



AI360 podcast

Season 1, Episode 4: Revolutionizing service: exploring generative AI in customer support

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Soumyadeep Bakshi: Hello, and welcome to another episode of AI360, your go-to six-minute podcast for all things AI. I'm your host, Soumyadeep, and today we are diving deep into the world of Gen AI and its applications in customer service. With us is a special guest, Howie [Stein]. Welcome!

Howie Stein: Thanks for having me.

Soumyadeep Bakshi: Thanks for joining us today. Could you briefly introduce yourself and share your experience with Gen AI?

Howie Stein: Absolutely, yeah. My name is Howie Stein. I'm a managing director at Deloitte, and I focus on AI services across our telecom, media, and entertainment sector, where I help my clients solve some of the most complex operations challenges in areas like customer service, sales, and retail operations.

Soumyadeep Bakshi: It's always exciting to hear more about practical applications of Gen AI. Moving on to the topic of customer service, what are some of the key challenges today that organizations face?

Howie Stein: Yeah, I think despite many years of seeing organizations try to make sense of their data

with work around data warehouses, data lakes, many organizations continue to struggle getting to that single view of their data. This manifests itself in many ways.

One way is limited relevance of knowledge articles and self-service and digital channels. Customer information also continues to be very fragmented and inconsistent. This prevents agents from driving meaningful insights and conversations, especially with more complex service-related issues.

Inefficient case routing continues to be a challenge in many organizations without considerations for skill sets or entitlements of their agents. And finally, appropriate governance around capturing, maintaining, and sustaining knowledge base and knowledge articles continues to be a very manual and human-intensive task.

Soumyadeep Bakshi: Most certainly all of us have faced some form of frustration or the other with today's customer service operations. So with Gen AI now being thrown into the mix, what are some near-term use cases that we might see in this space?

Howie Stein: Yeah, there's four areas where we see immediate value, and these are areas that we're actively working with our clients today; these are not theoretical use cases.

Self-service is an area where we use Gen AI to help get the right information to the right customer at the right time. We also like to promote what we call an "insights-driven agent experience"—giving agents (at their fingertips) access across customer data, across knowledge resources, giving them a conversational experience to guide service and troubleshooting, and then giv[ing] agents the most valuable insights to guide that interaction with the customer.

Post-case closure, after a case, after a conversation is complete, we're using generative AI to summarize call reasons, resolution steps, customer sentiment, and then we're using that information to refine the knowledge base, refine troubleshooting guides, and refine our capability for future calls.

And finally, coaching QA [quality assurance] continues to be an area where we see a lot of interest driving personalized coaching and QA measurement. All of these things reinforce the fact that traditionally data has been very siloed—complex knowledge management libraries, complex integration, swivel chair to back-end systems, and loss of customer information both structured and unstructured.

Soumyadeep Bakshi: Some would say it's applicable into and across the life cycle. So for executives tuning in today, what are some of the primary business factors that they should keep in mind as they look to enter the space?

Howie Stein: I think a lot of the business factors are ones that we've been talking about for quite a while in the customer service space. How do you provide a personalized and customer-centric experience? How do you drive adoption and value orientation for the product and the service that you're selling to the customer? How do you drive worker productivity? That continues to be a hot topic especially with the advent of digital and other channels. How do you augment human intelligence in the right way and give agents the right information at their fingertips?

And most importantly, proactive and predictive continues to be a hot topic amongst our clients. How do we anticipate customer needs and either give agents information around how to solve those problems proactively or how do we proactively solve those problems before a customer even contacts us?

Soumyadeep Bakshi: From a technical standpoint, are there any considerations that execs need to keep in mind as they look to enter the space? Is there a "building vs. buy" consideration to this?

Howie Stein: There is. “Build versus buy” has become an even more important decision as many of your existing platform providers, software providers are likely going to be releasing their own generative AI capabilities now and in the near future. But I would urge you to consider impacts to governance and user experience.

You want to embrace these out-of-the-box solutions, but you also want to make sure that governance is being achieved as you manage these tools. You want to ensure a seamless user experience. You’re not creating additional what I like to call “AI silos” with multiple solutions that have different data and knowledge bases. So work with your hyperscalers and SaaS providers, but maintain a cautious approach to integration across your tech stack.

Soumyadeep Bakshi: That seems like a lot of activity going on in this space. So for businesses that want to get started today, what are the immediate next steps that they should consider?

Howie Stein: Yeah, I’d say three main things that should be considered: First is proceed with caution, but don’t be afraid to conduct and drive real pilots at scale with your customers. They’ll appreciate seeing the innovation.

The second is plan for the complexity of figuring all of this out within your organization. You’re going to have new models, new technology, new governance, and new talent considerations to manage and sustain the technology.

And third and finally, make sure you maintain that focus on value and customer experience.

Soumyadeep Bakshi: Fantastic insights—and a good three-point checklist to follow, Howie. It is evident that Gen AI has a lot of potential to disrupt this landscape.

Thank you for joining today and sharing your insights with us!

Howie Stein: Thanks for having me.

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