

Three ways AI will reshape HR by 2028



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Three years from now, we'll look back on 2025 as the breakthrough year for employee service—the year that forward-thinking organizations began to build better employee experiences.

Today's HR leaders are already navigating this transformation, adapting to new employee norms and behaviors in a workplace—and a world—increasingly powered by artificial intelligence (AI).

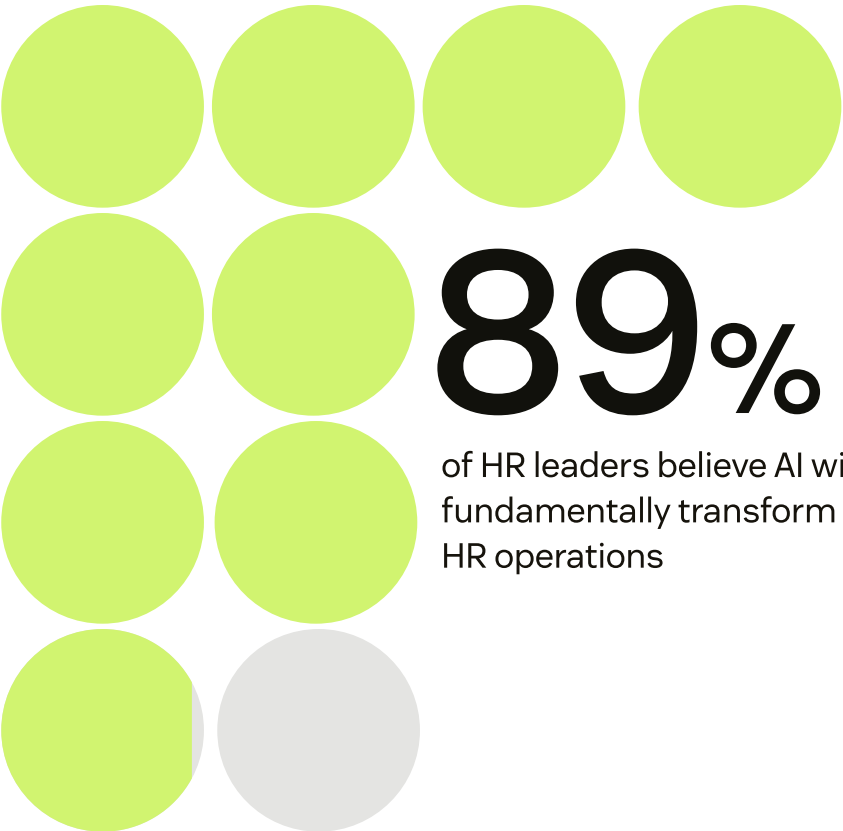
To better understand the changes ahead, we asked 1,400 employees and HR leaders about their experiences and expectations at work. What they shared has painted a vision for what employee service will look like over the next three years.

In particular, our research captured the top needs of employees: round-the-clock support; feeling seen as an individual; and faster, proactive service. And while these desires aren't new, **the way HR leaders plan to meet employee needs is changing.**

According to our research, nearly all HR leaders believe that AI will completely reshape how employees and HR interact by 2028. These leaders expect AI to be infused into every employee touchpoint and interaction—helping to autonomously answer questions, guide employees to self-service options, and even anticipate issues before they arise.

To prepare for a new way of operating, future-oriented HR leaders are taking action—starting to identify the changemakers in their organizations and develop their team's skills for an AI-powered workplace.

The future of employee service is evolving and the next three years will be consequential for HR leaders. But you're not in it alone. Armed with the key insights we've gathered, you have the know-how to reshape your employee service strategy and effectively adapt your HR operations to the new AI-powered workplace in the years ahead.



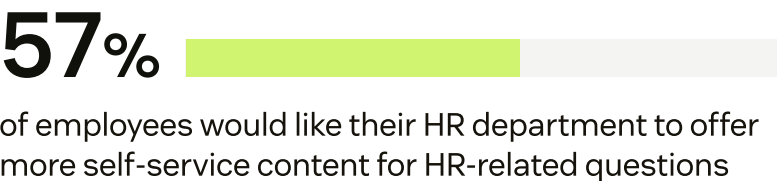
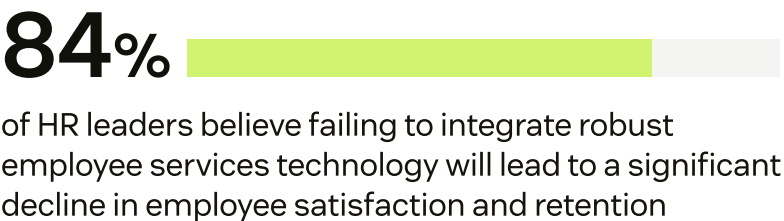
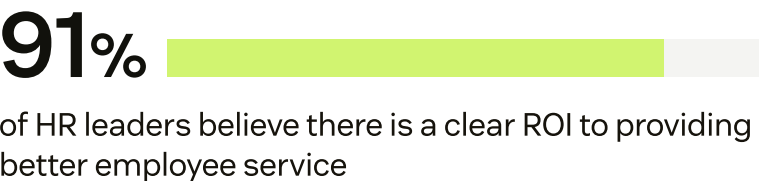
Zendesk research methodology

We surveyed 600 U.S. HR leaders and 800 U.S. employees about the future of employee service.

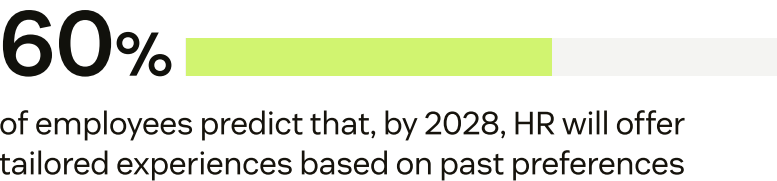
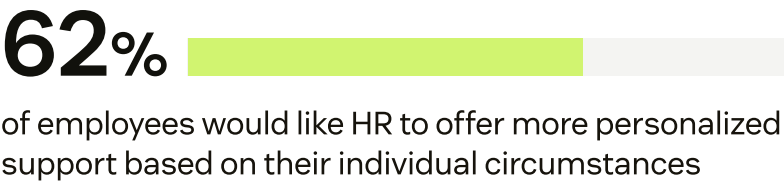
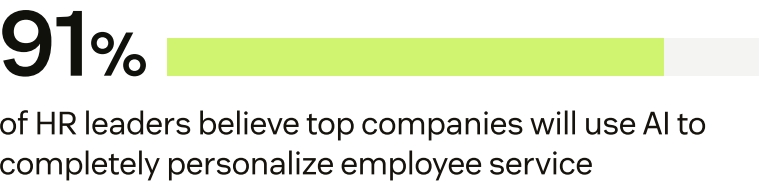
What is the future of employee service?

Here's a peek at what employee service could look like in 2028, according to our research:

1 AI meets employees' demands for instant, 24/7 service



2 AI earns employees' trust with personalized support



3 AI-powered proactive support anticipates employees' needs

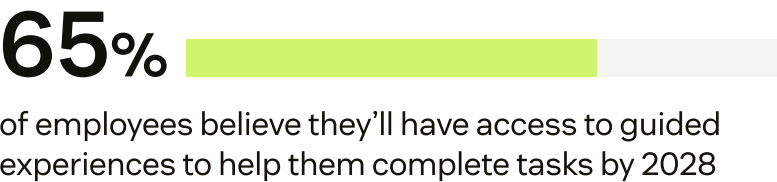
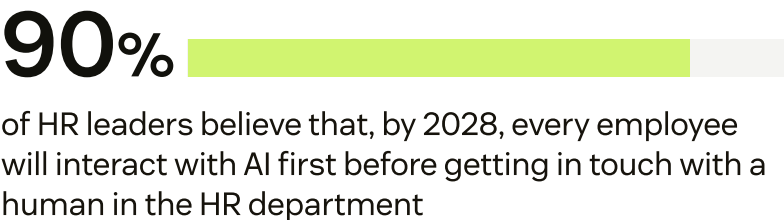
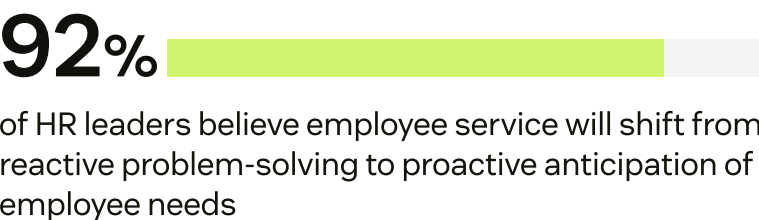


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1. AI meets employees' demands for instant, 24/7 service

Whether it's navigating a new job, a new system, or a new manager, employees come to HR with a wide variety of questions. Sometimes, the answers to those questions aren't cut and dry; sometimes, they're not best handled by HR. But how are employees to know?

Think about it from the lens of a new employee. They're having trouble logging into a system for the first time. Where do they turn to for help?

I can't log in. What now?

How do I contact IT?

Should I ask my contact in HR?

How fast can I get an answer?

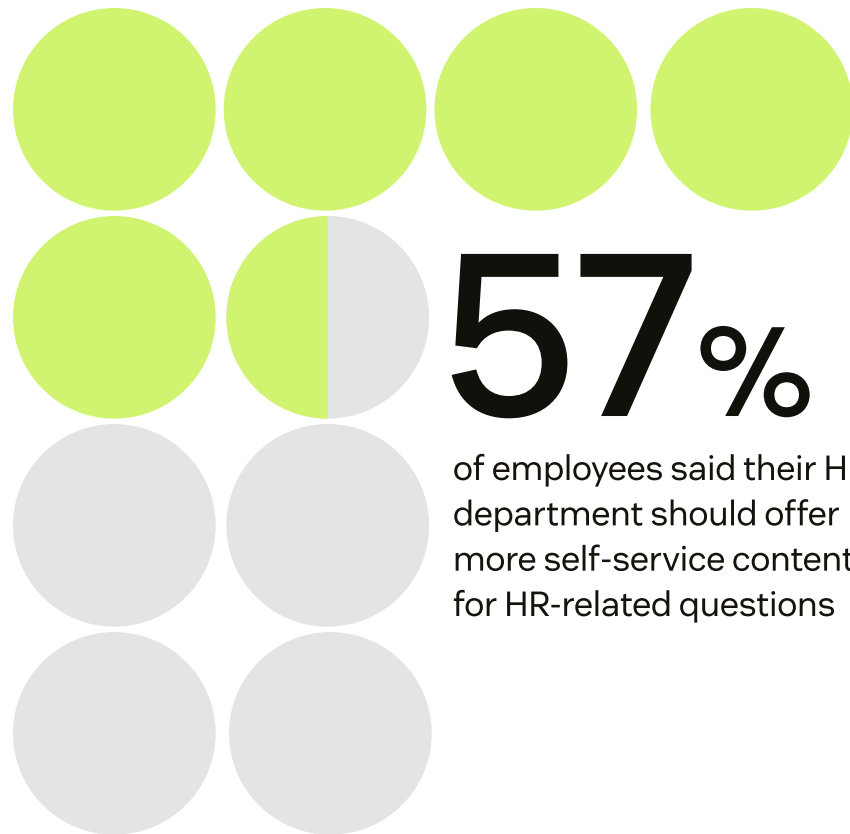
Like we said, not cut and dry.

Of course, it's not just new employees who come up against support-related quandaries. Employees of all tenures look to HR when issues arise—and they're not always satisfied with the response. Indeed, more than half (57%) of the employees we surveyed believe HR could improve their availability, especially during critical times or deadlines.

What's driving this desire for on-demand support? For starters, employees' expectations have been shaped by better, faster customer experiences. And thanks to AI, they're now accustomed to asking questions—ranging from “What's today's weather forecast?” to “How early should I arrive at the airport?” and having answers at their fingertips. It's no longer acceptable to wait days for help with an issue at work.

That said, employees are largely agnostic about where support comes from. Whether a question falls under HR, IT, or Facilities, **employees simply want fast, reliable help delivered in the most seamless way possible.**





57%

of employees said their HR department should offer more self-service content for HR-related questions

Meeting employee expectations for on-demand service will do more than satisfy their needs. **Nearly all HR leaders (91%) believe there is a clear ROI to providing better employee service.** On the other hand, a lack of clear action would have a negative impact on performance metrics: 84% of HR leaders believe failing to integrate robust employee services technology will lead to a significant decline in employee satisfaction and retention.

It's clear: employees' need for 24/7 service will not only shape the future of employee service, but influence key business metrics companies can't afford to ignore.

Tip:

Set up an HR knowledge base powered by generative search to house HR policies, training materials, and best practices. Employees can then easily search and access answers to frequently asked questions or locate how-to content—without having to wait.

“Knowledge bases are the future of human resources. Employees have responded positively [to ours] so far.”

HR leader

2. AI earns employees' trust with personalized support

To answer the demand for instant employee service, many companies are looking to AI. They're bullish on AI's ability to not only serve as the initial point of contact for all employee service touchpoints and interactions, but also help to autonomously answer questions and escalate issues to human specialists for further support.

Many HR leaders are optimistic about an AI-powered future: 90% expect that, by 2028, employees will interact with AI first before getting in touch with a human in the HR department.

But employees have their doubts. Most employees (62%) would like HR to offer more personalized support based on their individual circumstances, but many (64%) are concerned that relying too much on AI will reduce the quality of support they receive.

Employees seek out HR's help with navigating life's gray areas: difficulties with a coworker; updating their benefits after a divorce; getting passed over for a promotion. Can AI really step in and deliver not only accurate advice, but also empathetic support? Right now, more than half (58%) of employees say no.



“AI can only go so far when it comes to personalization as it [can’t] be empathetic towards a situation like a human can.”

Employee respondent

To earn employees’ trust in AI, companies must offer top-notch personalized support.

Here’s what that could look like:

| The future of AI-powered personalization | | |
|---|---|---|
| Now: | Next: | In the future: |
| By leveraging real-time employee data (e.g., location, role, or device usage), AI will take an individual's specific context into | Employees will receive accurate, nuanced answers to policy questions that vary by region, benefits inquiries based on eligibility, or IT support tailored to their exact hardware or software configurations. | AI will learn employee preferences and patterns, allowing for increasingly accurate, helpful, and relevant support that delivers a more intuitive and efficient service experience across the organization. |

In the near future, AI will understand the difference between what is a quick service question, and what is something that requires a human to support—such as interpersonal relationships at work. It will automatically update all relevant systems and employee profiles following a change in benefits status. And, not only will AI automatically order a gift card to celebrate an employee's hard earned promotion, but also proactively tap people who matter to employees—like their manager and colleagues—to congratulate them.

This level of personalization will be key to earning employee trust.

That’s good news for HR leaders who believe this is where employee service is headed.

HR leaders bet on AI to deliver a personal touch



Believe top companies will use AI to completely personalize employee services



Predict HR will offer tailored experiences based on past preferences by 2028

Tip:

Earn your employees' trust in AI by deploying AI agents that not only deliver answers quickly, but also adapt to the complexity of individual situations and know when it's time to escalate to a human. Connect your AI agents to your HRIS to retrieve relevant employee data and provide personalized responses that ensure each employee feels seen and supported.

By 2028, companies that have earned employees' trust in AI-powered service will have done so by offering personalized support that reflects their personal circumstances—helping every individual feel seen at work.



3. AI-powered proactive support anticipates employees' needs

Betting on AI to deliver personalized, on-demand service is just the start.

Many HR leaders believe **employee service will prioritize AI-powered self-service as the default experience**, placing powerful, real-time support directly into the hands of employees. In fact, 94% of HR leaders are already using or plan to use AI agents within the next 12 months to field and answer questions.

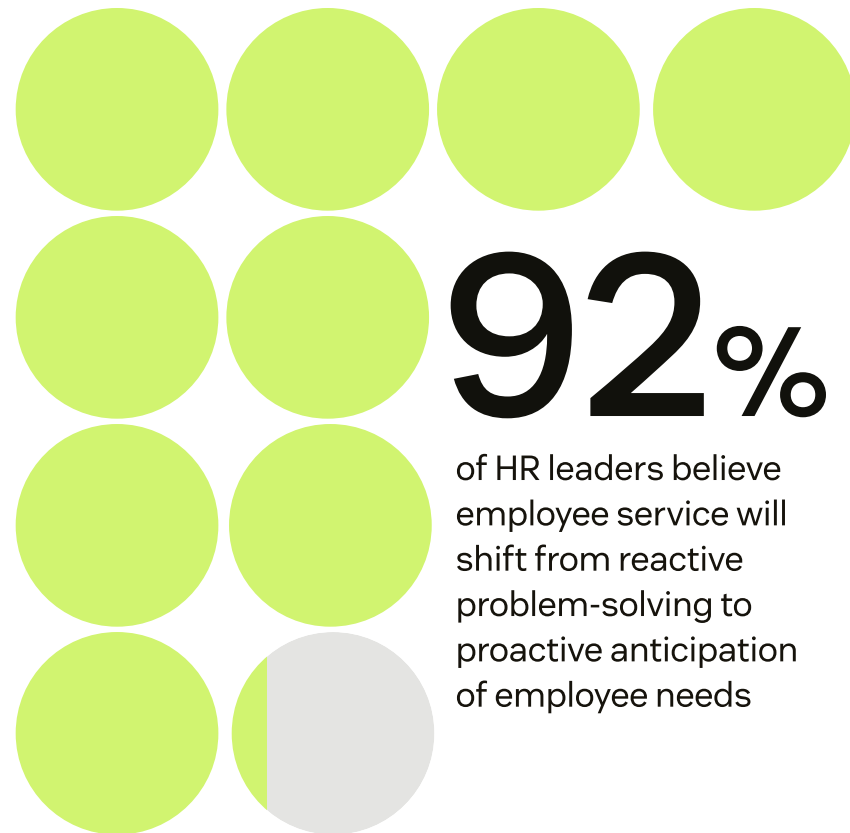
But their future vision is even bigger: HR leaders see self-service evolving into a proactive tool for keeping employees ahead of potential issues, upcoming deadlines, and system upgrades.

Indeed, AI-powered service will go beyond answering day-to-day HR inquiries—serving up proactive notifications and reminders to complete open enrollment, renew credentials, or submit key documentation before deadlines pass to reduce delays and avoid common service requests.



“AI aids in HR's ability to connect to employees' concerns. It can help find solutions faster and provide quick service.”

HR leader



Tip:

When it comes to AI adoption, embrace an iterative testing mindset. Communicate to your teams that deploying AI will be a process of trial and error—and learning. Test deploying AI in a lower-risk way by piloting it within HR teams first, before introducing it to employees. Rather than waiting for a perfect solution, focus on starting small, learning quickly, and evolving over time.

Employees are likewise anticipating this kind of proactive support: 65% believe they'll have access to guided experiences to help them complete tasks by 2028. While wary, employees know AI-powered HR experiences are coming. Nearly two-thirds (63%) predict they'll interact with AI first before getting in touch with a human in the HR department in the next three years.

The data is clear: employees expect more from their workplace. They want on-demand support, personalized answers, and service that anticipates their needs. They don't need a human to help solve **every** problem, but they do expect AI to be part of their workplace, and to demonstrate the same level of accuracy, nuance, and understanding that defines high-quality service.

As HR leaders think about adopting and scaling with AI in the years ahead, they will need to earn and maintain employees' trust—demonstrating AI's ability to deliver clear, accurate resolutions at speed, while maintaining the level of personalization they expect from their HR departments.

“I used AI to look into the amount of days someone at my level gets each year for vacation. It was easy to use and the information came back very fast.”

Employee respondent

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

DUTCH BROS COFFEE

Fast-growing coffee chain Dutch Bros chose Zendesk for its employee service platform to centralize HR operations and scale support for its 30,000 employees more efficiently—achieving a decrease in resolution time from 23 hours to just 1.3 minutes.

In the near future, they envision AI enhancing their self-service capabilities and further automating transactional tasks—handing off tasks to an AI agent and empowering their human agents to take on more of the personal elements of the employee service model.

[Learn from Dutch Bros](#)



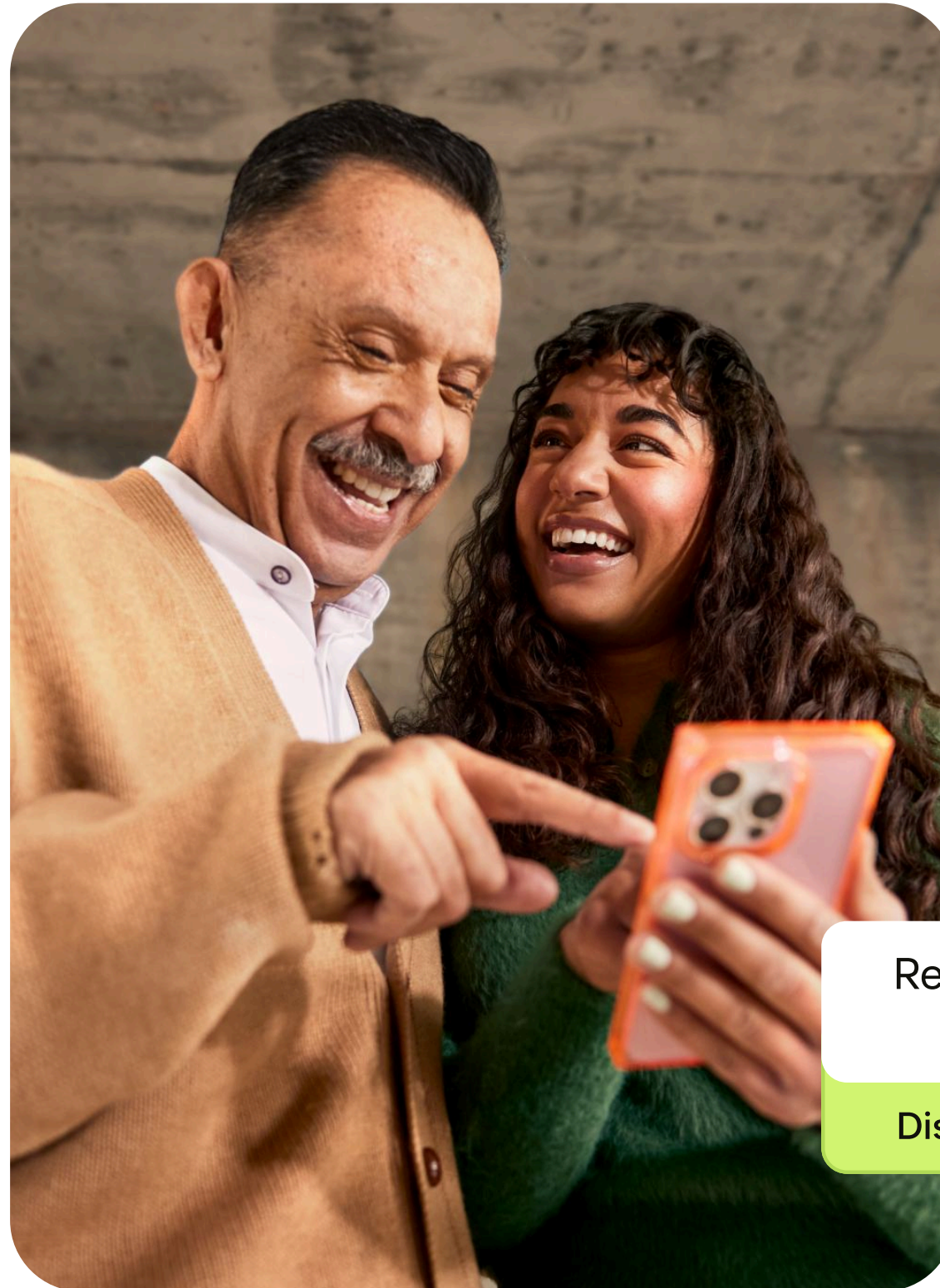
Bring the future of employee service into focus

Your journey into the future of employee service starts today.

No matter where you are—whether you're updating your knowledge base or AI agents to answer questions—it's time to level up your employee service strategy.

Future-focused HR leaders are already rethinking the skills of their HR teams. They're identifying skill gaps and creating a clear plan for both upskilling current team members and hiring for emerging roles. They're also focused on intentional change management—readying the change agents in their organizations who will lead with transparency and help shape the future of employee service.

It's not too late to bring your organization's AI-powered future into focus—but **now** is the time to act. At Zendesk, we have the expertise to help your organization navigate its AI-powered employee service transformation, equipping you with service-specific AI solutions, like AI agents, Copilot, and QA to support your journey. Together, we will help you adapt, innovate, and drive unprecedented business results.



Ready to unlock the future of employee service?

Discover the power of AI in HR



Methodology

Zendesk surveyed 600 U.S. HR leaders and 800 U.S. employees about the future of employee service in December 2024. HR leaders were VP level and above, while employees were spread across age, gender, and industry.



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