# Bridging the CX Divide

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Introduction

Why bridges? Connection.
A bridge connects places, people,
ideas, and much more.

As the world continues to connect, innovate, and grow, the need for bridges, figuratively speaking, has never been more critical. As needs grow, so do opportunities, and capitalizing on those opportunities separates the successful from those who get left behind.

The need for bridges is paramount in the CX world as companies communicate, or attempt to communicate, with their customers. However, there is a divide separating customer expectations from business reality. This gap comprises a shortage of smart self-service options, a lack of personalization, or frustrating digital journeys that lead to negative interactions.

NICE's "2022 Digital-First Customer Experience Report" is based on a survey of 1,000 consumers and 320 business and contact center leaders and asked them about digital-first customer service. The response shows that the existing CX bridges are not meeting customer expectations, and updates need to be made to build greater brand loyalty and provide an exceptional and seamless customer experience.

This eBook is designed to help you do that using proven solutions from NICE CXone. That way, you can build stronger bridges and make better connections with your customers.

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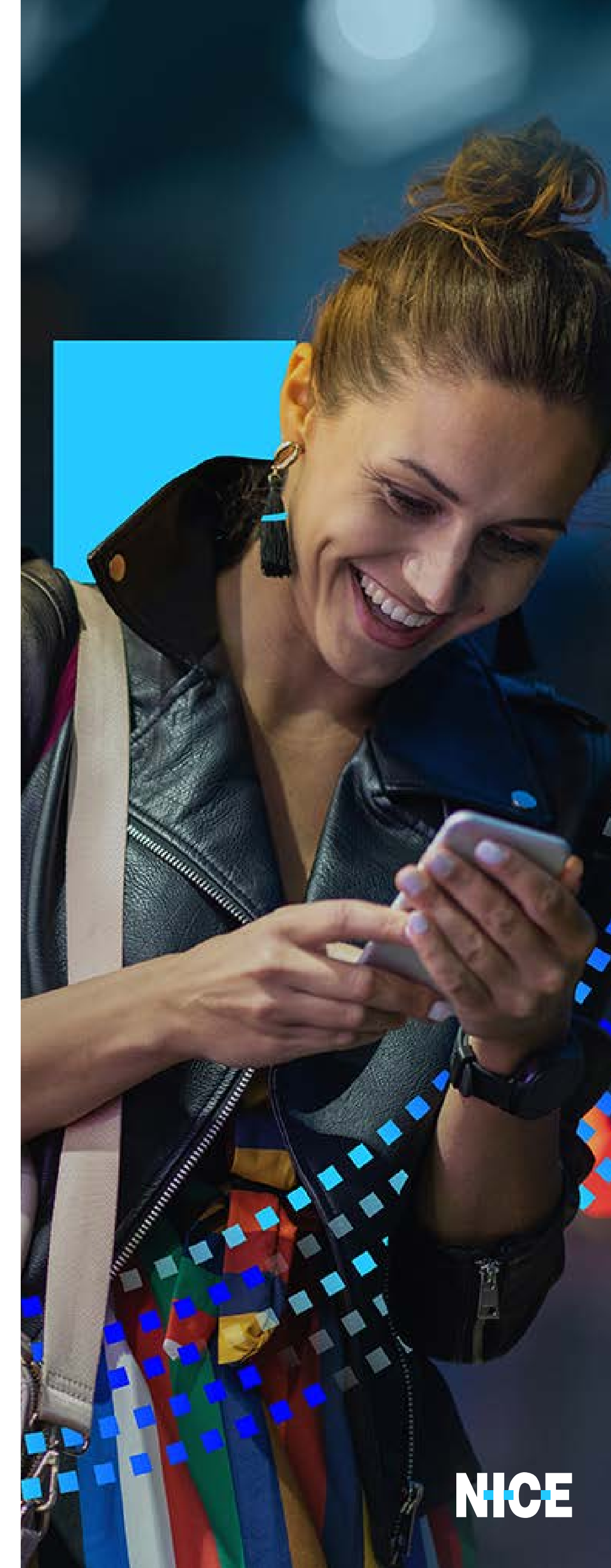
What divide needs to be bridged?

There are five key areas from the report where consumer expectation and business reality don't match, including[1]:

Self-service
81% of customers want better self-service, yet companies believe that number is only 60%.

Brand loyalty
57% of consumers will abandon a brand after one to two negative CX interactions, but only 34% of businesses believe that's true.

Smarter offerings
36% of consumers want more intelligent self-service, but only 11% of businesses are prioritizing it.

Options
81% of consumers expect more self-service options, but only 60% of businesses think consumers want additional self-service.

Customer experiences
99% of customers report experiencing frustration when interacting with customer service agents, and 95% of consumers admitted that a negative interaction with customer service led to abandoning a brand.

Customer service is a prime example of "a two-way street." Creating an ideal customer experience will, in perfect

unison, empower agents, reduce costs, and build brand loyalty externally and internally. Satisfied customers stay customers. Customers who are happy bring their friends. The more friends that come means more revenue. More revenue means happy agents.

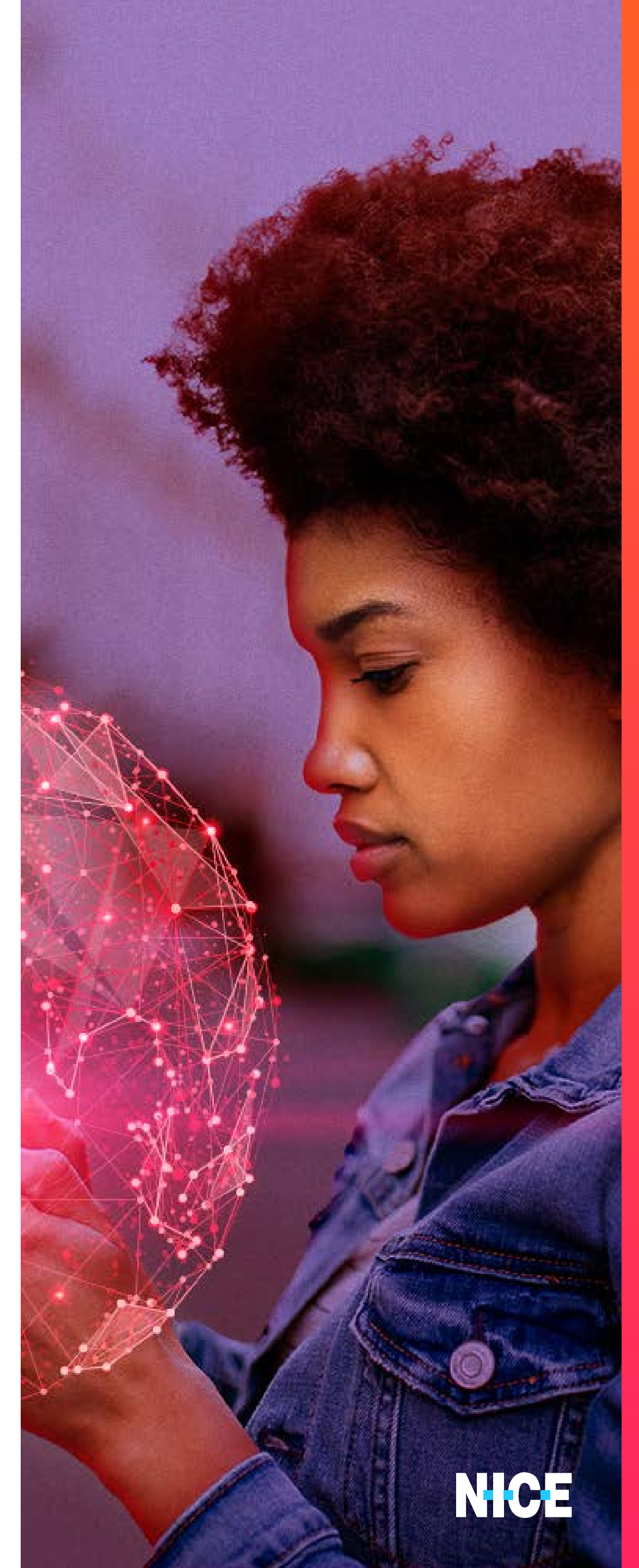Happy agents represent less turnover. Less turnover means reduced costs for your contact center.

Building the CX bridge spanning the digital divide is the first step for companies towards making customer expectations a reality. There are three key building blocks to make this happen:

• **Smart self-service**
• **Artificial intelligence (AI)**
• **Knowledge management**

1 NICE. (2022, May). 2022 Digital-First Customer Experience Report.

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Smart self-service that delivers

Self-service is not a new idea. Online bill pay, appointment scheduling, and many more flood the digital sphere. These online service tools are essential to providing exceptional CX interactions. But just because you have self-service tools doesn't mean they are smart.

In fact, 34% of consumers requested smart self-service that can handle more complex issues. And 46% of consumers go to Google as the first step for every customer service issue[2]. Smart self-service is a proactive approach to meeting customers on page one of Google search results.

Smart self-service should:
• Appear in channels and locations where consumers are looking.
• Understand where the customer is coming from and recommend the next steps.
• Provide context on why the suggested answer is the best fit.
• Proactively suggest the ideal path to a resolution.

Traditional self-service models are created using a narrative approach, meaning contact centers guess which phrases customers might use to express intentions.

The narrative approach is reactive, time-consuming, and inaccurate.

The result leads to poor outcomes and decreased customer satisfaction. Expenses increase from using outside resources and management consultants to improve containment.

Smart self-service is proactive, time-saving, and precise. This can be accomplished by using knowledge and data learning AI. Contact centers benefit from this level of service in several ways:
• Increased first-contact resolution
• 24/7 convenience
• Increased self-service containment
• Decrease in cost
• Tailored self-service based on contact center needs

NICE CX solutions, like Enlighten XO, uses knowledge and data learning AI to discover customer intents from human conversations. It uncovers thousands of training phrases that pinpoint each customer's needs at every touchpoint. This data-driven approach means more precision, new insights, and prescriptions for the best self-service opportunities.

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[2] NICE. (2022, May). 2022 Digital-First Customer Experience Report.

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Smart self-service that delivers

AI-enhanced self-service is a crucial building block in the CX bridge and in forming consumer opinion. Consumers who contact support more frequently are even more likely to cite the importance of DIY digital channels. In fact, 95% of companies report growth in overall self-service requests over the last year, with projections that the number will continue to climb[3].

Smart self-service serves as the vehicle that drives consumers to the solutions and is also the GPS, equipped with the knowledge and skills to avoid slowdowns or redirect when the current path is unlikely to lead to success. Without smart self-service options, customers might get lost and frustrated along their digital journey.

The need for smarter, more personalized self-service is apparent, and AI is the only way to build a CX bridge that will endure increased volume and complexity within customer service.

[3]   NICE. (2022, May). 2022 Digital-First Customer Experience Report.

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The rise of the AI machine

"I'm sorry, I didn't understand. Could you repeat that?"

This is an all-too-common phrase that consumers hear from an automated voice. While AI has come a long way and now lives up to the intelligence part of its name, not all systems are created equal. Tools like Enlighten AI are the service that never sleeps, doesn't need breaks, and can handle request volume on an epic scale.

Another AI tool is CXone SmartAssist which enables your customers to communicate naturally, whether by voice or chat, to resolve support issues or ask questions. SmartAssist responds quickly and carries out consumer tasks by delivering relevant personalized information efficiently. This level of AI accelerates resolutions, providing customers with answers quickly and easily.

AI makes self-service more intelligent in three ways[4]:

• Smarter routing
• Cross-channel connections
• Real-time agent coaching

Smarter routing

Do you know where customer queries are coming from? Or if they are even happening? By leveraging AI, you meet customers at the start of the digital journey, not the end. More intelligent interaction routing looks up the customer's communication style and experience preferences and identifies the skilled agent with the best-predicted performance for the customer, then directs the customer to the agent, improving their experience and business outcome.

Understanding how to convert interactions into solutions or when and where customers disconnect from their digital journey allows for greater connection to customer expectations for seamless CX experiences every time.

Cross-channel connections

Research conducted by "The Contact Center Executive's Agenda[5]" states that one out of two contact centers use at least nine channels to serve customers. If a customer needs to communicate across multiple channels, (e.g. if they start with a voice call and then want to switch to text or have details emailed after a call) the customer's intent and interaction details should transfer seamlessly across channels without requiring

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[4] NICE. (2022). Artificial Intelligence: Driving the Future of CX.

[5] Aberdeen. (2022, June). Three Steps to Use AI to Foster a Customer-Centric, Competitive Organization.

The rise of the AI machine

the customer to repeat information or questions when switching to a new channel.

AI can also accurately determine intent based on customer questions making chatbots more effective. When a digital self-service channel is unlikely to work, AI can send the customer to an agent with all information up to that point, improving the speed and quality of customer resolutions.

Real-time agent coaching

AI allows agents to receive in-the-moment coaching with embedded desktop tips based on phrases spoken or omitted, customer satisfaction metrics, and AI-driven soft-skill behaviors. Real-time interaction cues help agents improve customer satisfaction during an interaction. It alters their approach and reinforces the skills they learned in coaching sessions.

AI doesn't only improve customer experiences; agents see a 25% improvement in job satisfaction when working with an AI-powered system. Productivity also dramatically increases with a 50% jump in operational efficiency[6].

Smart self-service powered by AI is the best way to surprise and delight customers. Together, tools like Enlighten AI and CXone SmartAssist help build a much stronger CX bridge. They also quickly improve brand loyalty by meeting and exceeding customer expectations every time.

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[6] NICE. (2022). Artificial Intelligence: Driving the Future of CX.

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Knowledge powers the AI-driven CX machine

What fuel does this high-powered, terminator-like innovative self-service platform run on? Knowledge.

But not just any old bits of knowledge. A specific set of knowledge parameters that have been created and placed in an accessible framework. In the contact center world, it is called Knowledge Management (KM).

Smart knowledge management begins at the customer's first point of need and makes the right answers quick and easy to find. NICE CXone Expert does just that by unifying the content your customers need into one self-service experience extended to agents and any preferred channel, on any device, at any time, and in any language. Building smart self-service options is a huge customer pain point, 36% want more efficient and intelligent service[7].

Within this platform, a robust KM solution offers multiple features and capabilities that help effectively create, capture, distribute, and share organizational knowledge. This provides the customer with:
• 24/7 support translated into all the languages your customers use

•Optimized content which supports findability across all channels, including web search

• Improved containment of lower-cost self-service, limiting the number of interactions that escalate to agents

• Personalized results specific to customer or agent profiles

• Proactively guiding customers and agents to organization-approved content, so they don't find unclear or misleading information elsewhere

While your customers get the instant gratification they want, your contact center reaps the benefits. CXone Expert can reduce costs through ticket deflection, boost self-service success rates, and improve first-contact resolution and average handling time.
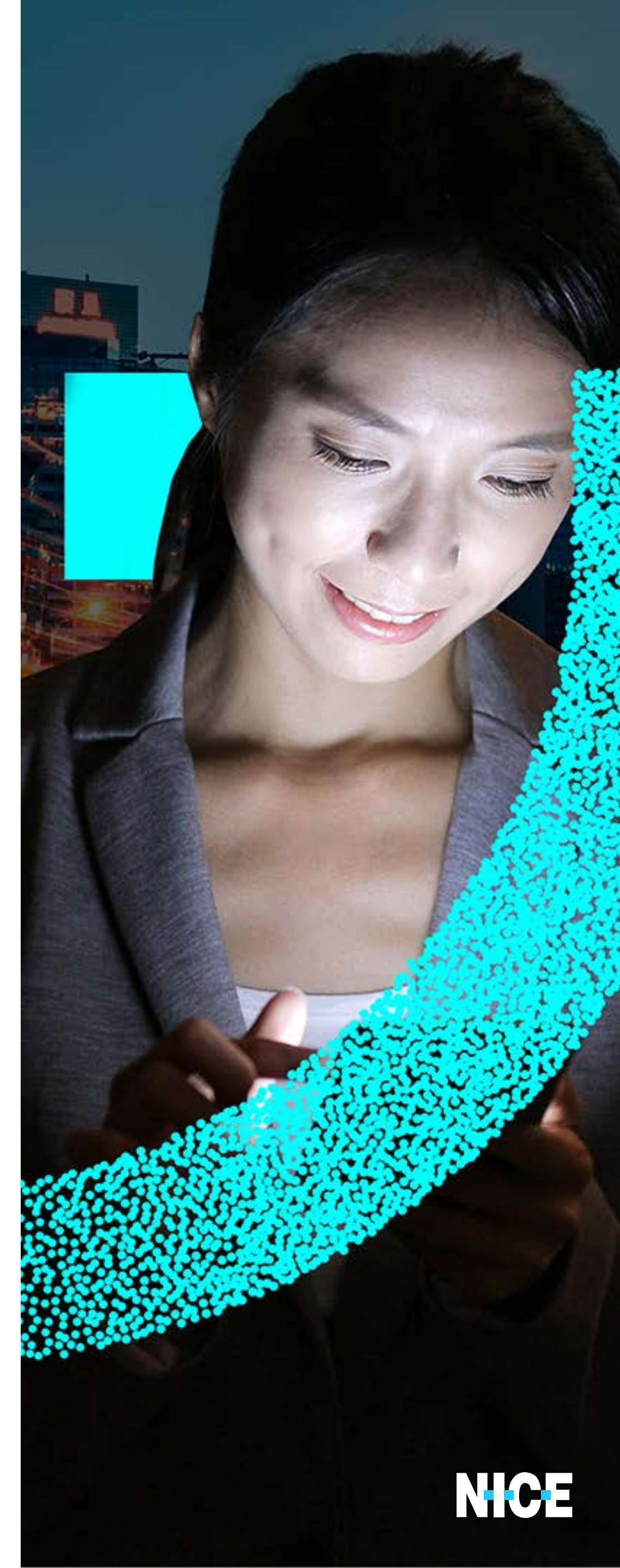
[7] NICE. (2022, May). 2022 Digital-First Customer Experience Report.

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Conclusion

Consumers demand excellent customer service, and as the "2022 Digital-First Customer Experience Report" shows, CX impacts brand opinion and loyalty significantly. Building a CX bridge that can surprise, and delight customers is not just a good idea, it is vital. There is no magic formula or wand that grants perfect contact center execution. There are only bridges that connect customers with businesses, and if the CX bridge is updated and well maintained, there will be a strong relationship and connection between them.

That connection builds greater loyalty, increased revenue, and happy, delighted customers with expectations exceeded in every interaction. All thanks to your AI-powered smart self-service CX bridge.
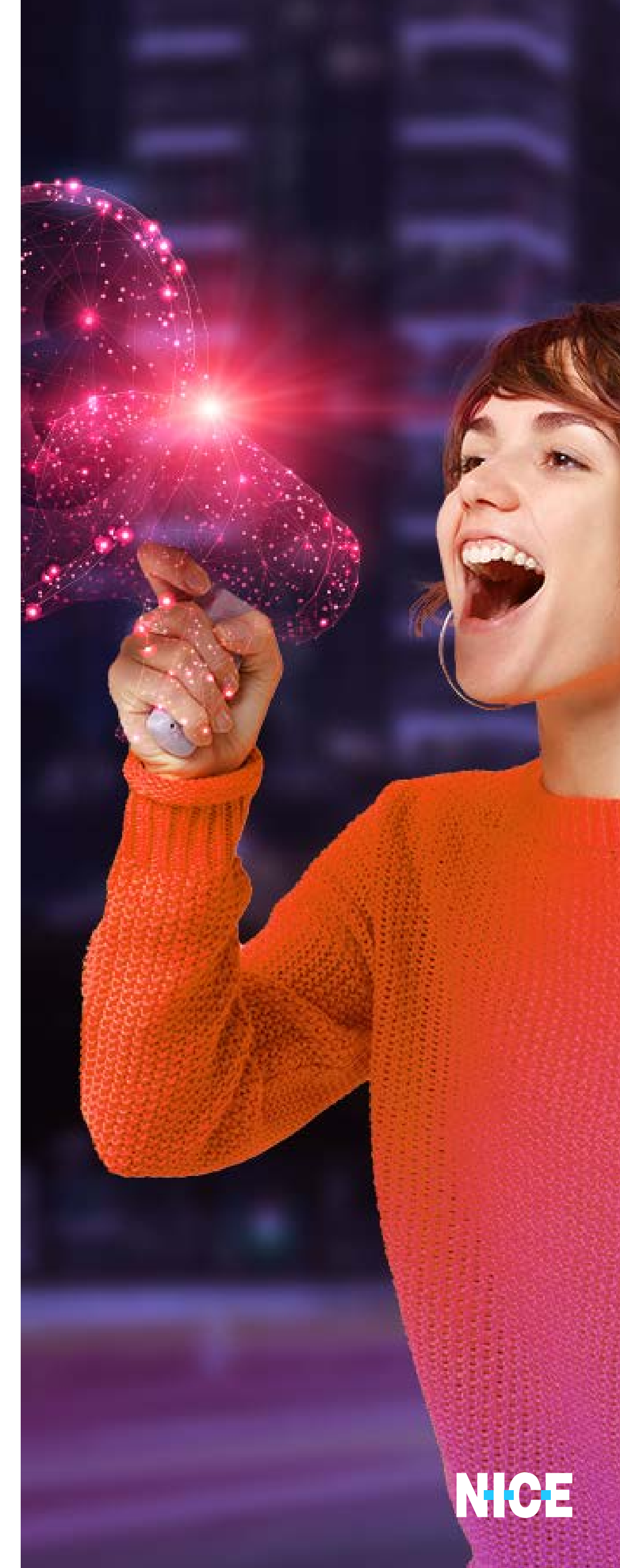
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About NICE

With NICE (Nasdaq: NICE), it's never been easier for organizations of all sizes around the globe to create extraordinary customer experiences while meeting key business metrics. Featuring the world's #1 cloud native customer experience platform, CXone, NICE is a worldwide leader in AI-powered self-service and agent-assisted CX software for the contact center – and beyond. Over 25,000 organizations in more than 150 countries, including over 85 of the Fortune 100 companies, partner with NICE to transform - and elevate - every customer interaction.

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