

TALKDESK EBOOK

AI readiness for government contact centers: 5 steps to success

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Introduction

The best way to delight citizens is to take a page from retail brands' playbook to deliver an exceptional customer experience (CX) with expedited response times and frictionless journeys.

Customers worldwide have grown accustomed to this type of practice. Yet, many are unaware that artificial intelligence (AI) raises the bar for this gold standard CX. Having a connected transactional experience across the entire customer journey is essential to transform CX the right way.

This ebook explores AI-driven CX outcomes in contact centers, and how to create an exceptional citizen experience with five crucial steps to successfully embark on an AI journey.



I. How AI is delivering on its potential

In simple terms, artificial intelligence (AI) is processing large amounts of data to "learn" solutions to problems. One of the founding pioneers of AI, professor John McCarthy from Stanford University, described it as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines." But it took many years for AI to overcome its biggest obstacle: the lack of computer storage and processing power required for the vast amounts of data for AI systems to function well.

Thanks to computing power and data storage advancement through cloud computing, AI is now well-positioned

to do incredible things and can be usefully deployed in practically every industry including the public sector. Yet, there is plenty of hype, jargon, and abstract technology, making it difficult for non-experts to identify the most interesting opportunities to apply AI in everyday use cases.

Transforming workforce productivity is an important area where AI delivers excellent value through automation.

CFI Group cites

75%

of customers who reach out to a government contact center first try to self-serve. Automation is key to CX excellence, and state and local governments must act now to uncover the opportunities.

The purpose of automation is not about replacing humans with machines; it's about changing the tasks usually carried out by humans who can focus on more purposeful work and optimize workplace productivity.



II. How AI-led operational precision improves CX

The best AI tools leverage cloud technology and data to deliver powerful support solutions and an incredible level of operational precision in contact centers across some key areas:

Automation

Resolve more cases with improved accuracy, automating repetitive processes, allowing agents to focus on higher-order tasks. The cost per case decreases, supervisory actions are minimized, and citizen satisfaction and outcomes improve.

Assistance

Deliver faster service, reduced escalations, and enhanced agent training and performance.

Arming agents and supervisors with AI-powered practical assistance (such as recommended next best actions or automated data entry) reduces average handle time (AHT), helps newer agents be more effective in less time, mitigates agent errors, and improves first contact resolution (FCR) with the citizen.

Optimization

Reduce agent stress and manual supervision by eliminating search and browsing tasks with AI recommendations. With Agent Assist citizen program qualifications and eligibility for a program can be instantly accessed, verified and processed resulting in higher value citizen interactions.

Recommendation

Simplify how agents receive recommended next steps or next best actions by proactively delivering information in a single interface, preventing agents from being scattered between several data sources. Minimize supervisory support and improve citizen outcomes.

Discovery

Discover patterns hidden deep in the vast amounts of citizen interaction data and boost performance results that improve citizen satisfaction ratings with predictive recommendations.



Prediction

Better predict future outcomes using AI to analyze patterns and historical data. Create models that can anticipate citizen behavior more accurately.



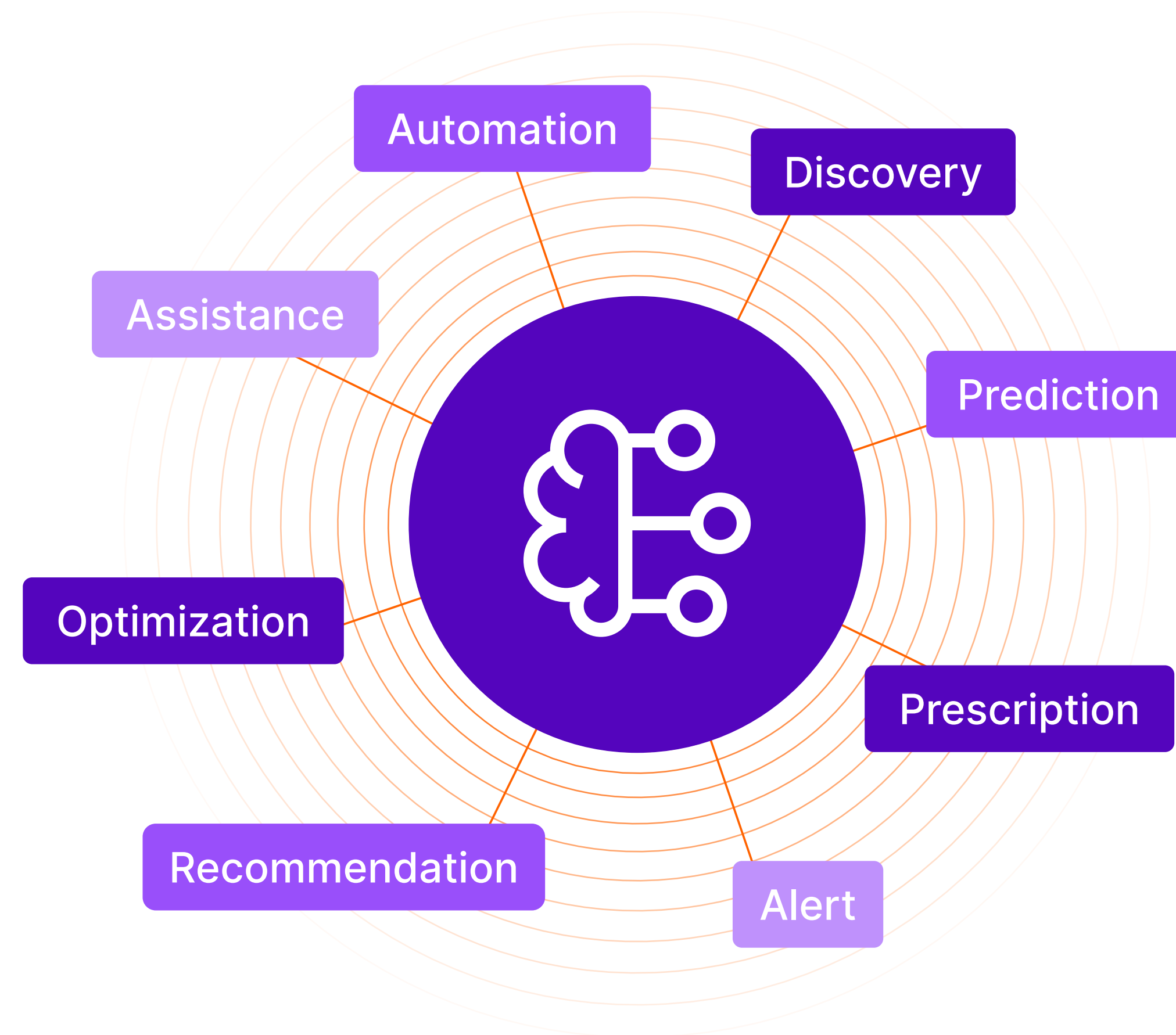
Prescription

Reduce supervisory engagement by providing agents with intelligent guidance that recommends next steps in the transaction process and resolves citizen issues quickly. The agent is guided with step-by-step instructions to ensure the required content is collected eliminating missed steps in the process.



Alert

Detect and react promptly when something goes wrong without any manual intervention. Agents and supervisors get alerts about specific data points, detecting anomalies and unusual deviations from the norm to trigger real-time notifications that enhance citizen resolutions more promptly.



III. How the path to a retail type CX for government must include contact centers

The private citizen loves the speed and simplicity, for which companies such as Amazon use AI to go beyond personalization by focusing on customer interactions, identifying friction points, and working hard to remove them. Retailers understand that customer adoption requires eliminating unnecessary human interaction or human control, providing a baseline for frictionless customer experiences.

The same intentions for exceptional customer experiences hold true for the government. While the lens is slightly different between the public and private sectors, the focus is the same—CX excellence.

Public sector must ensure trust and transparency by securely and seamlessly maintaining vast amounts of personally identifiable citizen data and confidential information, such as social security numbers, driver's license information, and tax and financial data.

Excellent citizen experiences require finding automated ways to collect data across various engagement touchpoints, including support requests, transactions, and follow-up, while also ensuring the vast amounts of citizen data is kept secure and safe. Public sector contact centers can support every piece of the CX value chain by implementing and operationalizing AI across citizen interactions.



IV. The 5 crucial steps to embed AI into contact centers

Government contact centers are a large source of citizen information and public data. They can generate and store enormous quantities of intelligence through interactions and integrations with applications across the entire data collection ecosystem. Contact centers can integrate with CRM systems, budgeting and monitoring programs, application and survey tools, and other data collection and storage platforms for such inputs as systems of records.

Implementing the right AI tools will help to harness data to make fast decisions or quickly deduce conclusions. Government contact centers can take more proactive actions, moving away from complicated IVRs and long wait times that cause frustration and negatively impact the citizen experience.



STEP 1: setting the stage for AI success

Cloud APIs make it easier to collect data that allows AI to solve problems effectively. **With data points ‘everywhere’, contact centers need to capture data across channels, interactions, and users.** Robust integrations help to combine services and data from diverse systems and applications.

Many enterprises consider AI as a core part of digital transformation programs, providing extensive opportunities across key areas, such as:



Automation and optimization

AI follows pre-programmed rules to handle simple and often repetitive tasks in an expedited manner, automating the most repetitive tasks and letting agents focus on delighting citizens. Recommendations from AI also lead to optimization of services and can have a massive and positive impact on the way agencies across state and local governments respond to their citizens.



Detection and discovery

Relying on AI to cultivate data from billions of interactions leads to actionable discoveries and citizen insights that drive predictive recommendations and optimize agent and contact center efficiency. Machines can also be trained to detect criteria that may indicate fraudulent activity, such as unemployment claims, alleviating the need for human adjudicators to spend countless hours looking for anomalies. And if something goes wrong, the AI brain should send an alert about specific data points, reducing short- and long-term training efforts through real-time error identification.



Prescription and assistance

Directly or indirectly, every person in the contact center can benefit from AI practical assistance. AI should recognize new patterns and suggest the next best steps based on that recognition, empowering agents with intelligent guidance, recommending the best actions to solve citizen issues. Proactively delivering information in a simple interface also prevents agents from being scattered between several data sources. Similarly, contact centers should reduce manual supervision, leveraging automated guidance to trim down agent-supervisor ad-hoc interactions, giving supervisors more time to focus on workforce engagement activities and agents more quality time with the public.

STEP 2: using Speech Analytics to improve humanized automation

The COVID-19 pandemic forced contact centers to reinforce their staffing and deflect interactions to digital channels like chatbots. But there were worries about the lack of human empathy that can arise from automated conversations. With citizens' ability to self serve the concern is overcome by creating faster resolutions freeing up agents to have live conversations for the more difficult cases that result in higher citizen satisfaction scores.

The public is now more familiar with digital engagement channels, and government leaders are following the private-sector trend recognizing the potential cost benefits and expedited service outcomes from automation.

Requests for services as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and affordable housing requests can be expedited through the use of AI, with the money saved from these processes circulated back into the economy.

Natural language processing (NLP) analyzes hundreds of millions of calls, learning why people call the contact center and categorizing all conversations from citizen-agent interactions.

NLP infused tools such as Speech Analytics uncover opportunities for process automation for multiple use cases, relying on capabilities such as:

Sentiment analysis

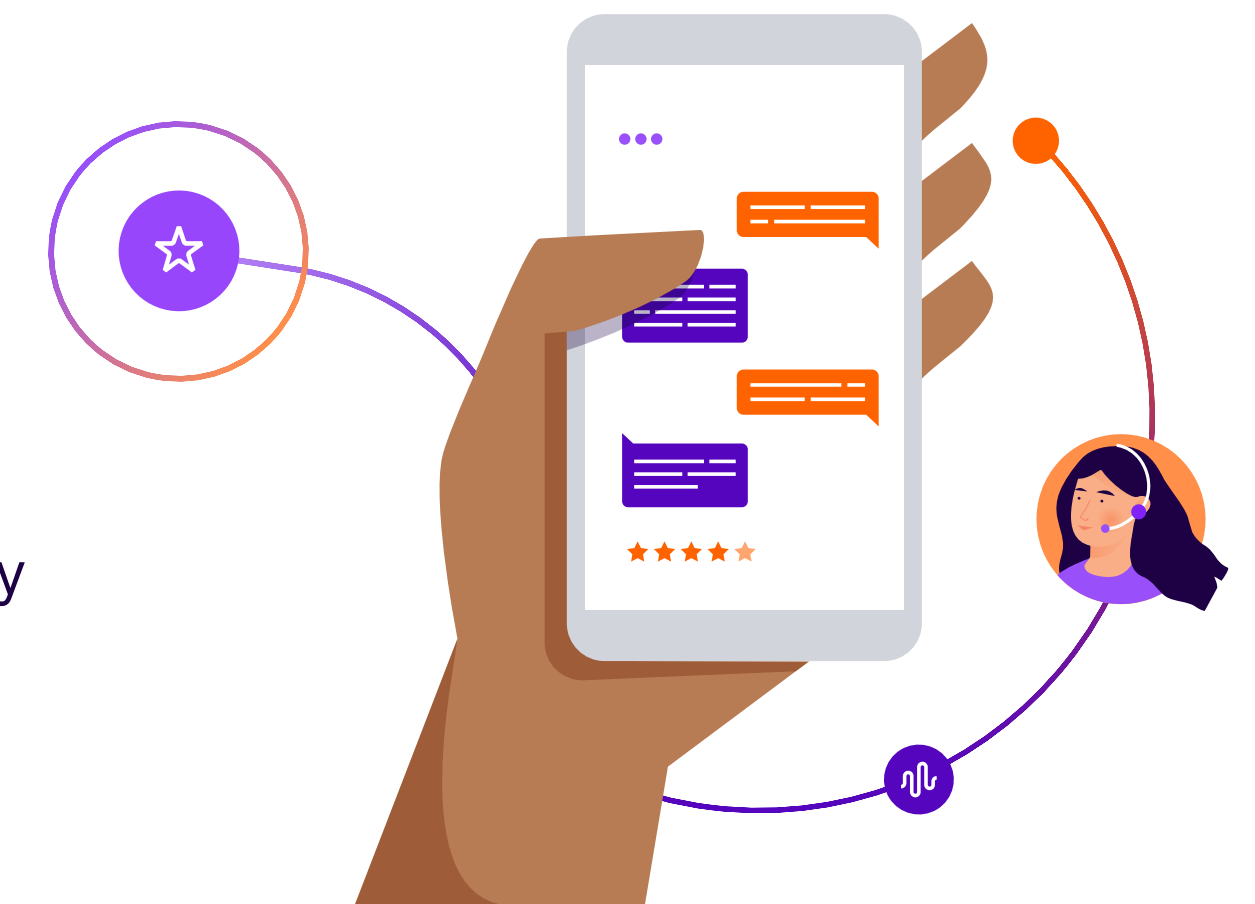
By analyzing citizens' voice tone and listening for keywords during the conversation, AI helps identify process automation enhancements for a better customer experience.

Topic and intent analysis

By revealing topics and keywords that are being discussed to holistically approach citizen demands faster.

Call transcription cards

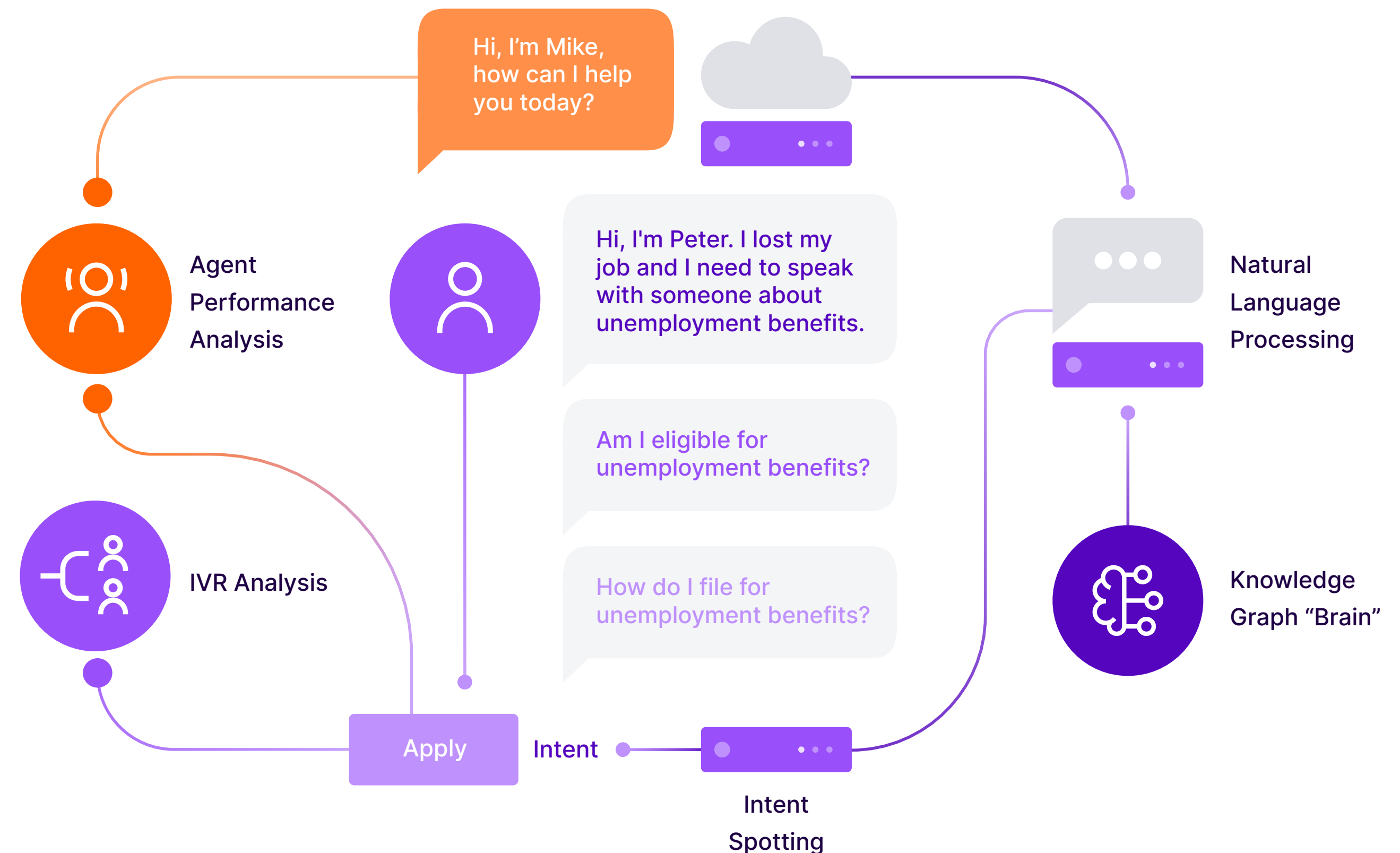
By using speech-to-text and NLP for better and faster on-call answers and after-call work (ACW).



Speech Analytics data can positively impact critical metrics, like average handle time (AHT), first call resolution (FCR), and cost per contact (CPC), by:

- **Identifying the best IVR setup (e.g., new IVR exits)**
- **Making agents more knowledgeable**
- **Empowering citizens**

Humanizing automation in CX is a fine balance. Before jumping into automated environments, contact centers should consider developing a set of customer journey maps and identifying how customers navigate them. Then, separate repetitive tasks from the more complex ones to evaluate automation opportunities and set tasks that benefit from the human touch, assisted with AI.



STEP 3: introducing Agent Assist to workflows

AI can empower agents with a personalized assistant that listens, learns, and provides intelligent recommendations in every conversation to help resolve complex citizen issues faster.

An AI-powered agent assistant can browse a knowledge base, whole conversations, and all the available data to fetch the most relevant documents related to a citizen query and present it in real time to the agent.

For contact centers with a temporary workforce during seasonal spikes,

an AI-agent assistant tool will simplify onboarding processes and ramp up new hires with contextual information during calls, reducing the need for manual supervision and assistance.

Features include:

Real-time actions and quick shortcuts

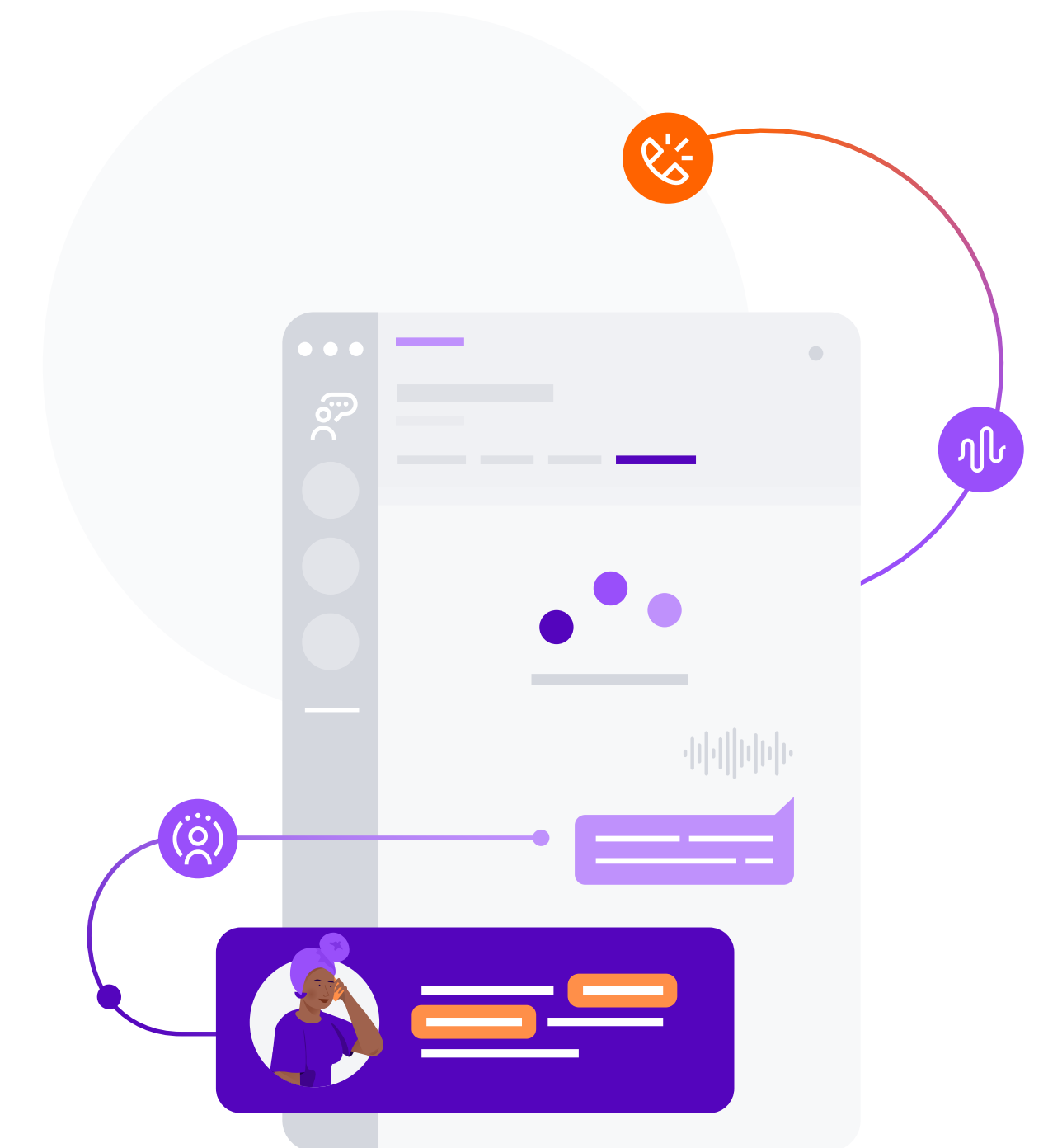
Reduce the need to leave the citizen on hold or transfer the call to a different agent or to a supervisor.

Smart notes

Summarize the entire conversation and show agents the transcript so they can accept or modify it.

Automatic data entry

An agent assistant can make the right application pop up with the caller's name and address, so the agent is not delayed by having to type in any data.



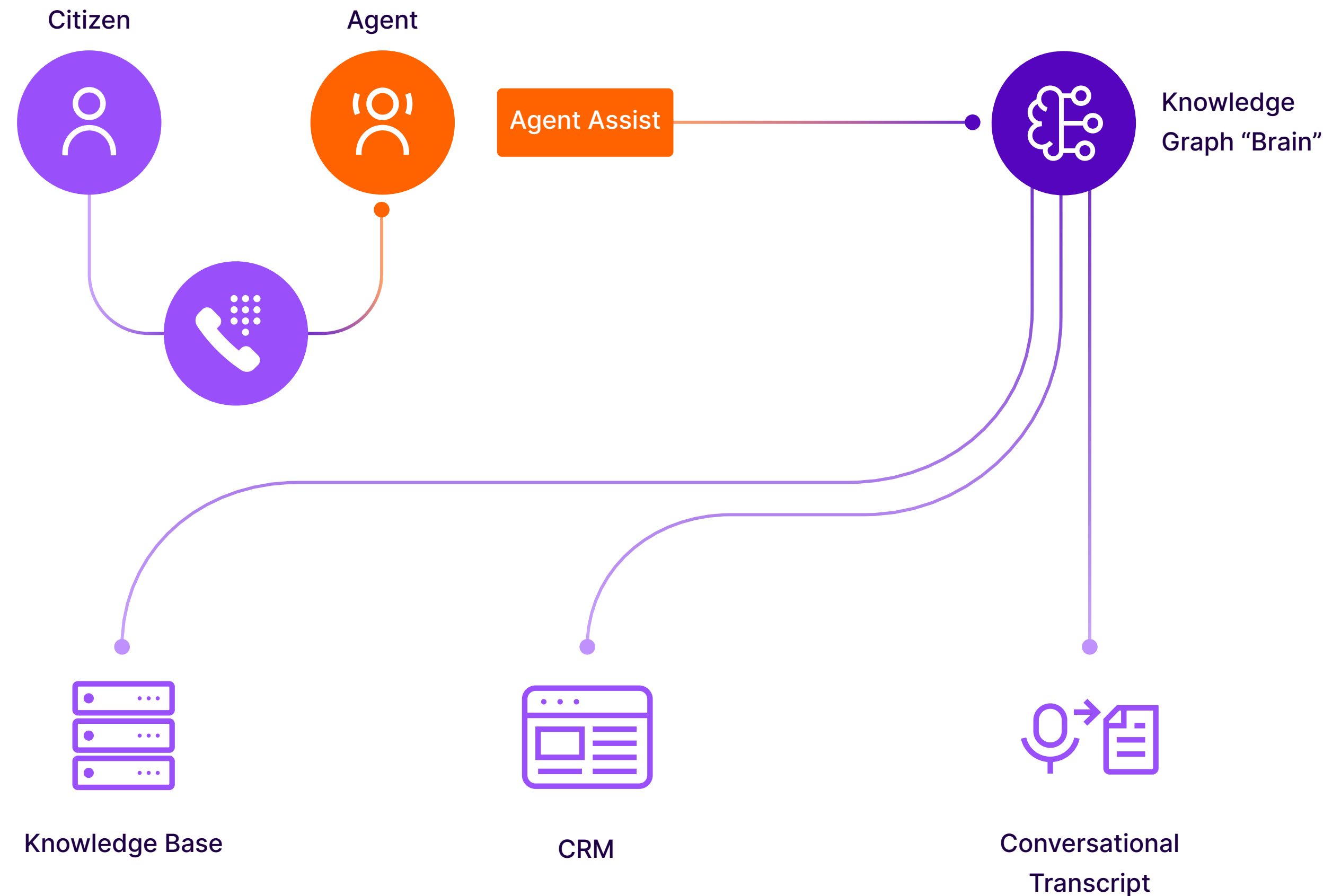
Escalation assistance

It is nerve-racking for citizens when their call is transferred and they have to describe the entire situation all over again. With a powerful agent assistant, the complete citizen record is summarized, extracted, and delivered in just a couple of bullet points to the next agent or supervisor.

Real-time analytics and error detection

The agent assistant can monitor the call to ensure the agent goes through standard protocol and follows the established script.

The information extracted from this monitoring can later be used to offer training recommendations in real-time or after the call.



STEP 4: powering virtual agents for citizen conversations

AI-powered conversational assistants, or "virtual agents," can instantly deliver answers and outcomes over voice-enabled channels. They provide contact centers with a cost-effective and scalable self-service solution to meet ever-changing citizen needs and provide human-like service, even outside of business hours, to ensure consistent quality in citizen responses.

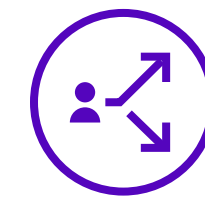
A virtual agent is ideal for resolving common issues and automating routine tasks when agents are not available after hours or to free agents during peak traffic periods, allowing them to focus on more complex issues.

The main benefits of implementing a virtual agent in the contact center include:



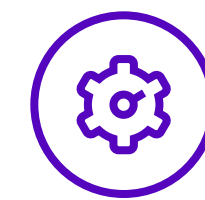
Always-on support

Enable citizens to solve routine and basic service issues any time of day, automatically scheduling follow-up calls during after-hours interactions. Reduce citizen frustration and improve satisfaction by leveraging intelligent voice with around-the-clock conversational support. Create a future where routine tasks are automated and agents are free to solve more complex issues.



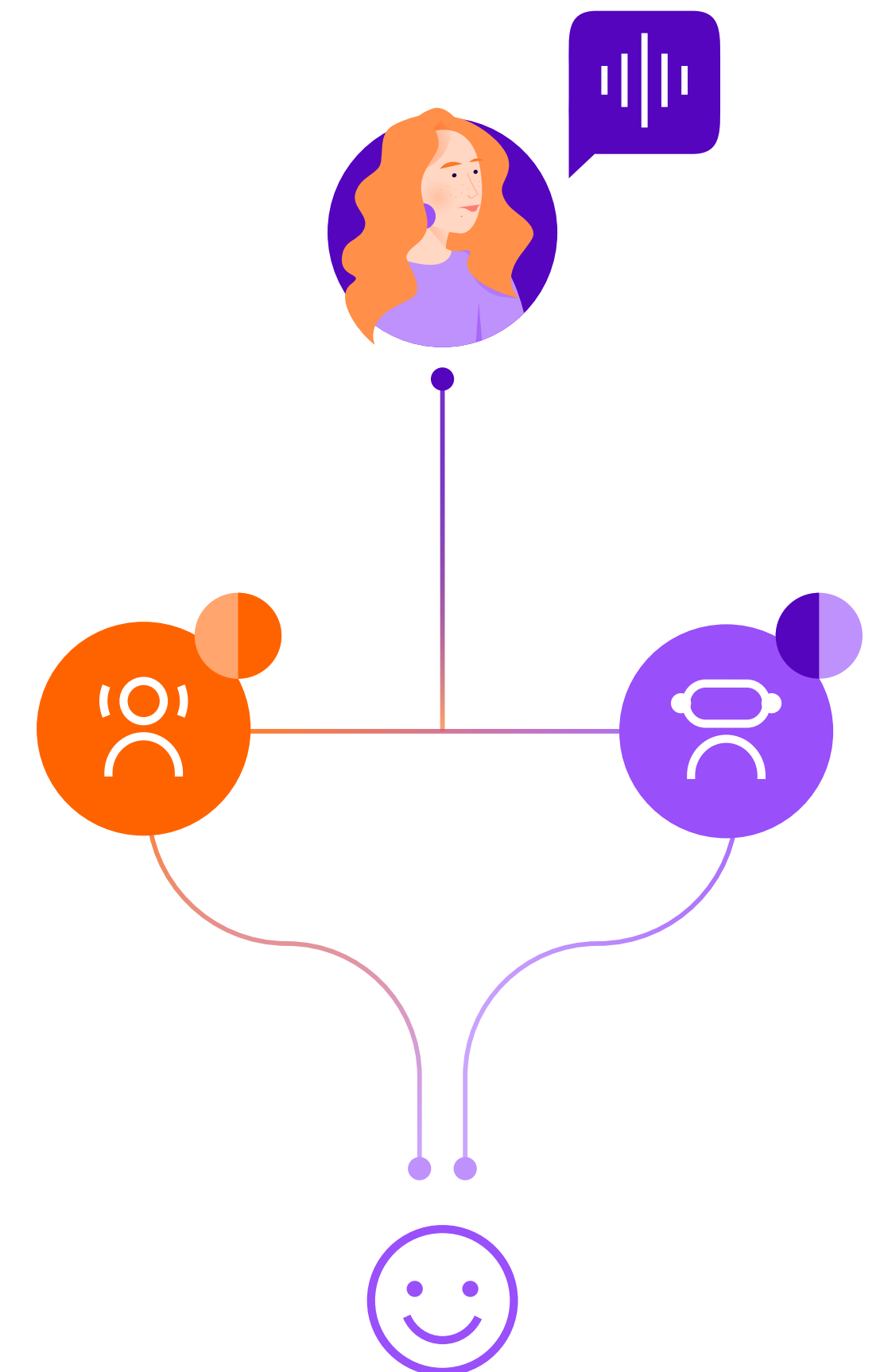
Operational efficiency through conversational routing

Analyze citizen intent and route to the live agent that can best handle the inquiry thus improving contact center operational efficiency by solving issues effortlessly, with minimum or no live agent interaction.



Improve self-service KPIs

Shorten the amount of time required for citizens to get answers and resolve issues. Correctly and consistently answer questions to improve key metrics, such as first call resolution (FCR), average handle time (AHT), average speed of answer (ASA), and customer satisfaction (CSAT). Talking to a live agent should always be a fallback option for citizens along their entire contact center journey. A virtual agent's advantage is to have a 24/7 AI-powered assistant to address the most frequent issues at any time of the day or night. If a citizen wants to ask a question, there is always an answer.



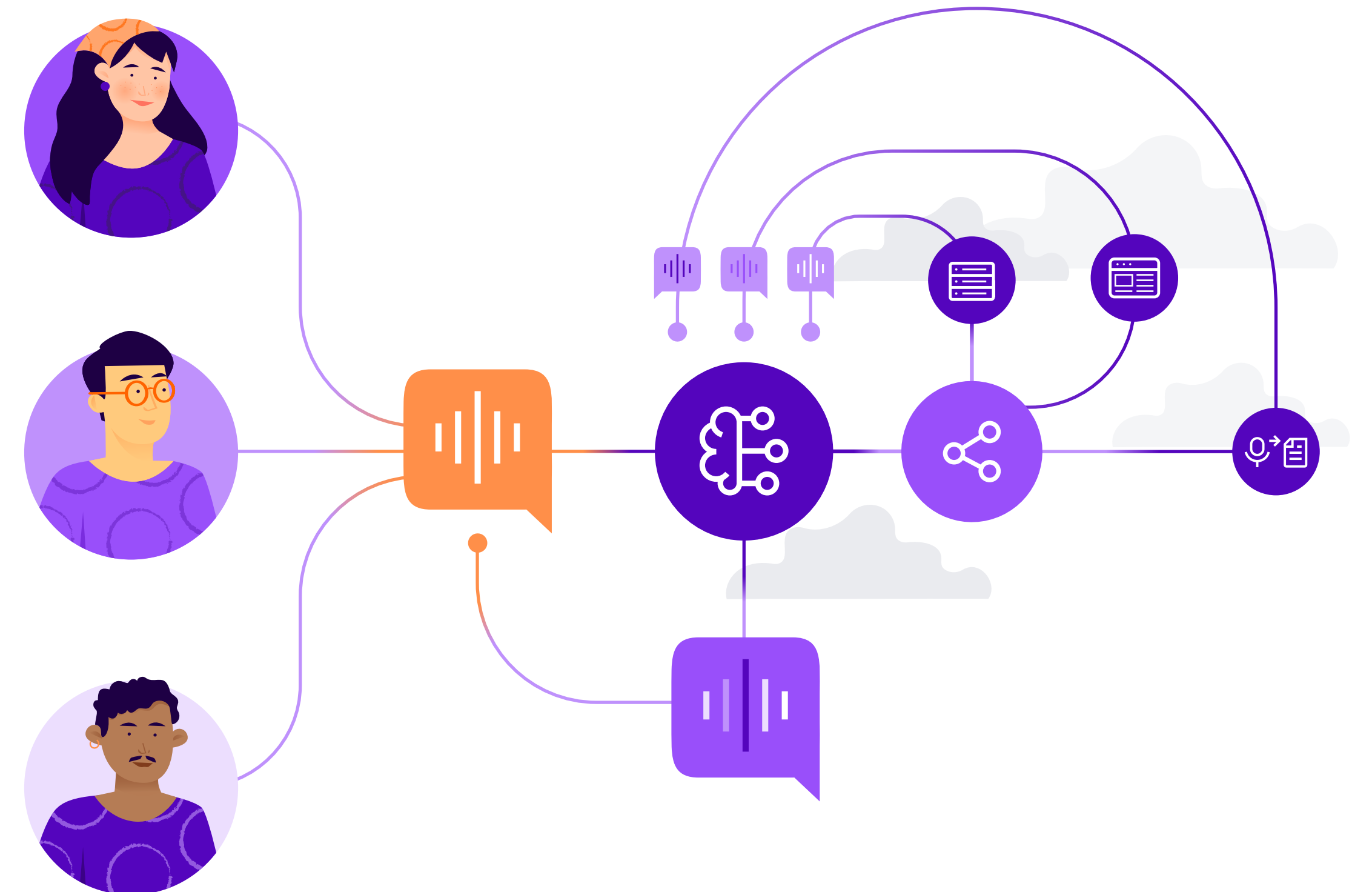
STEP 5: operationalizing AI with an agent's touch

AI is not a static, one-off technology; it must continually update and evolve. AI projects can avoid most implementation pitfalls by operationalizing the AI models' ongoing performance in a practical and cost-efficient way.

The accuracy of AI models powering tools, such as agent assistance and virtual agents, means continuous calculations of contact center interactions that provide for the public's well-being.

Every time a model loses its predictive power, it needs to be updated. One of the most significant barriers to AI adoption has been the requirement to hire highly specialized data scientists to program AI models.

But with the rise of 'human-in-the-loop' technology, the process to improve the accuracy of AI models is made easier and cost-effective by operationalizing non-technical staff, like agents and supervisors, to do the work with a no-code, simple interface.



Conclusion

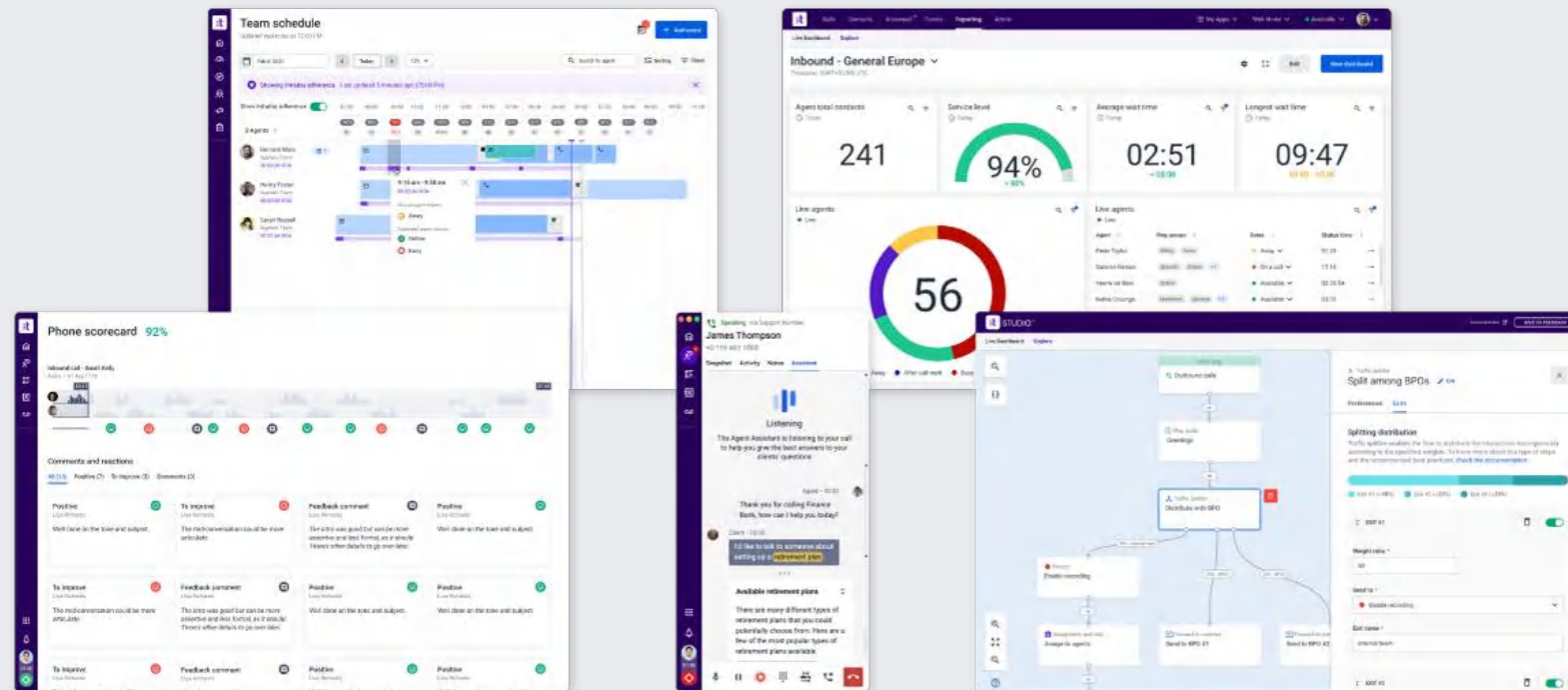
Leverage AI-powered CX to build an experience that citizens love

Just like the retail industry, the public sector can improve citizen interactions and create operational efficiencies by embracing AI. Citizens want frictionless and instant responsiveness, indicating public expectations are likely to be outpacing the reality of most agencies' contact centers. Successfully leveraging AI will lead to better citizen experiences.

If you'd like to know how you can begin your AI journey, [request a demo now.](#)



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