



TrendzOwl



TECHNOLOGY TRENDS TO WATCH IN 2026 & BEYOND:

Driving Business Value with Human-Based Support



A TrendzOwl executive brief in partnership with



Companies in the technology industry feature complex products with rapidly iterating capabilities. As such, the provision of hyper-personalized customer journeys should be enabled by a combination of artificial intelligence (AI) and emotional intelligence (EI), which only human-centered support can provide.

In 2026 and beyond, TrendzOwl proposes three intertwined themes in the technology sector:

Process Excellence. In a rapidly changing world, it's imperative to streamline processes to optimize efficiency and improve business results with tools and workflows that span the entire CX value chain. That's particularly true for the technology sector.

Business Value. In light of the complex and uncertain nature of developments in the AI space, business leaders should maintain reasonable expectations when implementing new technologies. The real challenge with AI in the context of CX is delivering business value.

Human-Centric Support. Ironically, the technology sector has a unique need for human beings to drive white-glove CX for product, service, and application support services (levels 1, 2, and 3) across interaction channels for all types of enterprise sales models (B2B, B2C, D2C).

TRENDZ SPOTLIGHT

Delivering Business Value in an Age of Transformation

In 2025, trade tensions continue to transform the global economy. Across geographies, tariffs are putting upward pressure on consumer prices for tech products such as laptops and smartphones. “With tariffs starting to realign trade flows and supply chains, the economic effect is beginning to show.”¹ And as global trade becomes more confusing and difficult for countries to manage, big tech companies are being compelled to rethink how they do business.²

Transformation is also impacting the tech sector in the form of business transformation initiatives rooted in AI. But there’s an important plot twist. “Companies that cleaned up their data, modernized their technology infrastructure, reduced technical debt, simplified, standardized, and automated processes, established data governance, increased digital literacy, and put in place guardrails focusing on responsible use are in a position to leverage what AI offers. But most companies haven’t done that.”³

When it comes to customer support, specifically in the technology industry, the key challenge with AI “is identifying and then delivering business value from any investment made.”⁴

People-Centric Transformation & the Changing Customer

As McKinsey explains, it’s essential to reinvent technology architecture to support the customer’s changing needs. However, at too many firms, channels are still supported by siloed architecture designed for transactions rather than experiences. As a result, more firms must redesign the systems landscape, shifting from transactional channels to holistic customer journeys that feature AI in support of skilled subject matter experts (SMEs).⁵

At the same time, according to Joe Peppard, professor and academic director at UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School, companies should be “encouraging employees to use AI tools, to experiment and try things out, and to pursue ideas organically... The best ideas will most likely come from the bottom up, by those engaging in their day-to-day work and supporting customers. Technology doesn’t drive change, people do.”⁶



HUMAN-CENTRIC SUPPORT

People-Centric Change

Evidence suggests a persistent need for human support in customer management. Recently, the COPC Global Benchmarking Series research examined preferred interaction channels and their effectiveness. “While 39% of customers initiate contact via phone, 42% conclude their interactions over the phone. The finding points to a preference for direct, real-time communication when there is no resolution through other means.”⁷ Tech companies must appreciate that effective human-centric support can make all the difference for customer satisfaction and loyalty.

As such, AI’s capabilities should be kept in perspective regarding customer support. MIT economist Daron Acemoglu, winner of the 2024 Nobel in economic science, has considered the impact of technical innovations on global economics and “is skeptical about the more fervent AI claims... He doubts that full, advanced artificial general intelligence ‘that can do anything a human can do, but more’ will be achieved.”⁸ Over time, it’s possible the current AI fever could cool down considerably.

Indeed, it’s important to remember that skepticism about the reasoning abilities of large language models (LLMs) remains warranted. After all, “LLMs use novel nonhuman processes to create human-seeming word output (or images or computer code). These processes aren’t at all comparable to thinking. Such models employ arcane statistical methods to decide what word, pixel, or coding term to deploy next in a string based on patterns observed in vast text or image archives.”⁹

“While 39% of customers initiate contact via phone, 42% conclude their interactions over the phone. The finding points to a preference for direct, real-time communication when there is no resolution through other means.” — COPC



WORLDWIDE REGIONAL TRENDZ

The United States: Getting the Balance Right

Even as American consumers confront the prospect of higher prices on consumer electronics due to tariffs, they expect near-instantaneous support, particularly in the tech sector. Yet according to Forrester's 2024 U.S. Customer Experience Index, "the overall quality of customer experience in the U.S. has declined for the third consecutive year. Only 14% of U.S. companies deliver good CX, a stark drop from previous years. Despite massive investments in CX technologies and strategies, scores have reached an all-time low, with 39% of brands experiencing a notable decline. The average score on the index is now 69.3 out of 100, down from a peak of 72.0 in 2021."¹⁰

Is there a connection between the rapid rate of digital transformation and these numbers? COPC notes, "Automation and AI, intended to enhance efficiency, often result in impersonal interactions, leaving customers disconnected. Staffing shortages and supply chain disruptions further exacerbate these challenges, leading to longer wait times and reduced service quality."¹¹ The human touch cannot be neglected.

McKinsey puts it this way — "Even the technology developers and the development teams in the technology organization have to be oriented toward customer experience, not the applications."¹² It's a tricky balance to get right. As TP explains, "embracing digital channels and anticipating the rise of upcoming disruptors in the market is no longer just a 'nice-to-have' but has become a 'must-have' for brands. As technology continues to advance and customer behavior and preferences shift with it, brands need to stay ahead of the curve and adopt a forward-thinking approach to digital services."¹³

Europe: Where Better Infrastructure Will Enable Better Experiences

For Europe, digital innovation also plays a central role in a seamless support experience. However, in Europe's complicated market, with such a diversity of languages, tech deployment will demand more machine translation and automation capabilities. At the same time, there's a growing need for more nuanced agent training that focuses on critical thinking skills and empathy because nuances in sentiment and tone are not things that even the best voice translation tech can handle.

Nor is digitization a smooth process across Europe. According to a recent report by the GSMA, when it comes to the connectivity needed to enable customer support, Europe "continues to 'lag' behind other advanced regions such as North America, East Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council states where many operators are setting their sights on the next generation of networks."¹⁴ It seems that urgent policy reforms will be "required to drive a step-change in access to investment across the continent to keep it competitive globally."¹⁵

So, while digital infrastructure is essential for enabling seamless digital experiences, "unless key regulatory challenges that restrict investment capacity in the European sector are resolved, the increased adoption of these technologies in Europe will progress more slowly."¹⁶

Only 14% of U.S. companies deliver good CX. — Forrester



The Middle East: Finding the Balance Between Digital Innovation & Human Connection

Across the Middle East, hyper-personalized, culturally relevant interactions are being prioritized, with digital transformation a cornerstone of CX. “This year has been particularly pivotal. The region has witnessed rapid digitalization, with industries racing to adopt technologies like artificial intelligence, data analytics, and omnichannel platforms to deliver seamless and personalized experiences. Simultaneously, customer expectations have evolved, influenced by global standards and a growing appetite for hyper-personalized, culturally relevant interactions.”¹⁷

In effect, “Across industries, organizations are responding to an increasingly digital-first customer base while striving to maintain the human connection that resonates deeply with Middle Eastern consumers.”¹⁸ It seems that the ultimate challenge “lies in finding the right balance between digital innovation and human connection. Companies must ensure that technology enhances, rather than replaces, human-centric interactions — especially for high-stakes or relationship-driven touchpoints.”¹⁹

Africa: Revolutionizing Customer Engagement

According to Victor Songa Musiwa, Chairman of the CXPA Africa Council, “Traditionally, African markets have been characterized by a seller-centric approach, where businesses focused primarily on transactions rather than cultivating long-term customer relationships. However, this paradigm is rapidly shifting as companies recognize the importance of prioritizing customer satisfaction and loyalty. With growing competition and heightened consumer expectations, organizations are embracing a customer-centric mindset as a key differentiator in the marketplace.”²⁰

And while there have been many challenges, there are “immense opportunities for innovation and growth. The rise of digital technology has revolutionized the way businesses engage with their customers, enabling personalized interactions, seamless transactions, and real-time feedback mechanisms. Mobile penetration, in particular, has been a game-changer, providing companies with a direct channel to reach consumers across vast and diverse markets.”²¹ The demographic shift toward a youthful population with evolving preferences for all kinds of devices should drive momentum for continued improvement in the provision of quality experiences in the tech sector.

Latin America: Personalization & the Human Interface

Recently, HubSpot released the results of a survey, “The State of Customer Service in Latin America,” asking 1,000 end users and 1,000 business owners about the customer service they receive or provide. “The study conducted in Mexico, Colombia, Chile, and Spain... revealed that 74% of users would quit using a brand because of a bad customer experience.”²² The survey also found that “72% of the budget allocated to customer service teams has grown in the last two years, and 43% of companies are willing to invest in artificial intelligence tools to drive an improvement in the attention they provide to customers. In terms of plans to improve customer service, 60% of companies have created specific strategies focused on customer service, while 38% have increased customer service channels.”²³

In the end, it’s the human interface that matters. “Our study,” adds Hubspot, “reveals the gap between what people want — companies and brands to be more present, even with face-to-face service — and what companies offer: virtual service channels. The good news is that the perfect formula is possible between what users demand and what brands offer (speeding up service and offering personalized attention). In this sense, the use of technology is essential, but it is also essential to understand that technology is complementary to the activities performed by human beings.”²⁴

74% of users would quit using a brand because of a bad customer experience.

— HubSpot

Asia-Pacific: Exploring AI, from China to Singapore

In 2015, China embarked on a domestic industrial policy — “Made in China 2025” — to make higher-skilled, more valuable goods like sophisticated computer chips and electric vehicles. Even as the U.S. and Europe raised tariffs on these high-technology products, the Chinese pursued tech-related innovation initiatives. The continuing flood of exports from China has fueled increasing tensions in global trade.

As in the U.S., today the Asia-Pacific region confronts intriguing tech-related questions in customer support. In China, the release of DeepSeek has demonstrated the momentum behind investments in advanced technologies like AI and supercomputers. Consider that in 2025, more and more organizations “have held sessions to train workers to use DeepSeek... encouraging employees to come up with uses for DeepSeek in... customer service.”²⁵ Meanwhile, Alibaba is taking the lead in open-source AI. As of January 2025, “more than 290,000 customers were using its Qwen models, in various industries such as automotive, healthcare, education, and agriculture... The potential impact is huge, given China’s vast market and the growing acceptance of open-source AI solutions among state-owned enterprises and government agencies.”²⁶

At the same time, other parts of the Asia-Pacific aren’t so sure about adopting specific AI models. “Outside China, DeepSeek’s rise has worried regulators about censorship, security, and data handling. Government departments in Australia, South Korea, and Taiwan have told employees not to use DeepSeek’s services.”²⁷ Meanwhile, in Japan, SoftBank will spend \$3 billion a year to deploy OpenAI tech across its group companies, plugging in tools like ChatGPT Enterprise to employees while integrating “Cristal intelligence,” an advanced enterprise AI.²⁸ By helping to manage customer inquiries, such enterprise AI aims to free up human beings to exercise their empathy, creativity, and strategic thinking. Transformation will seek to uncover new value.²⁹

TAKEAWAYS

According to Morgan Stanley, the impact of tariffs will vary across countries, companies, and sub-sectors depending on different variables, including exposure to China, inventories, the ability to reduce costs, and the evolution of consumer sentiment.³⁰ Regardless, at a time of rapid transformation, it's essential that businesses be ready for potential new operating models. However, while the tech side is the catalyst for the change, "the business side has to be ready to receive the change."³¹

THE TP APPROACH

In light of fast-developing trends, TrendzOwl and TP propose the following key action items for tech companies and their Business Process service partners:

Strive for Process Excellence. TP's D.I.B.S. (Digital Integrated Business Services) comprises a range of integrated digital transformation solutions spanning the entire customer experience value chain. When confronting the specific challenges associated with the successful adoption of AI, TP offers end-to-end support, focusing on Systems Integration, Data Quality, Scalability, AI Bias, Model Performance, Human Oversight, Timelines, and ROI. The company encourages enterprises to better integrate back-office services with front-office operations to achieve a comprehensive "one office" service offering, enabling enhanced and more efficient customer experience management and an optimized sales approach.

Transform Digital Experiences by Focusing on Value. As one business leader told McKinsey, "The most important thing is to always focus on value for the business. If you are able to deliver the value the business needs, that gives you the space to innovate and attracts the necessary investment to change other aspects of the business."³² TP's Deputy Chief Client Officer William Fritcher offers an AI-related example. "Our focus here," he notes, "is to do what the client needs based on their customer experience journey. We offer a wide range of AI solutions where customers can determine how and to what extent they want to leverage them. Leveraging the power of the cloud, we can be flexible and nimble to their needs and stay ahead of the fast-moving changes that AI will continue to see as it evolves."³³

Put Human Beings at the Center of Strategy. In the "Age of AI," TP understands that customer journeys can be enhanced by using purpose-built LLM-powered workflows in combination with AI agents for hyper-personalized digital experiences and cost reduction. As such, the company is actively leveraging recent advances in generative AI to drive an enhanced experience where empathy meets technology to drive more efficient interactions. But in the end, human beings should remain at the center of a company's CX strategy. As McKinsey points out, "The right experience is not just a simple digital transaction that takes less than five seconds. It's more about the white-glove treatment, knowing the customer, the context of the transaction and the conversation, and presenting the right proposition at the right time."³⁴

Endnotes

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