



# When Devices Get Smarter, CX Gets Harder

How complexity, personalization, and AI are reshaping the customer experience in consumer technology.

# Executive Summary

Consumer technology brands are operating at a moment of real transition. Products are no longer static devices that customers use in isolation. They are the internet of things – intelligent, connected systems that sit at the center of people’s homes, routines, and identities. As a result, the customer experience in consumer tech has expanded far beyond the traditional realm of troubleshooting.

AI and automation are accelerating this shift, but not in the way many expected. Rather than replacing human work, they are steadily stripping away lower-skill, transactional interactions and reshaping what’s left. As SVP of Global Program Strategy at IntouchCX **Mary Flynn** explains, automation removes much of the Tier 1 work from the process. What remains is more complex, higher-value Tier 2 and Tier 3 interactions that require judgment, empathy, and technical confidence.

At the same time, consumer tech brands are facing a convergence of pressures in the form of faster product cycles, sprawling device ecosystems, rising customer expectations, and growing regulatory scrutiny around how brands manage the personal data these devices now collect. Customers expect experiences that feel seamless and human, while operations teams are grappling with fragmented systems, uneven data quality, and constant change.

**This report explores the challenges many consumer tech brands are underestimating today, how CX workflows are evolving in response, and how IntouchCX is already helping brands navigate this new reality.**

## Consumer Tech CX Has Entered A New Era

There was a time when customer support in consumer technology was largely mechanical. A device failed, a customer contacted support, and the goal was to restore basic functionality as quickly as possible. That model no longer holds.

As Vice President of Demand Generation & Insights at IntouchCX **Ramesh Ranjan** explains, consumer tech is now defined by how people interact with their devices in human ways. Voice commands, personalization, and behavioral adaptation have changed the nature of the support that most customers need. Devices are now expected to recognize accents, respond to habits, and integrate smoothly into broader ecosystems.



This evolution means that effective CX is no longer just about fixing something that broke, but supporting products that adapt to people and, in turn, shape how people live. When something goes wrong, it feels personal. A smart thermostat that stops working or a phone that behaves unpredictably is not just inconvenient, it disrupts daily life.

As a result, CX in consumer tech has moved closer to the product itself. Support teams are no longer operating at the edge of the organization. They are increasingly central to how brands deliver, maintain, and improve the overall experience.

*"This is a very distinct time for consumer tech," Ranjan says. "Before AI, it was straightforward. You bought a product and you used it. But as everything became smart, we connected these devices to our Google accounts, for example."*

*"We train them to respond to voice commands, which means they're always listening. We integrate them into broader ecosystems. The complexity has increased."*

The change isn't just technical, but cultural. *"As customers started interacting with their devices in a human way, those gadgets had to adapt to local culture and the entire ecosystem they operate in,"* Ranjan explains. *"Now you also have regulatory layers. In Europe, for example, devices that are always listening have to redact personal information because of GDPR."*

The result is a fundamental shift in what CX means. In practice, this means CX teams are no longer supporting isolated products, but technologies that are completely woven into customers' daily lives.

## The Challenges Consumer Tech Brands Are Underestimating

### From Troubleshooting to Personalization, and the Data That Comes With It

Today's devices involve far more customization, visibility, and interaction with customer data than in the past.

***"Earlier it was just troubleshooting. Now it's no longer just that. It's personalization. You have more customization, more visibility, & much deeper involvement with customer data and information."***



**RAMESH RANJAN**  
VP of Demand Generation  
& Insights at IntouchCX

That creates new responsibilities for CX teams. Supporting a connected device often means handling sensitive personal information, understanding usage patterns, and navigating regional expectations around privacy. In markets governed by regulations such as GDPR, the stakes are even higher. Devices that are always listening or constantly collecting data introduce legal and ethical considerations that did not exist when consumer tech was more self-contained.

What looks like a simple support request can quickly become a question of data governance and compliance. For many brands, this complexity is still underestimated.



# Managing This Complexity at Scale: Devices, Variants, and Obsolescence

Consumer tech brands are also contending with an unprecedented level of product complexity. Ranjan describes an environment where brands are supporting dozens – sometimes even hundreds – of device models at once, each with its own firmware updates and integrations.

New releases do not replace old ones in practice. Customers continue to use devices for years, and they expect the same quality of support regardless of how long ago a product launched. Knowledge does not retire simply because the market has moved on. Managing this complexity is difficult enough. Delivering a consistent experience across it is harder still.

As Senior Director of Customer Experience at IntouchCX **Marlon Ramirez** points out, even internal teams are often struggling to keep pace. Technology is evolving continuously and faster than before, with new products launching all the time. Support teams are frequently learning those products at the same moment customers are, while also dealing with higher volumes and tighter budgets.

The result is sustained pressure on CX operations, not just from customers, but from the speed of innovation itself. Agents are expected to understand problems that span old hardware, new software, and evolving ecosystems. Without strong operational support, even understanding the root of a customer issue can be a challenge.

*“Consumer tech brands are really facing pressure on two fronts right now,” Ramirez says. “First, customer expectations are higher than ever and people expect a seamless experience across troubleshooting, returns, and device setup, even as technology evolves faster and new products are launched constantly.”*

***“The second challenge is agent empowerment. As brands put bots and self-service in front of more interactions, human agents are left handling only the most complex issues.***

***That makes having the right tools, training, and support absolutely critical.”***



**MARLON RAMIREZ**  
Sr. Director of Customer Experience at IntouchCX



## AI Pressure and Operational Anxiety

AI is now part of almost every consumer tech conversation, particularly in CX, and many leaders feel pressure to adopt it quickly, but they are uncertain about how to do so meaningfully.

Flynn describes a common anxiety among CX and operations leaders: the fear of investing in the wrong capabilities or implementing AI without improving outcomes. The promise of lower costs, faster resolution, and better experiences is clear enough, but the path to getting there is often opaque.

Ranjan points to the underlying reason. Most consumer tech organizations operate across multiple disconnected systems: CRM platforms, product databases, payment systems, supply chain tools, and more. AI is only as effective as the data feeding it, and fragmented systems make clean, reliable data difficult to achieve.

Without addressing these structural issues, AI initiatives risk stalling at the pilot stage or creating new friction rather than removing it. This creates what many CX leaders now recognize as an automation trap.



Self-service and bots successfully absorb simpler interactions, but they also push the most complex, emotionally charged issues to human agents.

As Ramirez explains, many brands now place a bot or self-service option in front of the customer before allowing escalation. That means agents are increasingly handling only the hardest cases, where frustration is already high and resolution requires both technical depth and emotional intelligence.

At the same time, people are becoming tired of automation that feels impersonal. They don't want brands to hide their humans – they want more genuine, human interaction when it matters.

## Disconnected Systems and Broken Workflows

From the customer's perspective, the most visible symptom of these challenges is repetition. Customers frequently have to explain the same issue multiple times as they move between channels or agents.

As Ranjan points out, customers already know their own history. They assume the brand does too. And when that assumption proves false, frustration builds quickly. This has direct consequences for first contact resolution. Customers are often willing to wait longer if they believe their issue will actually be resolved. What they are far less tolerant of is being passed around without progress.

At this point, CX effectively becomes a stress test for organizational alignment. Support teams are often the first to feel the impact of unclear product decisions, rushed launches, or gaps between design intent and real-world use. As Flynn explains, CX organizations are frequently the only teams with continuous exposure to customer reality.

When internal feedback loops are slow or bureaucratic, problems are addressed only after they reach customers, turning CX into a reactive function rather than a preventative one.



# How CX Work Is Changing, Not Disappearing

## Automation and the Rise of Higher-Skill Agent Work

A persistent misconception in consumer tech is that AI will replace human agents. In reality, the work is changing and growing more skilled, rather than vanishing.

Flynn observes that automation has been most effective at removing lower-skill, transactional interactions – simple status checks, basic changes, or routine queries – and what remains is work that requires deeper expertise and emotional intelligence.

*“There’s a lot of anxiety about AI replacing people, but what we’re actually seeing is the opposite,” she says. “Automation is removing a lot of the lower-skill, transactional work from the system. What’s left is more complex, more skilled work – Tier 2 and Tier 3 interactions that require judgment and experience.”*

But Ranjan adds an important nuance: many low-level interactions were already automated before the current wave of AI. The real opportunity today is not replacing agents, but reducing the cognitive load they face.

When agents no longer have to jump between systems to retrieve information, they can focus on resolving complex issues more effectively.

The result is a shift, as Flynn describes, toward smaller volumes of higher-value interactions.

These higher-tier interactions also tend to cluster around specific moments in the customer journey. Onboarding and setup, for example, often carry a disproportionate emotional load. As Ramirez notes, customers begin with excitement when unboxing a new device, but if setup is not simple or fails outright, frustration sets in immediately.

Troubleshooting and post-sale support create similar pressure points, particularly when issues involve multiple devices, software updates, or unclear warranty processes. In these moments, CX becomes the deciding factor in whether trust is reinforced or eroded.

## Agent Enablement as a CX Priority

As the nature of agent work evolves, so do the expectations placed on them. Flynn notes that the roles being hired for today are more experienced and more technical than in the past.

This makes training, real-time guidance, ongoing support critical because, without the right tools, even skilled agents struggle to deliver consistent experiences across complex product ecosystems. With them, agents become one of the strongest assets a consumer tech brand has.



## Delivering Consistency Across Regions Without Losing Nuance

For global consumer tech brands, consistency is one of the hardest CX challenges to solve, not because standards don't exist, but because reality is rarely uniform. Devices may be sold globally, but they are used locally, shaped by language, culture, infrastructure, and regulation.

Ranjan describes this as one of the defining tensions in modern consumer tech CX. On the surface, the hardware may be identical across markets. Underneath, everything from voice interaction to privacy expectations can change depending on where a customer lives. Accents, local languages, cultural norms, and even how people describe technical problems all influence the support interaction.

This is especially pronounced as devices become more conversational and more embedded in daily life. Customers are no longer interacting with technology through buttons and menus alone.

They speak to it, rely on it, and expect it to understand them. That requires consumer tech brands to localize experiences far beyond simple translation.

Regulation adds another layer of complexity. As Ranjan explained about the EU's General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR, regions such as Europe impose strict requirements around privacy and data handling, particularly for devices that are always listening or continuously collecting information. The same AI assistant or smart home product may be permissible in one geography, but require redaction, consent mechanisms, or different data handling practices in another. What appears to be a CX interaction is often also a legal and ethical one at the same time.

Delivering consistency in this environment does not mean forcing uniformity. Instead, it requires strong global foundations combined with flexibility at the local level. According to Ranjan, this is where training, quality assurance, and knowledge management become critical operating levers.



IntouchCX's training teams work closely with clients to ensure that agents understand not only products, but how those products behave differently across markets. The quality teams work closely with clients to define what "good" looks like globally, while still allowing room for regional nuance. Knowledge bases are treated as living systems, continuously updated as products evolve and as new issues emerge in the field.

In this model, CX becomes a two-way conduit. It delivers support to customers, but it also delivers intelligence back into the organization. Over time, this feedback loop is one of the most effective ways to maintain consistency at scale, even as products, regions, and regulations continue to change.

## How IntouchCX Helps Brands Operate in This Reality

### Augmenting Agents With Sidd Spark

One of the ways IntouchCX supports consumer tech brands is through **Sidd Spark**, its AI-powered agent assist tool. Rather than acting as a chatbot, Sidd Spark sits alongside agents during live interactions.

Drawing on CRM data, customer history, and knowledge bases, Sidd Spark surfaces relevant information in real time and suggests next steps.

Agents remain in control, but they are no longer forced to search across multiple systems and databases while a customer waits.

As Ranjan describes it, Sidd Spark is best understood as an assistant for the agent. It reduces friction, supports higher-tier work, and helps agents deliver more confident, consistent resolutions.

### Training, Quality, and Operational Partnership

Beyond tools, IntouchCX works closely with clients through training and quality programs designed to keep pace with rapid change. Knowledge is continuously updated. Processes are refined. Feedback flows in both directions.

*"Training and quality are critical," Ranjan says. "Our QA and training teams work closely with clients to refine the knowledge base and build the right processes together. It's a collaborative effort, and it goes well beyond frontline support."*



***"If we consistently hear from customers that they're struggling with something specific, such as a dropdown in the chat experience, then we feed that insight back to the client. That feedback comes directly from what customers are telling us, and it helps brands fix issues at the source."***



**RAMESH RANJAN**

VP of Demand Generation  
& Insights at IntouchCX

**This operational partnership allows brands to adapt more quickly, even when systems are imperfect or evolving.**

## Making Fragmented Systems Usable in Practice

In consumer tech, customer data lives across multiple platforms: CRM tools, product databases, payment systems, supply chain software, analytics platforms, and increasingly, AI tools layered on top.

Each system solves a specific problem, but none provides a complete picture on its own.

As Ranjan notes, this fragmentation is one of the biggest barriers to meaningful automation. AI depends on accurate, connected data streams, yet most organizations operate with partial visibility by default. The result is that AI often knows something, but rarely knows enough to resolve complex issues on its own.

Rather than attempting to force full integration, IntouchCX focuses on helping brands operate effectively within this reality.

That means understanding how systems interact, where dependencies exist, and where data breaks down in practice, not just on architecture diagrams.

At the frontline, this translates into workflows that support agents rather than overwhelm them. Agent assist tools surface relevant information across systems. Training prepares agents to recognize when data is incomplete or inconsistent. Operational teams help brands identify recurring points of failure that can be addressed upstream.

Over time, this approach turns fragmentation from a liability into a source of insight. Instead of masking system limitations, CX becomes the place where those limitations are made visible and where practical improvements can begin.

# What Best-in-Class Consumer Tech CX Looks Like Today

Best-in-class consumer tech CX feels effortless to the customer, even when the underlying operation is complex. Customers do not repeat themselves. Resolution matters more than raw speed. Automation supports human judgment instead of replacing it.

Behind the scenes, agents are empowered rather than overwhelmed. CX insight informs product decisions. Metrics such as first contact resolution, effort score, customer satisfaction, and retention reflect not just efficiency, but trust.

**"Great consumer tech CX is invisible when it's working, but unforgettable when it isn't."**



**MARY FLYNN**

SVP of Global Program Strategy at IntouchCX

As Flynn says, *"The best consumer tech experiences feel effortless to the customer, even though there's a huge amount of complexity underneath. When it works well, customers don't see the systems, the handoffs, or the automation – they just feel supported. And that's only possible when human work is elevated, not buried under process."*

CX in the consumer tech industry can no longer be a support layer added after the fact. It is an operating model that reflects how products are built, how data is handled, and how customers are treated.

The work that remains is the work machines cannot do. Brands that succeed will be those that elevate human capability, apply AI deliberately, and partner with organizations that understand complexity in practice, not just in theory.

For consumer tech leaders, the challenge is no longer whether CX matters. It is whether their operating model is built to sustain it.

