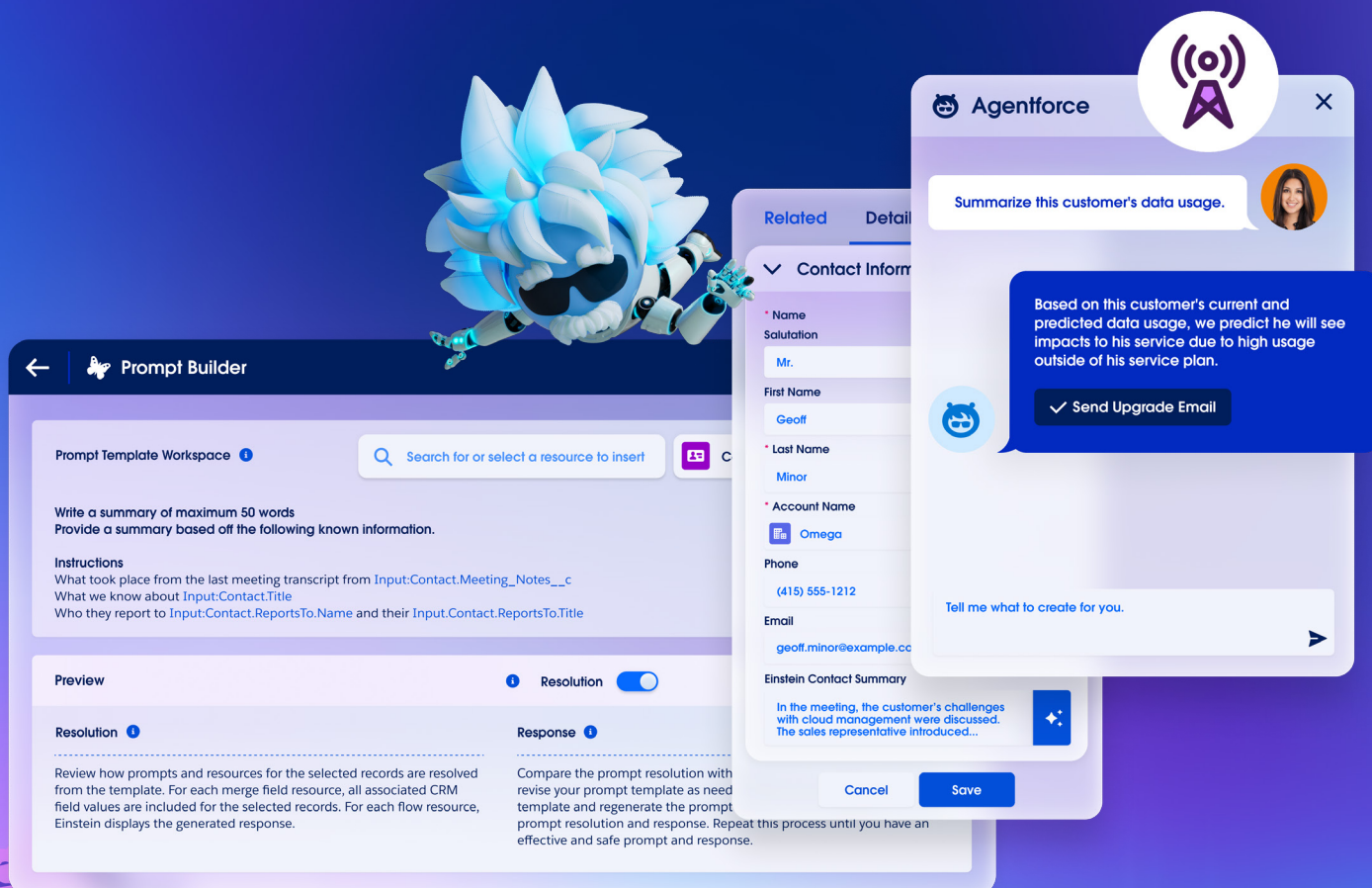


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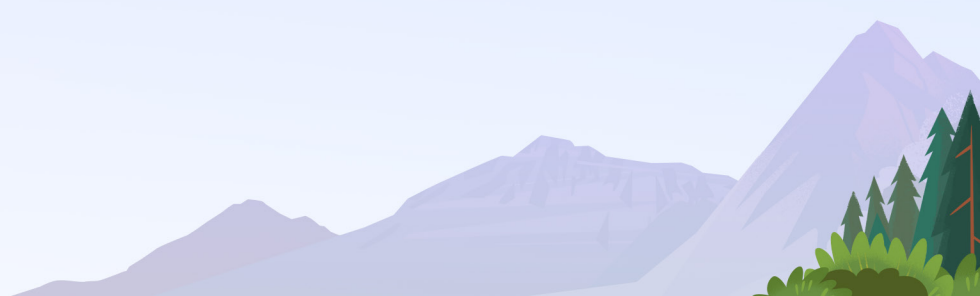
The Telecommunications Industry's AI Evolution: A Guide to AI Agents

Agents represent a significant step forward in AI technology and have the ability to revolutionize telecom.



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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is advancing at an unprecedented pace, reshaping business worldwide, and that's especially true in the telecommunications industry. Telecom is well into its journey of using AI to take on growing demand for faster, more efficient customer service, optimized sales processes, and streamlined operations. That journey is now heading in a new, revolutionary direction. In ways that predictive or generative AI could only scratch the surface, assistive and autonomous agents are being plugged in to solve these challenges. Agents take generative AI to the next level with their ability to understand context and derive insights. They then have the ability to take action or assist employees, not only freeing up time for employees but also making your teams more effective. Agents are capable of performing independent tasks without constant human input. Agents can proactively analyze data, make decisions, and execute entire workflows, freeing up your reps for higher-value tasks. It's the next generation of AI-driven transformation.

What does this mean for the telecom industry? The No. 1 goal for telecom companies is improving operational efficiency driven by declining margins. Most of the industry is already in the midst of using AI to achieve that goal:



of communications providers use AI to improve their customer service.



of communications providers believe unified data and AI will reduce costs.



of communications providers use AI to improve the use of sales reps' time.



The bulk of the telecom industry has already invested in building their value chains and processes when it comes to integrating their data to power an AI strategy. Still, employees are overwhelmed and running against a fixed capacity to handle the increasing complexity of customer demands and the high volume of interactions; 41% of time is lost to low-value and repetitive tasks. Agents can work within that context to automate those same tasks and processes, building upon the existing AI investments. Nearly half of industry decision makers in AI and data management [believe this will be the case](#). It's clear that telecoms see the potential, but they may struggle to achieve their AI goals with a DIY mindset by building their own platforms.

Agents are uniquely suited to address these challenges by handling those routine tasks, resolving common inquiries, and delivering proactive support. Agents can provide 24/7, data-driven, and personalized service, automating customer and sales interactions at scale. For communications service providers, this level of autonomy not only reduces operational costs and improves customer satisfaction, it also has a direct impact on revenue generation. By performing these tasks independently, agents streamline operations, reduce delays, and enhance overall productivity.

Understanding Agents

First, it's critical to understand exactly what an agent is and how that technology differs from predictive or generative AI. Agents are a type of AI system that can understand and respond to customer inquiries either autonomously without human intervention or to assist humans. They are created using an agent builder, like [Agentforce](#), and rely on machine learning and natural language processing (NLP) to handle a wide range of tasks.

These intelligent agents can perform anything from answering simple questions to resolving complex issues – even multi-tasking. Most importantly, agents can continuously improve their own performance through self-learning and use feedback from humans. This is distinct from traditional AI, which requires human input for specific tasks. Agents can autonomously perform tasks, make decisions, and provide personalized solutions. Agents are proactive, able to anticipate customer needs, resolve issues, and streamline workflows without intervention.

Setting up an agent is simple. Agents are configured through a set of instructions (written in natural language) that tell them what they can and can't do. Those instructions are tied to a set of actions they can take within a given system, whether that's your CRM, billing system, etc. Those actions can be really simple like reversing a late fee, or complex and involve a series of steps, like scheduling a repair that requires a specific technician skill set.

AI agents operate through four key steps:

Perception and data collection: Agents start by pulling data from both internal and external sources. This includes internal data such as customer interactions, transaction histories, and social media, in addition to relevant information from external data sources and databases. This is crucial for understanding the context and nuances of customer queries. Agents can process data in real time, providing them with the most up-to-date information to handle inquiries effectively.

Decision making: Using sophisticated machine learning models, agents analyze the collected data to identify patterns and make decisions. For example, they can determine the most appropriate response to a customer query based on past interactions and the current context. This decision-making process is enhanced by the agent's ability to learn from previous experiences and refine its responses over time.

Action execution: Once a decision is made, agents can execute the required action. This could involve answering a customer query, processing a request, or escalating a complex issue to a human agent. The execution is designed to be seamless and efficient, ensuring that customers receive timely and accurate responses.

Learning and adaptation: Agents continuously learn from each interaction, refining their algorithms to improve accuracy and effectiveness. They also learn and enhance future interactions from feedback received from humans. This continuous learning capability ensures that AI agents remain effective and relevant, even as customer expectations and business environments change.

By combining these capabilities, agents can handle a wide range of tasks autonomously, such as making product recommendations, troubleshooting problems, and engaging in follow-up interactions.

Priorities for Agents in the Telecommunications Industry

Increasing Revenue, Reducing Churn

Agents can address the unique needs of telecommunications providers because they are built to understand and leverage meta-data to pivot from insight to action. Agents provide digital labor to perform entire workflows autonomously, improving operational margins. The automation of routine tasks also bolsters efficiency and reduces costs by eliminating manual steps, accelerating time to resolution and the sales cycle, reducing errors, and enhancing the overall customer experience. Agents can be [built for just about any workflow](#). But common examples particularly suited to the needs of the communications industry include:

Customer Service

Agents have the ability to resolve billing inquiries, troubleshoot technical issues, and provide order status updates 24/7. They operate independently, analyzing customer account details, usage patterns, and historical interactions to identify issues and provide proactive solutions. For instance, an agent can detect a recurring billing anomaly, validate against account data, and resolve it without human involvement – all while keeping the customer informed through automated notifications. Similarly, when troubleshooting technical issues, agents can autonomously diagnose faults and apply fixes, such as remotely resetting a device, only escalating complicated issues. This ensures faster resolution times and reduces pressure on human support teams.

Field Service

Agents are able to automate scheduling and route tasks to make sure the right technicians are assigned to the right jobs at the right time. Agents can analyze internal data such as technician availability, location, and skill set to optimize schedules to minimize travel time and make sure the job is completed efficiently and without additional truck rolls. Agents can also detect potential delays, such as scheduling conflicts, and communicate updates to both technicians and customers. This takes traditional AI, which has the ability to automate many field-service processes, to the next level by allowing agents to take action without handing that step over to a human. Whether it's installing a new service or making a repair, customers can schedule the entire experience autonomously with an agent.

On site, agents can provide step-by-step troubleshooting guides, access inventory systems to ensure necessary parts and tools are available, and generate service reports automatically. This helps technicians deliver better and faster service that improves customer satisfaction. Agents can also recommend personalized offers to help service technicians close more sales before leaving a customer's home or business.

Marketing

Agents have the ability to run highly targeted campaigns, all while streamlining processes by automating manual tasks. For example, agents can segment customers based on usage patterns, demographics, or purchase history and initiate tailored marketing campaigns without manual input. Again, building off traditional AI tasks of optimizing campaigns by taking action based on performance analytics. Then, agents act as digital partners, analyzing data to recommend targeted solutions and automating steps like quote generation and service activation – all tailored to each customer's specific needs.

Sales

Agents can assist in the sales process by prospecting accounts on behalf of a seller and handing off leads that are ready to buy. They have the ability to detect usage patterns and predict potential overages, prompting an upgrade offer and producing an upsell opportunity. They are able to generate accurate quotes for multiple locations based on the customer's needs, complete with serviceability checks.

Agents can also act as sales coaches, analyzing performance data such as conversation rates, pipeline progress, and account activity, to provide actionable insights to teams. They proactively identify opportunities for improvement and suggest tailored strategies to address gaps and automate routine follow-up tasks such as notifying sellers of high-priority leads. This all empowers sales teams to focus on building relationships, closing deals, and achieving targets more effectively.



Potential Considerations to Adoption

Centralizing disparate data sources onto a unified system such as [Data Cloud](#) is critical. Without integrated data, agents may lack access to the necessary context needed for proactive decision-making. Agents thrive on unified, real-time datasets – customer profiles, service histories, and operational metrics, for example – to enable richer, more contextual and actionable interactions. Data Cloud can access existing data management platforms and data lakes using its “zero copy” capability to achieve seamless integration. For example, a sales agent can automatically cross-reference product availability with a customer’s address or billing status to offer the most suitable service option in real time. Similarly, customer service agents can use network data to deliver faster, more personalized troubleshooting and resolutions. Seamless data integration is the backbone of agent performance.

There are several factors to consider when implementing agents. Telecom companies must first ensure there’s a solid operational foundation to maximize the potential of an agent-driven workflow. Telecom companies should access their technological infrastructure to ensure it supports AI integration and scalability. Bottom line, the first step to building a digital workforce is integrating systems and data first. Then, a phased approach with well-defined use cases – such as Salesforce’s [purpose-built, out-of-the-box agents for sales and service](#) – to lay the groundwork for broader implementation.

Building trust is also key for successful adoption. There must be transparency in your organization’s use of agents and application among not only internal teams but also with customers. Trust in agents grows when they operate transparently and within defined guardrails, ensuring secure and appropriate actions.

Organizational buy-in can also be achieved through change management. With agents handling basic tasks, employees must be upskilled to tackle complex cases and strategic work. Companies also should invest in or upskill employees in agent management to optimize its performance and processes and ensure guardrails are being followed.



Embracing the Future with AI Agents

Agents represent the next frontier of automation, efficiency, and innovation in the telecommunications industry. By taking predictive and generative AI to the next level by autonomously executing workflows, delivering hyper-personalized customer experiences, agents are transforming how providers operate in an increasingly digital and competitive landscape. The role of agents will only deepen – moving beyond basic task automation to more sophisticated capabilities to serve as proactive, intelligent partners that anticipate customer needs, minimize churn, and unlock new business opportunities.

Salesforce's trusted and deeply integrated agents provide telecom providers with tailored, scalable solutions that build upon existing infrastructure and data investments while offering the security and governance required for the increasingly complex needs of the industry. As organizations continue to innovate, adopting agents will be critical to remaining agile, efficient, and responsive to customer expectations. With [Agentforce](#), Salesforce brings autonomous AI agents, unified data from any source, and Customer 360 apps together on one integrated platform to help telecom companies connect with customers in a whole new way. Salesforce is democratizing agents so organizations of any size can embrace a workforce without limits by building and customizing agents fast to work in every customer and employee experience to transform your business.

Take the first step for success through the power of [Agentforce](#) by getting your telecommunications organization's data in order with this comprehensive playbook.

[Get the playbook](#)





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