

How AI is changing the communications buying brief

Infrastructure. Data. Governance.

New research reveals how AI is broadening the communications brief, bringing infrastructure, data and governance into decisions already shaped by employee productivity and customer experience.

84%

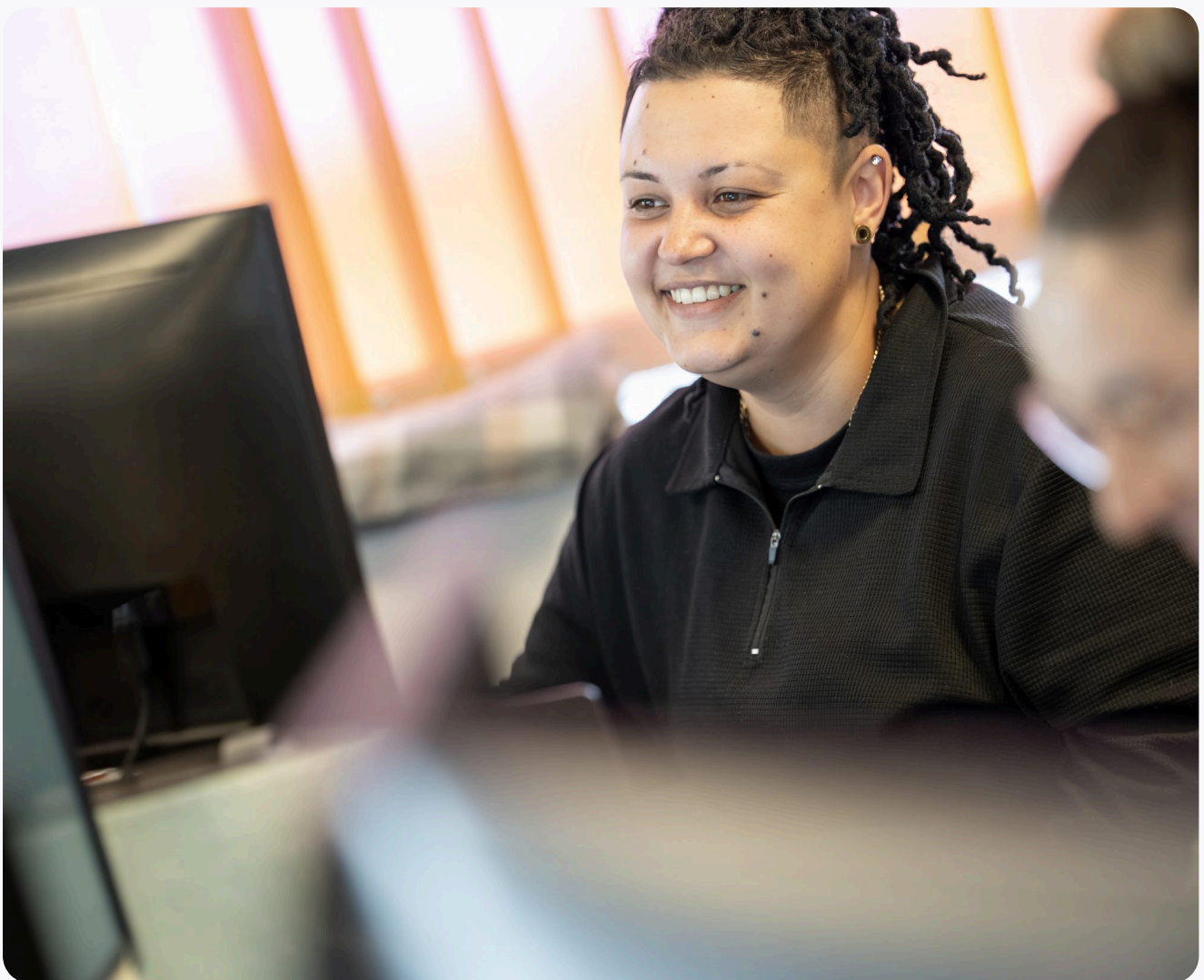
of UK CIOs and CTOs consider infrastructure location important when choosing an AI-enabled communications platform

91%

say data sovereignty has become a greater priority

As AI becomes more embedded in unified communications and the contact centre, organisations are looking beyond functionality to the environment needed to support it. Censuswide research commissioned by 8x8 found that **84% of UK CIOs and CTOs** consider infrastructure location important when choosing an AI-enabled communications platform, while **91% say data sovereignty** has become a greater priority.¹

Digital Space explores what is driving those decisions, where AI can deliver meaningful value and what businesses need to consider as its role grows.



THE RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

2,501

CIOs and CTOs surveyed

5

markets covered

501

respondents in the UK

AI is transforming business communications

AI is expanding what organisations can do with their communications technology, from helping employees work more efficiently to automating customer interactions. Performance, resilience, user experience and cost are fundamental, but the growing role of AI adds another layer to consider.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Where will it run?



DATA

Where will the data it uses be stored and processed?



ACCESS

What will it be able to access?



AUTONOMY

How much should it be allowed to do without human intervention?

The UK findings form part of a wider Censuwide survey commissioned by 8x8 of 2,501 CIOs and CTOs across five markets, including 501 respondents in the UK. Together, they show how decisions around infrastructure, data and governance are becoming more closely connected to the way businesses use communications technology.



Start with the problem, not the technology

91%

of customer service leaders are under pressure from executive leadership to implement AI.

Gartner, February 2026. Survey of 321 customer service and support leaders.²

With AI now high on the business and boardroom agenda, customer service leaders are being asked to turn interest into practical use. A Gartner report published in February 2026 found that 91% were under pressure from executive leadership to implement AI, with improving customer satisfaction, operational efficiency and self-service success among their leading priorities for the year.²

For Digital Space, the starting point is not AI itself but the outcome the organisation needs. AI has different strengths across unified communications and the contact centre, and the value it creates depends on the problem it is being used to solve.



In unified communications

Many of the most immediate benefits come from saving people time. Meetings can be transcribed and summarised, voicemails converted to text, responses drafted and follow-up actions captured automatically. The saving on any one task may be modest but repeated across hundreds or thousands of employees it becomes significant.



Within the contact centre

AI can handle routine enquiries, help customers get answers quickly including out of hours, and reduce pressure on frontline teams. It can also analyse large volumes of calls, emails and chats to identify patterns in customer demand, intent and sentiment that would be difficult and time consuming to find manually.

That gives the organisation something concrete against which to assess whether AI is the right solution, what level of investment is justified and what a worthwhile return would look like.

THAT MIGHT MEAN

● Reducing repetitive work

● Improving a customer journey

● Developing employee skills

● Addressing a capability gap

● Gaining more value from the information already held within customer interactions

In some cases, an existing technology, an integration or a change in process may achieve that outcome more effectively.

Where AI runs is not one size fits all

39%

of UK respondents say infrastructure location is the **top criterion** when choosing an AI-enabled communications platform.

Censuswide research commissioned by 8x8.¹

The importance attached to infrastructure location goes further than the headline Censuswide finding. For 39% of UK respondents, it is the top criterion when choosing an AI-enabled communications platform.

In practice, there is no single hosting model that will be right for every organisation, but AI makes the environment behind the service increasingly relevant to the experience it delivers and the way it is governed.



AI makes the environment behind the service increasingly relevant to the experience it delivers and the way it is governed.

Contact centres rely on the real-time flow of calls, messages and operational data. Teams may be responding to activity across several channels at once, which means the location of services and the speed at which information can be accessed can influence day-to-day operations as well as customer experience.

The right approach to data location will depend on the organisation's regulatory obligations and operating model. An organisation may have mandatory requirements around where information is stored or processed, while an international business may need services running across several markets alongside central visibility and management.

FROM THE OUTSET, PLATFORM AND INFRASTRUCTURE CHOICES SHOULD REFLECT



Where users are based



How the service will be used



Where data needs to sit



What governance applies

Governance has to match AI capabilities

As AI technology moves from assisting people to agents that are making decisions and taking action, the question of responsibility becomes more significant. Half of the UK CIOs and CTOs surveyed by Censuswide say the CIO is accountable when an AI agent makes an error in a customer interaction, while only 5% place that responsibility with Legal or Compliance.

WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE WHEN AN AI AGENT GETS IT WRONG?

50%

say the CIO is accountable



5%

place responsibility with Legal or Compliance



However, responsibility for an AI deployment is rarely confined to one function in practice. Technology, security, operations, marketing, customer experience and compliance can all have a legitimate role in deciding what AI can access, what it is permitted to do and how different outcomes should be handled.

The controls also need to reflect the capability of the system. A tool answering straightforward customer questions presents a different governance challenge from an AI agent connected to several business systems with permission to make decisions and trigger actions.

Greater autonomy therefore requires clearer permissions, safeguards and escalation routes, including when an interaction should pass to a person and how the organisation can trace what happened if an outcome is challenged later. The level of oversight needs to develop alongside the responsibility being handed to the technology so that **capability does not move ahead of visibility and control**.

GREATER AUTONOMY REQUIRES CLEARER



Permissions

What the AI can access and what it is permitted to do.



Safeguards

So capability does not move ahead of visibility and control.



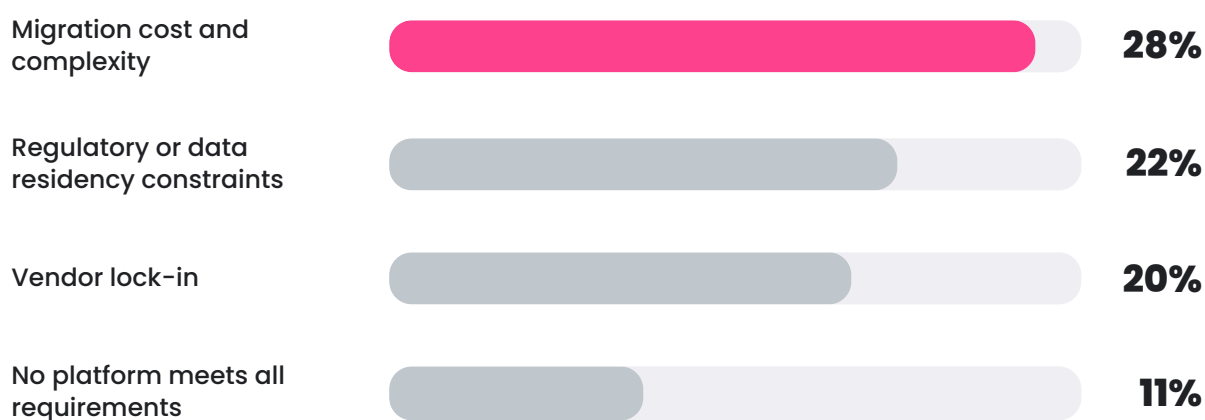
Escalation routes

When an interaction should pass to a person, and how to trace what happened.

Modernisation does not have to mean starting again

The UK respondent-base in the Censuswide research also provides useful insight into what can hold communications modernisation back. Migration cost and complexity is the biggest obstacle for 28% of respondents, followed by regulatory or data residency constraints at 22% and vendor lock-in at 20%. Only 11% say their main problem is that no platform can meet all their requirements.

BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO COMMUNICATIONS MODERNISATION, UK



Censuswide research commissioned by 8x8, UK respondents.¹

These findings could suggest that organisations need to simplify or replace their communications estate before introducing AI, when new capabilities can often be integrated alongside what is already working.

Targeted investment can then improve a customer interaction, automate a process or address a gap without replacing the wider estate.



For organisations concerned about the cost and complexity of migration, that can make AI adoption more achievable without turning it into a wholesale transformation programme.

The AI estate is wider than the approved stack

88%

of employees with access to enterprise AI also used personal AI tools for business tasks.

Gartner Global Labour Market Survey, Q1 2026. 12,004 employees and managers across 40 countries.³

AI use may already extend much further across an organisation than its formally approved platforms suggest. Employees can access AI tools directly and use them with company information, documents and day-to-day tasks, often flying under the radar of technology or security teams. Gartner's Global Labour Market Survey, published in May 2026 and based on 12,004 employees and managers across 40 countries, found that 88% of employees with access to enterprise AI also used personal AI tools for business tasks.³

Often described as shadow AI, and part of the wider shadow IT challenge, this raises questions about where company data is being used and who has visibility of it. As AI becomes easier to access, organisations need to understand which tools employees are using, what information they are sharing with them and whether those tools have access to wider company systems or data.

Clear policies can help employees understand which AI tools they can use, what company or customer information can be shared and where additional safeguards are needed. **Security and governance therefore need to extend beyond approved AI platforms to the wider use of AI across the business.**



Turning AI into lasting value

There is no doubt that AI is opening up exciting new possibilities in business communications, but its value depends on where it can make a genuine, measurable difference.

As organisations move beyond early experimentation, AI needs to fit the way the business works, the experience it wants to create for employees and customers, and the technology already in place. The right answer will not always be a new platform or a large-scale modernisation. A more considered approach is to introduce AI where there is a clear purpose and at a pace that makes sense for the business.

What has become clear is that decisions around infrastructure, governance and modernisation are best made as part of that process, rather than addressed once the technology is already in use.

CHECKLIST

Five questions to consider when introducing AI

1

What do you want to improve?

Start with the outcome, not the technology.

2

What is already working?

Build on what you have where it still makes sense.

3

Where will the AI and data sit?

Factor in users, performance, sovereignty and regulation.

4

What should the AI be allowed to do?

Set clear limits, permissions and escalation points.

5

Do you know how AI is already being used?

Be aware of shadow AI. Set clear policies and establish guardrails.

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Prezzo

Call data showed that unanswered calls were creating missed booking opportunities for Prezzo. Digital Space introduced an AI voice solution through a 10-site proof of concept, integrating it with Prezzo's existing reservation systems before wider rollout.

The solution now delivers a 100% call answer rate across all sites, significant revenue recovery and reduced reliance on restaurant teams to manage inbound calls. Automating bookings has given restaurant teams more time to focus on greeting and serving customers when they are in the restaurant, improving the customer experience across the board.

100%

call answer rate across all sites

10 sites

in the proof of concept, integrated with existing reservation systems

SPEAK TO AN EXPERT

Put AI to work where it makes a measurable difference

Whether you're exploring AI in unified communications or the contact centre, or need a clearer view of where your data sits and who controls it, Digital Space can help you start with the outcome and build on what is already working.

WEB

digitalspace.co.uk/contact

EMAIL

hello@digitalspace.co.uk

CALL

0333 220 0222

SOURCES

- 1 Censuswide research commissioned by 8x8. Survey of 2,501 CIOs and CTOs across five markets, including 501 respondents in the UK.
- 2 Gartner, "Gartner Survey Finds 91% of Customer Service Leaders Under Pressure to Implement AI in 2026", 18 February 2026. Based on an October 2025 survey of 321 customer service and support leaders. gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2026-02-18-gartner-survey-finds-ninety-one-percent-of-customer-service-leaders-under-pressure-to-implement-ai-in-2026
- 3 Gartner, "Gartner Predicts by 2027, 50% of Enterprises Without a People-Centric AI Strategy Will Lose Their Top AI Talent", 13 May 2026. Gartner Global Labour Market Survey, Q1 2026, based on 12,004 employees and managers across 40 countries. gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2026-05-13-gartner-predicts-by-2027-50-percent-of-enterprises-without-a-people-centric-ai-strategy-will-lose-their-top-ai-talent