

C R E S C E N D O

Your support data is an early warning system

What recurring contact drivers reveal before they show up in churn

S AUTO QA - LAST HOUR		• REVIEWING 100% OF CONVERSATIONS
#8409	order status • shipping window	• PASS • 98
#8410	appointment reschedule	• PASS • 99
#8411	insurance coverage action	• PASS • 97
#8412	returns - quoted 14 day window • KB says 30	FLAGGED
#8413	location lookup • Austin	• PASS • 98
#8414	insurance coverage action	FLAGGED

Introduction

We've all seen the pattern — no matter the business, no matter the size. The majority of your support demand is always driven by a handful of upstream issues. Could be in your product, your process, your fulfillment or your information architecture.

What you might not realize: These issues cluster at three specific points. Purchase evaluation, checkout, and post-purchase confirmation are the pivotal moments where a customer buys, stays, or churns. These upstream issues are thus an invaluable, and under-utilized, potential diagnostic tool.

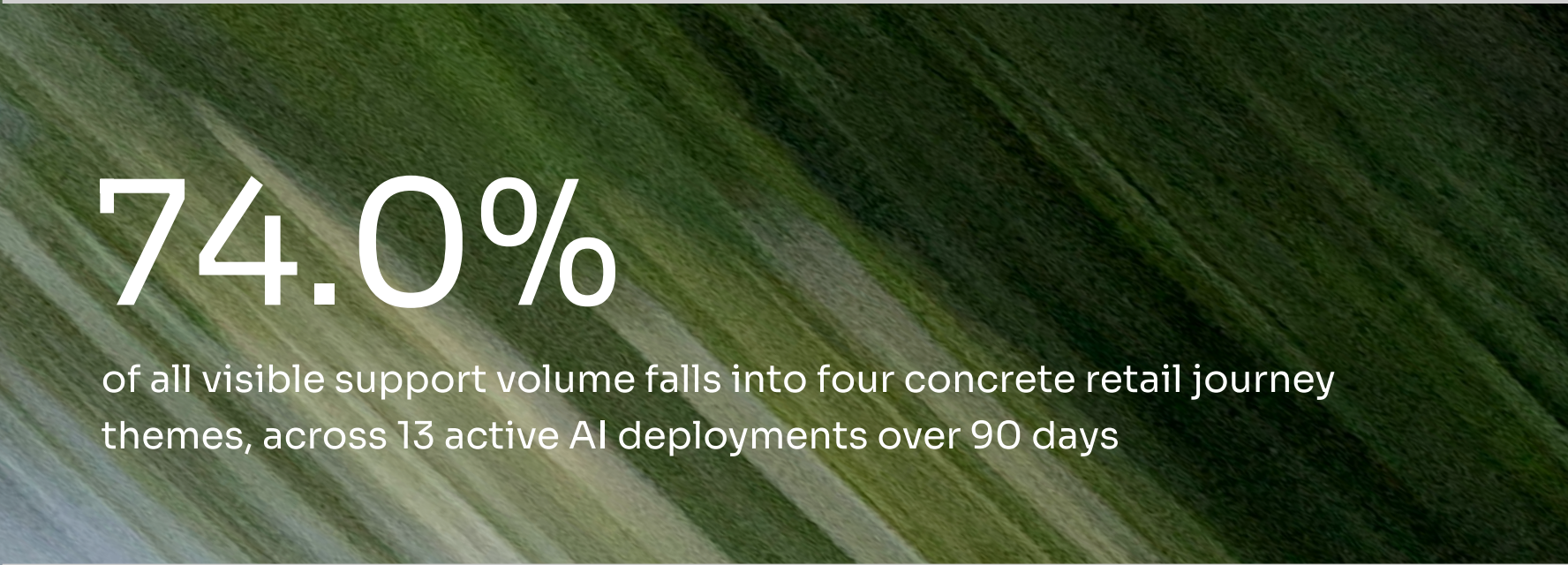
Across the 124 operations we analyzed, spanning more than 30 verticals:

92%

of root causes traced back to something upstream of the support conversation — process design, information architecture, product reliability, or missing integrations

8%

were genuinely about how the conversation itself was handled



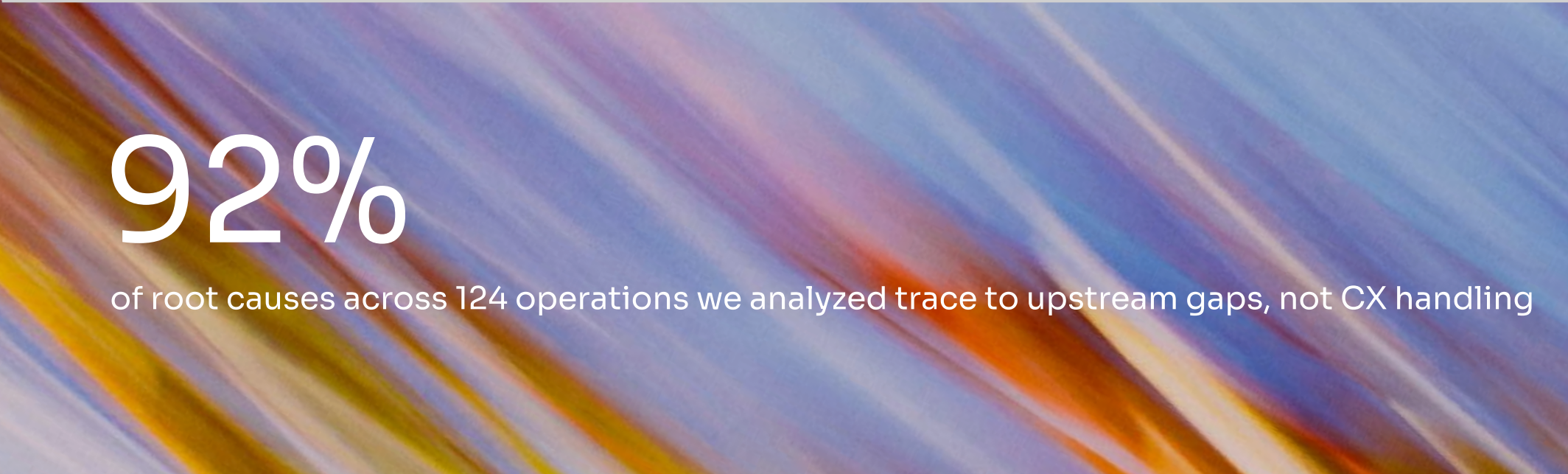
74.0%

of all visible support volume falls into four concrete retail journey themes, across 13 active AI deployments over 90 days



61.5%

of all volume concentrates in three themes: shipping, product, and returns



92%

of root causes across 124 operations we analyzed trace to upstream gaps, not CX handling

Directional first-party evidence · 13 active retail/e-commerce AI deployments · Apr 1–Jun 29, 2026 (90 days)

Contents

- | | |
|----|-------------------------------|
| 01 | Turning analysis into action |
| 02 | A deep dive into data |
| 03 | What we recommend |
| 04 | Why the full CX layer matters |
| 05 | Revenue implications |
| 06 | Pattern and big picture |
| 07 | Schedule a demo |

01

Turning analysis into action

Most CX leaders know their CSAT score. Very few know the cause. That gap is not a measurement problem, but instead an architecture problem.

An AI-only CX vendor can tell you shipping is high volume. With an integration into your systems, it might tell you where AI handed off and how often. What it cannot tell you is why — because it sees only the AI layer.

Because Crescendo runs AI agents, QA, and analytics as one system, we see beyond the handoff. Customer intent, AI containment, human handling, quality insight, and post-resolution satisfaction are all connected to the same conversation.

Shipping is high volume

70% handoff rate

CSAT down 5%

ROOT CAUSE

stale tracking, unclear ownership, no proactive comms

FIX

Integration, workflow change, or fulfillment improvement — not coaching

02

A deep dive into data

90 days, 13 deployments

We pulled category-level data across 13 active retail and e-commerce AI deployments over a 90-day window (April 1 – June 29, 2026), covering nearly 200 conversations. After separating broad catch-all categories (general service, account, routing, admin) from concrete retail journey themes, four concrete themes account for 74% of total volume.

Four themes in support contact

01

Issues with delivery + order visibility

The largest theme in the sample and the highest handoff burden of any concrete journey category. Deployment-level detail confirms the pattern:

- Furniture Company's order and shipping categories ran 76–82% escalation.
- Gift Company's delivery-issue category hit 76% escalation.
- Gift Company B's shipping category sat at 78% escalation.

This is the clearest signal in the entire dataset that customers contact support when delivery and order progress is not visible or recoverable — not when agents perform poorly.

Solution

Proactive delay and tracking notifications, automated SLA credits for missed windows, carrier-status sync, and structured intake before agent handoff.

35.6%

of concrete journey volume

26.4%

of all volume

70.4%

Escalation rate

28.7%
of concrete journey volume

21.2%
of all volume

53.1%
Escalation rate

18.8%
of concrete journey volume

13.9%
of all volume

53.1%
Escalation rate

02 Product problems

This theme mixes product-use questions, troubleshooting, quality issues, and damaged or wrong items. In other words: where product reliability, UX guidance, and support workflow all meet.

- Gift Company’s “order arrived damaged” category ran 95% escalation; “quality is not as expected” ran 91%.
- Furniture Company’s product category, its single largest, escalated at 82%.

Higher CSAT than shipping overall, but specific failure modes within it are just as severe — the average masks the worst pockets.

Solution

Product QA and packaging improvements, guided diagnostics, accessibility-aware troubleshooting, and AI pre-handoff evidence collection (photos, condition, order match).

03 From returns to replacements

When customers need a refund or an exchange, or have a warranty issue. Eligibility checks, evidence requirements, labels, and replacement workflows that AI can contain only if the right systems exist behind it.

- Shoe Company’s Claims category ran 59% escalation;
- Shoe Company B’s refunds ran 77%.

This is consistently a process and systems problem — verification steps, evidence requirements, and label delivery — not a knowledge gap on the agent’s part.

Solution

Product QA and packaging improvements, guided diagnostics, accessibility-aware troubleshooting, and AI pre-handoff evidence collection (photos, condition, order match).



16.9%

of concrete journey volume

12.5%

of all volume

57.8%

Escalation rate

04

Purchase promotions

While this theme, which includes checkout, payment, billing, promotions, loyalty & purchase UX, is smaller in volume, it's highest in commercial consequence.

- Dessert Company's Loyalty category alone drove 68% escalation.
- Gift Company B's Billing category ran 83% escalation.

A support contact in this theme often represents a conversion already blocked or a customer already deciding whether to stay, not a routine question.

Solution

Visible credit and reward balances in cart and checkout, auto-apply logic, clearer promotion terms, and payment integrations that surface rather than hide credit.

03

What we recommend

The diagnostic matters only if it produces a specific, actionable path forward — not a general call to “improve the experience.” Four examples from recent Crescendo deep-dives show what that looks like in practice: a precise problem, tied to real customer behavior, with a concrete recommendation attached.*



GIFT COMPANY

Problems with personalization

Confusion → abandoned carts

Many customers got confused while personalizing purchases: murky checkout steps, difficulty toggling between options, and address uncertainties. The result: Abandoned carts, repeated customer service contacts, or orders left incomplete.

RECOMMENDATION

Product QA and packaging improvements, guided diagnostics, accessibility-aware troubleshooting, and AI pre-handoff evidence collection (photos, condition, order match).



SHOE COMPANY

Half-size uncertainty

Size questions → contact support

Customers can’t tell if half-sizes are available. The result: Confusion at the point of purchase.

RECOMMENDATION

In the sizing chart, specify which sizes are not currently offered and state that half-sizes are not available at this time. Link directly to the sizing guide. Clearer sizing guidance heads off a support contact.



WELLNESS COMPANY

“Check with the carrier” rubs customers the wrong way.

Poor delivery communication → frustration

Escalations often occur when customers hear “check with the carrier” and feel they must investigate delivery problems themselves.

RECOMMENDATION

Clearly communicate that Wellness Company will manage carrier coordination; set defined investigation timelines; and proactively follow up. This reduces perceived risk and frustration and strengthens trust even during delays.



GIFT COMPANY B

Oops! My order has mistakes
I can't fix...

Can't edit orders → contact support

Submitted orders lock immediately, preventing the customer from fixing their own mistakes. What could be a self-service fix becomes a support contact.

RECOMMENDATION

Improve editor reliability — upload stability, draft auto-save consistency, clearer confirmation previews — while introducing a short, operationally aligned grace period for order changes. This addresses both technical friction and post-checkout error anxiety. Avoidable escalations decrease, automation containment improves, and trust gets reinforced earlier in the customer journey.

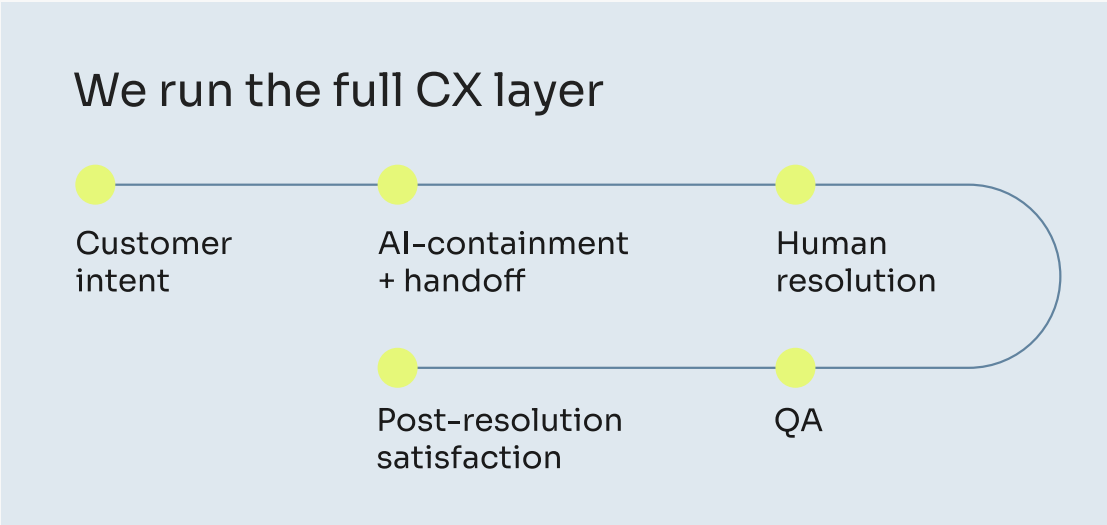
The pattern across all four: **None of these are agent-performance problems.**

Two boil down to website and checkout copy. One is a communication and ownership policy. One is a product and workflow change. Every fix lives upstream of the support conversation — exactly where we suggest the leverage actually is.

“AI-only vendors just see where AI escalates. Crescendo sees beyond that — to why it escalated, what it cost, and what kind of fix is actually required.”

Why the full CX layer matters

A pure-play AI vendor with system integrations can tell you shipping volume is high, and maybe where the AI escalated. That is a real capability — but it stops at the boundary of the AI layer.



That connected view is what lets us say not just that shipping escalates often, but that it escalates because tracking goes stale, ownership of the issue is unclear, no one proactively reaches out, and there is no fulfillment visibility for either the agent or the customer. Each of those has a different fix — an AI workflow change, a system integration, a policy update, or an upstream operational fix.

AN AI-ONLY VENDOR SEES... The AI layer	CRESCENDO SEES... The full causal chain
Conversations, containment rate, and handoff points — and, with integrations, some downstream reporting. That tells you shipping is high volume. It does not tell you why it escalates or what fixes it.	Customer intent, AI containment and handoff, human resolution, quality review, and post-resolution satisfaction — connected to the same case. That connection is what reveals the cause, not just the symptom.
THE QUESTION WE ASK Should this contact have existed?	THE RESULT Operational intelligence that compounds
Not just “did the AI perform well?” but was this escalation avoidable, and what upstream change prevents it? That reframe is what turns a support queue into a powerful diagnostics tool.	Because the system accumulates knowledge across AI, human, and QA layers, diagnostic capability improves over time. One account improved AI solved rate from 41% to 70% over five months through a recurring diagnostic cycle, not a one-time fix.

You cannot tell which one you need from AI-layer data alone.



Revenue implications

The issues we're exploring cluster at purchase evaluation, checkout, and post-purchase confirmation — the moments that decide whether a customer buys, stays, or churns.

A customer who contacts support because a promo code will not apply is a conversion at risk.

A customer who cannot find their store credit before checkout is a lost order. A customer who cannot confirm their return was received is making a repurchase decision right now.

CASE STUDY — DIRECTIONAL ANALYSIS

Chat operating as a conversion layer, not a support function

A transcript-level analysis of chats from a peak buying window for a personalized gifting brand, examining how chat was influencing sales outcomes.

49%

of chats occurred during active buying evaluation

19%

addressed direct checkout blockers — customers who could not complete purchase without help

7%

of chat sessions needed to convert to break even on the full channel investment

Directional and modeled from transcript-level signals. True incremental lift requires controlled A/B or holdout testing.

This Gift Company B account also appears in the 90-day retail pull: Shipping ran 78% escalation, and Billing ran 83% escalation — both well above the cross-deployment average.

The same account where chat is shown to influence nearly half of purchase-evaluation conversations is also losing customers to fulfillment and billing friction. The revenue argument and the friction argument are not separate stories. They are the same operation, seen from two angles.

Pattern and big picture

This is not just a retail story. We ran the same diagnostic lens — concentration of escalation drivers, and whether the root cause sits upstream of the conversation — across our broader case study library: 124 distinct operations spanning more than 30 verticals. Ninety-two percent of root causes traced to something upstream of how the conversation was handled. The retail data above is the deep, quantified version of a pattern that holds everywhere we look.

VERTICAL	CONCENTRATION SIGNAL	ROOT CAUSE
E-commerce & Retail	61.5% of all volume across 13 deployments concentrates in shipping, product, and returns	Fulfillment visibility, returns process, checkout UX, AI handoff gaps
Education Technology	42.3% of DSAT cases affected by Documentation-Driven Friction in one program. In another, 95% of escalated extension requests were policy-approved outcomes that needed no human	Information architecture and AI actionability limits
Healthcare & Technology	72% AI Accuracy on first audit, with 71% of reviewed AI tickets containing at least one miss tied to knowledge alignment, not agent behavior	Access reliability, eligibility logic, documentation controls
Finance & Payment Tech	>70% of billing contacts in one program driven by two issue types: duplicate charges and unintended renewals.	Subscription visibility, entitlement design
Food Service & Hospitality	43% of low-CSAT interactions tied to maintenance in one program; low-CSAT cases took 3.31 days to resolve vs. 1.15 days for high-CSAT — not an agent gap, a vendor SLA gap	Process and ownership: vendor SLAs, status visibility
Social Media & Gaming	70% of complaints in one program driven by repeated denials and unclear expectations; escalation outcomes often contradicted prior denials	Workflow and exception-path design
Sales & Productivity	47.7% of AI handoffs in one program from two categories where AI understood the request but lacked backend access to act on it	Backend integration and AI actionability limits



Schedule a demo

Where upstream issues cluster is a source of under-explored insights with revenue implications. An AI-only CX vendor sees only the AI layer. Crescendo sees beyond that — to why it escalated, what it cost, and what kind of fix is needed.

Set up a personalized demo with us. We'll show you how your support data could act as an early warning system — and evolve your customer experience.

Book a demo today.

crescendo.ai/demo

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