet AI) generally available across all its Workspace apps, including Gmail, Drive, Slides and Docs.	Per-seat	In January, Google Cloud announced pricing changes for Gemini AI that took effect as of March 17, 2025: Starter $11, Standard $27 and Plus $35 per user per month. Businesses can sign up for a no-cost trial.
Microsoft	Microsoft Copilot 365 was officially announced in March 2023. Its aim is to enhance productivity across Microsoft 365 applications using AI technology.	Per-seat	As of April 1, 2025, Microsoft 365 and Microsoft 365 Copilot paid plans include Business Basic, $36.00 user/month, paid yearly; Business Standard, $42.50 user/month, paid yearly; and Business Premium, $52.00 user/month, paid yearly. A free Copilot Chat, available to Microsoft 365 subscribers, allows basic AI tasks but may incur charges for specific queries.

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Salesforce Inc.	Officially launched in September 2024, Salesforce Agentforce is an AI enabled low-code development platform that enables businesses to quickly create and deploy autonomous digital agents.	Usage-based	Pricing for Salesforce Agentforce relies on a usage-based consumption model that charges for every conversation with an AI agent. The base rate for Agentforce is $2 per conversation.
Talkdesk	In June, Talkdesk introduced a new platform called Customer Experience Automation. This platform features fully autonomous, multi-agent AI automation across the entire customer journey, helping organizations automate complex customer service workflows.	Usage-based	Talkdesk has shifted to interaction-based pricing, a flexible model in which the cost is determined by the volume of interactions handled. This enables companies to adjust their spending according to fluctuations in customer interactions.
Zendesk	In March, Zendesk updated the Zendesk Resolution Platform. At its core are Zendesk AI agents, powered by agentic AI. They are designed to reason, adapt in real-time, and drive resolutions autonomously without scripting or training. They remain dynamic while still following business processes. Fully integrated into Zendesk, the platform unifies AI, a knowledge graph, actions and integrations, governance and control, and measurement and insights.	Outcome-based	The company's agentic AI approach blends outcome-based and flexible pricing; customers are only charged when AI agents successfully resolve issues autonomously.
Zoom	The Zoom Virtual Agent, launched on June 6, 2025, is a self-service solution aimed at enabling customers to address complex issues across their preferred communication channels more efficiently. The platform supports voice and chat interactions, leveraging Zoom's AI-driven technology and agentic framework; it integrates advanced reasoning capabilities and contextual understanding to enhance the self-service experience.	Available as an add-on to any Zoom Contact Center plan (Essentials, Premium or Elite).	Customers can purchase Zoom Virtual Agent for voice and chat in usage-based increments — per minute for voice and per conversation for chat — with pricing models including pay-as-you-go, monthly commitment or annual commitment. All models require a 12-month contract and a Zoom Contact Center license.

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