

CASE MATERIAL

AI Customer Support — Market Entry Companion Brief

Companion edition | Not the original task input

Showcase Companion Material · Revised October 2026

Companion material prepared from the published presentation and speaker notes. It is not the original task input. Suggested task instructions are newly written, not historical prompts.

15-slide leadership decision brief; published evidence date: September 14, 2026.

Decision context and evidence status

The published case asks where a B2B SaaS entrant can compete without rebuilding a help desk or an enterprise suite. Its recommendation is to authorize a six-week design-partner validation, not a horizontal product launch. The proposed wedge is a stack-neutral, action-oriented support layer for bounded workflows. Success means verified cross-system actions, evidence receipts and a human escalation that preserves context.

This companion separates figures reported by the presentation from analytical recommendations. Public survey, pricing and market figures below reproduce the published case; they have not all been independently rechecked against primary documents in this companion. They are historical case references, not current market guidance.

Market signals and conflicting definitions

The presentation reports 85% of service leaders planned to explore or pilot conversational GenAI, citing Gartner, December 9, 2024. It reports a 15% increase in issues resolved per hour across 5,172 agents, citing Generative AI at Work, QJE 140(2), 2025. It also reports 72% would choose AI if faster resolution were guaranteed and 15% experienced a seamless AI-to-human handoff, citing Twilio. These measures have different populations and definitions; assisted productivity is not autonomous resolution.

Its broad market estimate is \$12.06B in 2024 and \$47.82B in 2030, with 25.8% CAGR; the narrower estimate is approximately \$0.582B in 2025 and \$1.635B in 2030. The cited sources are MarketsandMarkets and Knowledge Sourcing Intelligence. The published conclusion is a definition conflict, not a forecast range to average. Establish bottom-up TAM only after validating the segment, workflow and pricing unit.

The case also cites 79% calling AI-agent investment essential and a 1.4x association between unified service-channel data and describing implementation as very successful. It cites Salesforce State of Service, seventh edition, and vendor-sponsored Intercom research. Preserve sponsor and population caveats. The presentation notes a 31-point executive/consumer satisfaction gap; do not invent the missing underlying rates.

Beachhead and competing operating models

Use mid-market B2B SaaS with a hypothesized 20–200 support agents. This range is an analytical screening assumption, not a surveyed threshold. Favor high digital-contact volume, modern APIs, documented policies, measurable repeat-contact pain, and bounded billing, entitlement, access, incident or engineering-escalation work. Validate budget, integration capacity and repeatability.

The published comparison treats Intercom/Fin as a focused AI-agent product route, Zendesk as a service-suite route, and Salesforce Service Cloud/Agentforce as an enterprise data and orchestration route. All three can answer and act. Intercom/Fin emphasizes deployment speed and outcome economics; Zendesk emphasizes ticketing, omnichannel, knowledge, QA and workforce operations; Salesforce emphasizes CRM context, Flow, Data and MuleSoft. These are qualitative operating-model descriptions, not benchmark rankings.

Product routes are not necessarily independent corporate owners. Salesforce officially announced completion of its Fin acquisition on September 10, 2026. The published deck retains three product-route columns; do not describe Fin as independently owned at the September 14 cutoff. The companion does not change the deck.

Historical commercial comparison

The published September 14 pricing snapshot lists Fin AI Agent at \$0.99 per outcome, Intercom Copilot at \$29 per agent per month with annual billing, Zendesk entry pricing from \$19 per agent per month with AI depth varying by tier, and Salesforce Service Cloud public tiers from \$25 to \$550 per user per month. It lists a Salesforce action consumption example of 20 Flex Credits = \$0.10 per action. These are case-reported historical anchors, not normalized TCO or current quotations. Do not compare an outcome, seat and action as equivalent units.

The case lists 450+ Intercom apps/integrations, connector/API/MCP-led extension, Zendesk marketplace-led extension, and Salesforce AppExchange/Flow/MuleSoft orchestration. Pricing, integrations, contract terms and consumption definitions require original-page verification before being presented as current facts. The published capability matrix distinguishes customer-facing agents, human assistance, helpdesk operations, actions, grounding, QA/workforce and enterprise orchestration.

Opportunity portfolio and reasoning

Opportunity A is a verifiable cross-system resolution layer: execute bounded account, billing, entitlement and incident workflows above the existing helpdesk. Opportunity B is

AI-to-human continuity: carry identity, intent, evidence, completed steps, confidence and next action. Opportunity C is knowledge/governance operations: identify gaps, conflicts and stale policies.

The published analysis scores A at 13/15, B at 12/15 and C at 9/15 across three 1–5 criteria: customer attractiveness, competitive intensity and execution difficulty. These are analyst judgments, not observed buyer demand or market shares. Lead with A, bundle B as trust/continuity, and use C as an enabling layer. No extra workload, subscription-cost or ROI model is supplied.

Six-week validation and stop/go controls

Week 1: recruit 6–10 partners. Week 2: select 2–3 repeatable workflows. Weeks 3–4: build actions and evidence. Weeks 5–6: measure outcomes and decide proceed, pivot or stop. Measure verified completion, re-contact, escalation quality, time to resolution, cost per verified outcome, human override rate and willingness to pay.

Continue only if workflows repeat, outcome improvement is measurable, risk is controllable/auditable and unit economics can be positive. Test repeatability with two workflows across at least three partners using mostly reusable connectors. Stop or pivot if deployments become bespoke, governance fails, incumbents match the value or outcome pricing cannot cover exception/support costs. This is proposed validation design, not achieved pilot performance.

Reference trail and presentation correspondence

Published pages 1–2 establish the decision; 3–4 cover market/operating signals; 5 covers ICP; 6–8 cover product routes and commercial models; 9–12 cover positioning, evidence conflict and opportunities; 13–15 cover validation, risks and decision.

The presentation cites Gartner; Salesforce State of Service; QJE Generative AI at Work; Twilio; Five9/Hanover; SurveyMonkey; MarketsandMarkets; Knowledge Sourcing Intelligence; and official Intercom, Zendesk and Salesforce product/pricing materials. It states that a 28-source ledger was retained in the original research package. That ledger was not recovered for this companion, so no claim of having reconstructed or independently verified all 28 sources is made.