



NUCLEUS
RESEARCH

How Zendesk is paving the path towards next generation service

ANALYST

Cameron Marsh

The Bottom Line

At its annual Relate event in Denver, Zendesk advanced its position as a broader service platform for both customer and employee experience. The vendor's announcements indicate a shift from traditional support software toward an AI-powered service environment built around four entry points: customer experience, employee service, AI Agents, and Contact Center. This expanded approach gives Zendesk more ways to enter customer accounts, support additional use cases, and consolidate service workflows across the enterprise. The announcements also show Zendesk setting the benchmark for the market to move beyond chatbot-based deflection toward verified resolution, with AI agents, copilots, workflow automation, and quality measurement designed to improve outcomes across human and automated interactions. In addition, Zendesk's recent acquisitions strengthen its ability to support AI-native service, employee knowledge discovery, analytics, and contact center modernization. Combined with the customer partnership and implementation support frequently cited by Zendesk users, Nucleus expects these developments to support Zendesk's continued growth as organizations look to modernize service without adding complexity.

Overview

Organizations across all industries are under growing pressure to improve customer and employee experiences while managing higher interaction volumes, tighter budgets, and rising expectations for faster resolution. Many have also reached the limits of fragmented service environments, where disconnected channels, knowledge bases, ticketing tools, workforce systems, and AI point solutions add complexity before measurable value is achieved.

Zendesk's Relate 2026 announcements address this challenge by positioning the company as a broader service platform rather than a standalone customer support application. The company is building around four primary entry points: CX, Employee Service, AI Agents, and Contact Center. This gives customers multiple ways to adopt Zendesk based on their immediate service priorities while creating a path for broader platform expansion.

A central theme of the event was Zendesk's move from deflection-based automation to resolution-based service. Through its Autonomous Service Workforce and Resolution Platform, Zendesk is bringing together AI agents, data, knowledge, workflows, governance, and quality measurement to support more accountable service outcomes.

This direction reflects a broader shift in how organizations evaluate service AI. Customers are no longer looking only for automated responses or reduced ticket volume. They want fewer escalations, more accurate answers, faster resolutions, stronger agent productivity, and clearer accountability for AI performance. Zendesk's announcements align its platform, pricing model, and roadmap around those measurable outcomes.

Announcements

Zendesk's announcements at Relate 2026 were highlighted by its announcement of the Autonomous Service Workforce, continued expansion of the Resolution Platform, new and expanded AI Agent capabilities, advancements across its Copilot portfolio, and investments in employee service, contact center, workflow automation, analytics, and governance.

The Resolution Platform gives Zendesk a foundation to connect AI agents, knowledge, workflows, and governance around measurable service outcomes.

Zendesk Expands its Enterprise Entry Points

Zendesk is expanding around four primary entry points: CX, Employee Service, AI Agents, and CCaaS. This gives customers more ways to adopt Zendesk based on their immediate needs while creating a path for broader platform expansion over time.

For customers, this reduces the need to evaluate Zendesk only as a traditional support platform. Organizations can begin with customer service, employee service, contact center modernization, or AI-led automation, then expand into adjacent use cases as their service needs mature. This supports platform consolidation and can reduce the complexity of managing separate tools for support, knowledge, contact center operations, and AI automation.

Autonomous Service Workflows

Zendesk announced the Autonomous Service Workforce, where specialized AI agents work alongside human teams to resolve customer and employee issues. This marks a shift away from single AI agents to a multi-agent environment where agents and humans have specialized tasks and work together.

The strategy is supported by Zendesk's Resolution Learning Loop, which uses service interactions to identify knowledge gaps and improve automated responses over time. For customers, this can improve resolution quality, reduce escalations, and make AI more accountable to service outcomes rather than simple containment metrics.

AI Agents and Agent Builder

Zendesk announced expanded AI Agent capabilities and Agent Builder, a no-code tool for building, testing, deploying, and optimizing custom AI agents. These agents are designed to operate across channels and reflect each organization's policies, workflows, data, and business logic.

For customers, Agent Builder can reduce the technical effort required to automate more complex service processes. Rather than relying on generic bots or separate AI tools, organizations can create agents that understand their operating model and take action across front, middle, and back-office workflows.

ITAM Expansion

Zendesk expanded its employee service capabilities with the general availability of IT asset management, bringing asset data directly into Zendesk Support. The update gives IT teams a unified place to track, monitor, and manage technology assets, including device status, assignment, location, and warranty information, while making that data available directly within ticket workflows.

For customers, this helps reduce hardware blind spots across the service desk. By connecting tickets with the assets tied to each employee, Zendesk can reduce tool switching, improve agent context, and support faster issue resolution. The update also strengthens lifecycle management, security, and compliance by enabling clearer asset records, audit trails, and remote actions such as locking or erasing compromised devices from the Agent Workspace.

Employee Service

Zendesk advanced its Employee Service strategy with autonomous AI agents built for internal support. These agents are designed to operate in tools such as Slack and Microsoft Teams, search across enterprise systems, and enforce source-level permissions.

For customers, this extends Zendesk's value beyond external customer support. HR, IT, finance, and operations teams can use the same service model to reduce repetitive requests, improve employee self-service, shorten internal resolutions, and optimize asset lifecycle management. Zendesk's acquisition of Unleash further supports this direction by strengthening enterprise search, permission-based knowledge access, and internal service automation.

Copilot Experiences

Zendesk announced new and expanded Copilot experiences for agents, administrators, knowledge teams, and analysts. These include Agent Copilot, Admin Copilot, Knowledge Copilot, and Analyst Copilot.

For customers, these tools embed AI across the service organization, not just in customer-facing interactions. Agents can receive guidance and suggested actions, administrators can identify and fix workflow issues, knowledge teams can close content gaps, and analysts can better identify trends and root causes. This supports faster decision-making and reduces manual work across the service lifecycle.

Contact Center Expansion

Zendesk continued to expand its capabilities through three core announcements: its native contact center experience, video calling and screen sharing, and Voice AI Agents. The native contact center brings voice, messaging, AI, ticketing, and workforce management into a single agent workspace, supported by a new call console for managing end-to-end interactions such as click-to-call, transfers, and in-call support. Zendesk also announced video calling and screen sharing, which will enable agents to send secure links directly from the workspace to launch browser-based video sessions alongside the customer's full interaction history.

For customers, this helps unify contact center and digital support operations. By bringing voice, messaging, AI, workforce management, video, and ticketing into a more connected environment, Zendesk can reduce channel fragmentation, improve agent visibility, and support faster resolution across service touchpoints. The addition of Voice AI Agents, with multi-brand and multilingual support across more than 60 languages, further strengthens Zendesk's ability to support more complete customer experiences across both digital and voice channels.

Quality Score and Governance

Zendesk announced Quality Score, which provides automated, continuous quality measurement across human and AI interactions. This gives teams a more complete view of service quality than traditional sampled QA processes. For customers, continuous quality measurement can improve visibility into where service is breaking down and where AI or human agents need adjustment. As organizations automate more interactions, this type of governance becomes critical to maintaining accuracy, trust, and consistent service performance.

Knowledge, Context, and Workflow Automation

Zendesk announced Context Graph, expanded Knowledge Graph connectors, Action Flows for AI Agents, and new workflow connectors. These capabilities are designed to help AI and human agents access the right information, understand prior context, and take action across systems. For customers, this is expected to strengthen the foundation for more advanced automation. AI agents need accurate knowledge, operational context, and workflow access to resolve issues without unnecessary handoffs. Zendesk's investments in knowledge, context, and workflow orchestration can help customers automate more service processes while reducing integration complexity.

Continuous quality measurement helps organizations govern AI-led service at scale without losing visibility into accuracy, trust, or performance.

Why Customers are Choosing Zendesk

Customers at Relate were energized by Zendesk's product direction, particularly its investments in AI Agents, employee service, CCaaS, and workflow automation. These capabilities give organizations a clearer path to modernize service, reduce manual work, and improve resolution quality across customer and employee interactions. However, while the product roadmap is expanding Zendesk's competitive position, customers consistently pointed to Zendesk's people and partnership model as a key reason they selected the vendor. Nucleus met with dozens of customers at the event, and each cited Zendesk's support, responsiveness, or customer relationship as an important factor in the decision. This is significant because AI-led service transformation requires more than new functionality; it requires implementation confidence, guidance, and trust that the vendor can help translate technology into measurable operational value.