99% CSAT playbook

5 steps for empowering agents in the age of AI

# AI is raising the bar on customer expectations

Generative AI has upended the customer service industry, from how customers interact with brands to the way support agents work on a daily basis. As businesses recalibrate with this disruptive technology, customers are flocking toward brands that are leading the way — 53% of customers believe AI will improve the customer experience.

Leading brands that have heavily invested in AI are setting a new bar for customer service. For example, UPS uses AI to optimize delivery routes and manage its fleets, improving delivery efficiency and reducing fuel use. Lululemon is experimenting with AI to not only predict and recommend products to customers but also inform and design new products.

While customers are open to the use of AI in their experiences, their trust has dipped by 14% since generative AI took off in November 2022. That's why customer experience leaders have a new imperative: protecting trust and empathy. To bridge the trust gap, they're focusing on training frontline agents to utilize AI for much more than deflection. Instead, it can quickly surface the insights and context needed to enable more empathetic interactions that only human agents can deliver.

For customer service teams to meet and exceed these new standards, they need to be equipped with the right tools and test where AI best fits in their workflows. Empowered agents are in the best position to deliver great experiences that make customers happier — and their teams have the CSAT score to prove it.

Here at Front, we're creating the only AI-powered customer service platform built for collaboration. Our own agents rely on using Front to support our customers. The result? We're averaging 98% CSAT — 13 points higher than the industry average. Front itself is a critical piece to our support team's performance, but the principles and plays they run are things your company can do too. Case in point: Our customers are also using these plays to average 96% CSAT, exceeding industry benchmarks by nine points.

85%
of customers are willing to go out of their way for better customer service[1]
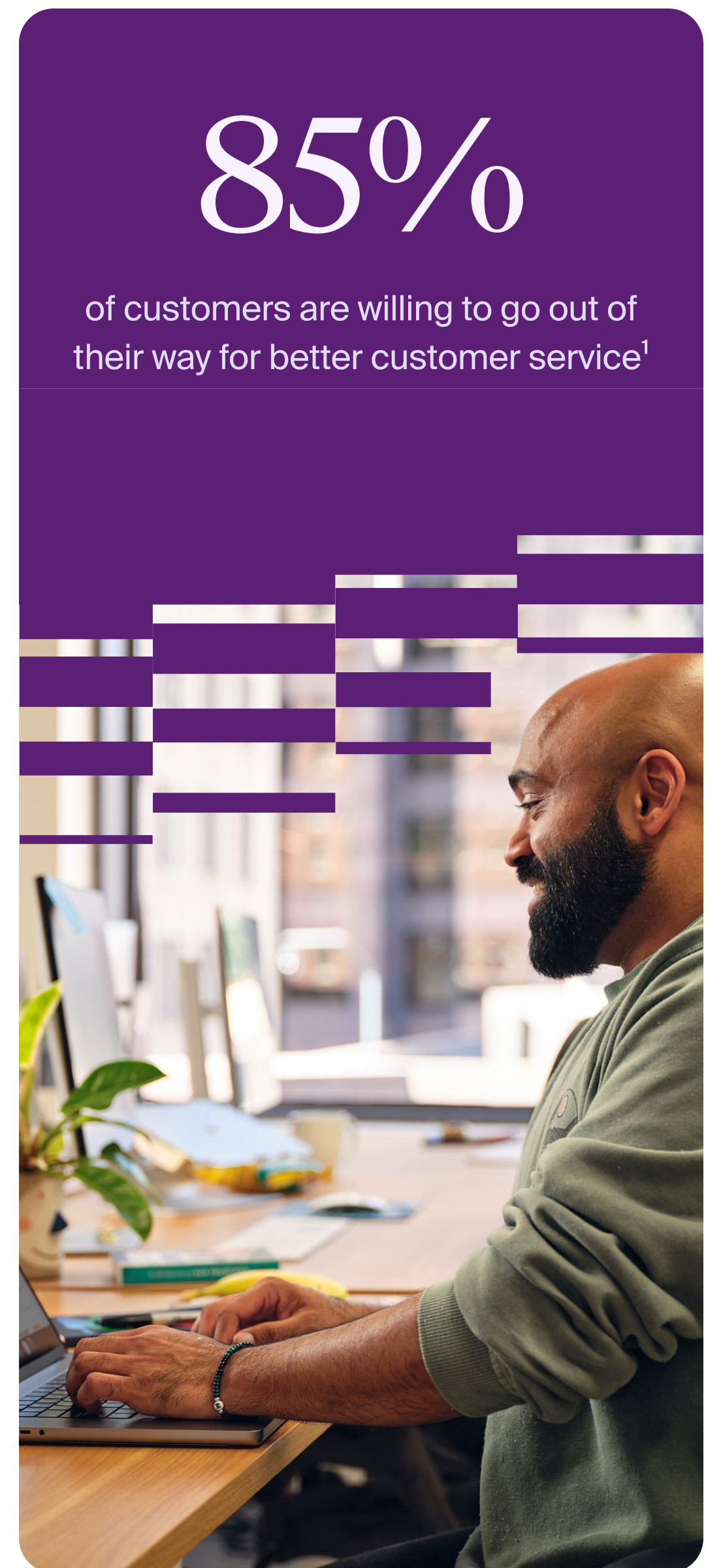
1. ACA Customer Service/CX Study. Shep Hyken.

Customer loyalty is getting harder to keep

AI is now a driving force behind faster response times, expanded support channels, deeper customer insights, large-scale personalization, and proactive customer support.

Better customer experiences increase brand loyalty, drive revenue, and give a competitive edge. Good customer service makes customers come back for more — 47% are willing to pay extra for better service.

Add convenience into the experience, and 87% are more willing to recommend a brand to family and friends. But the stakes are high when it comes to getting the customer experience right, where 79% would switch to a competitor with a better experience.

Customers are noticing the contrast between leading and lagging experiences:

65% expect companies to adapt to their changing needs and preferences[1]	**82%** expect their problem to be immediately resolved with agents[2]	**78%** expect more personalized experiences when interacting with brands than ever before[2]
60% think poor response time would make them more likely to do business elsewhere[3]		**68%** are more likely to switch to a competitor if they have to repeat themselves[3]

1. State of the Connected Customer. Salesforce.
2. 2024 Annual State of Service Trends Report. HubSpot.
3. ACA Customer Service/CX Study. Shep Hyken.

The modern customer's hierarchy of needs

Customers want businesses to use the data they have on them to create easy, convenient, and personalized experiences — even anticipating their needs.
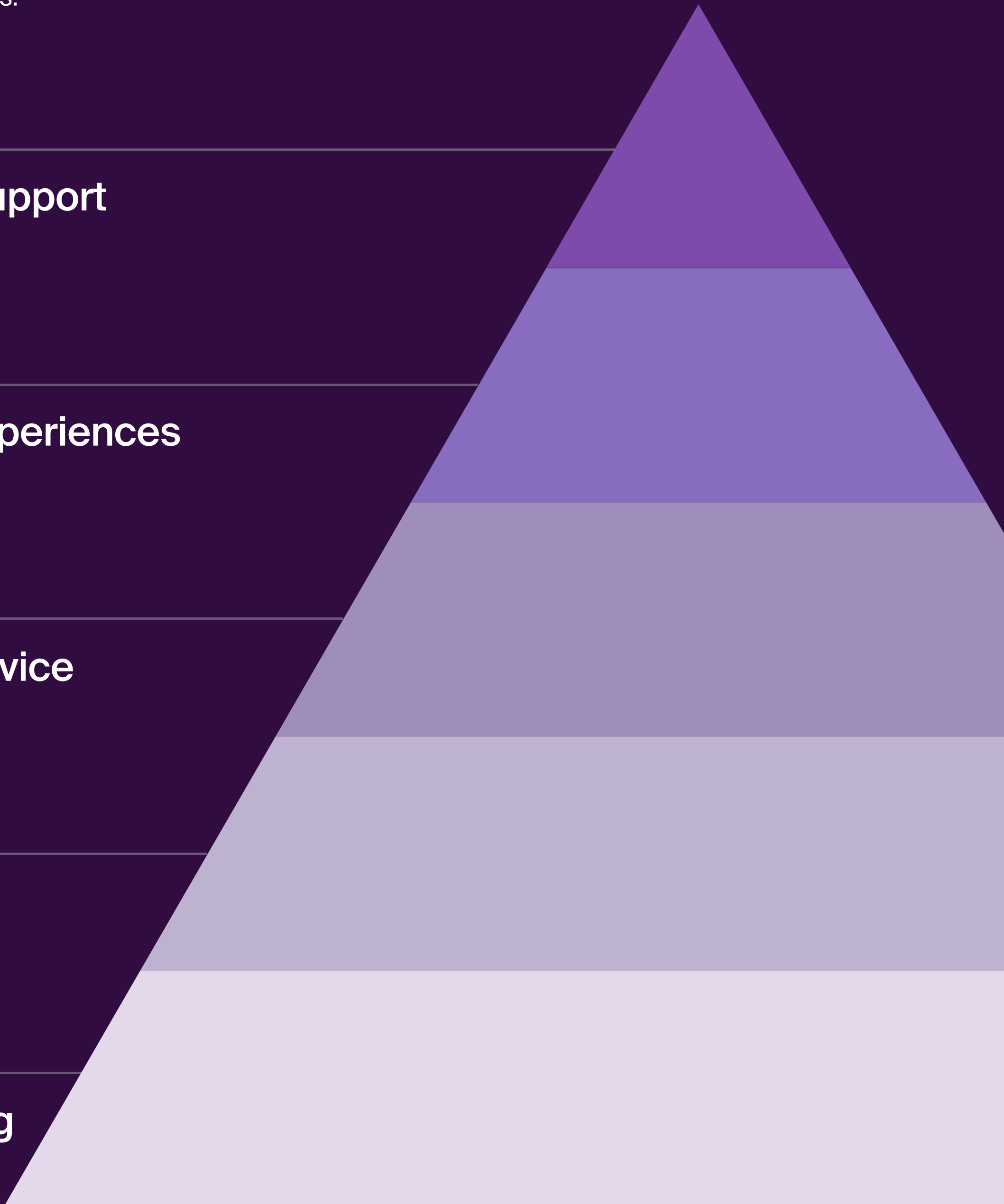
01   Proactive customer support

02   More personalized experiences

03   Fast and accurate service

04   Easier access to help

05   Deeper understanding

The modern customer's hierarchy of needs

01 Proactive customer support

Companies know more about their customer journey to anticipate problems before they arise. A thorough analysis of customer behavior and historical support inquiries inform smoother experiences, where customers can be primed with automated notifications, virtual guided tours, and self-service channels offering relevant resources — even an extra special printed note so they know what to do next. For example, Brooklinen includes an artfully photographed care instruction booklet with every order, so customers know exactly how to take care of their new luxury sheets.

02 More personalized experiences

Amazon and Sephora use analytical and predictive technologies to revolutionize the way customers receive custom recommendations with tailored content or related products. For example, Amazon uses purchase history to recommend repeat products that could be a part of Subscribe & Save programs.

Meanwhile, Sephora has a fully omnichannel support experience by remembering which products were bought in-store or online for not just easier repeat purchases but also tailored email campaigns related to your current beauty routine.

03 Fast and accurate service

Businesses that have embraced workflow automation ensure no messages slip through the cracks, creating seamless and sophisticated escalation processes to get issues resolved quickly. Intelligent routing is the go-to automation for getting customer messages to the right person who can respond in the fastest and most accurate way, regardless of channel. As agents respond to customers, they're now better equipped to get full customer context with AI serving relevant knowledge content — resolving issues with less back and forth.

04 Easier access to help

Customers can find more round-the-clock support through growing options of self-service channels like chatbots, help centers, customer portals, live chat, social media, mobile apps, or community forums. As self-service gains popularity with customers, companies are seeing where they can optimize for more conversational chatbots, better knowledge base article suggestions, seamless transitions to human agents, and tailored support content experiences.

Re-evaluating your self-service strategy? Download the guide: 5 best practices for stellar self-service support.

05 Deeper understanding

Customers feel more understood when their feedback has a direct impact on process improvement, and automated CSAT surveys and AI-assisted customer sentiment analysis make this easier and more scalable than ever before. Businesses can pinpoint what stages of their customer journey need improvement when they gather timely feedback. And now, AI can takeall these various inputs — tickets, social media, customer chats, etc. — and help identify strengths and weaknesses within the customer experience.

Measuring customer satisfaction via CSAT

There's no shortage of metrics that support leaders are tracking, which will vary across businesses depending on industry.

Average handle time might not matter as much to an insurance company as it would to the retail industry. NPS might have more weight with a consulting agency while first response time might be critical for consumer brands. Whatever the blend of metrics to help gauge customer satisfaction is exactly that: there is no sole miracle metric that can tell the full story in one number.

At Front, we track CSAT since it directly measures how satisfied customers are with the service they just received. While CSAT is Front's north star metric, we factor it alongside other metrics like resolution time, first response time, and average handle time, among others. Plus, CSAT is a metric that's more universally recognized and easily understood for those outside of customer support.

"Simply put, customer satisfaction is the north star for Front because it impacts the bottom line. It's a direct pulse on the quality of work your team is delivering and how happy your customers are with your support."

Kenji Hayward
Head of Support, Front

Using CSAT as a key performance indicator (KPI) for customer service has several benefits:

Customer feedback

Companies can understand where they excelled or fell short in their service

Customer loyalty

Satisfied customers are more likely to return and become brand advocates

Competitive advantage

High CSAT scores can seal the deal when customers are evaluating businesses

Quality improvement

CSAT data can drive process and product/ service improvements

Benchmarking

CSAT can be compared internally and externally to understand service quality

Early warning system

A decline in CSAT helps pinpoint root causes of dissatisfied customers

Collecting and calculating CSAT

Measure CSAT by offering customers to rate their experience on a 5-star scale (1 being poor, 5 being excellent) and give additional feedback with an open comment field.

CSAT surveys can be distributed in a few ways:

- Quick link in email signatures of agents
- Agents can manually push out the survey after a recent engagement with a customer
- Automated rules send a survey within a certain time frame after the issue has been resolved

Calculate CSAT scores by taking the number of satisfied customers (those who rated the experience as 4 or 5) and dividing it by the total number of responses before multiplying by 100 to get a percentage. Average scores above 90% are considered exceptional.

Equally as important is the customer dissatisfaction score (DSAT), which are all the responses rated three stars or less. DSAT sheds light on the root cause of what made a customer unhappy to help determine what needs to be improved to avoid this in the future.

Five plays for agents to deliver exceptional customer experiences

Customer service platforms like Front enable teams to deliver fast, efficient, and exceptional service, regardless of team size.

Front's award-winning support team consistently achieves a high CSAT score by using Front to seamlessly work with other teams, access full customer context, save time with automation and AI, and track key metrics for continuous improvement.

And it's not just us, our customers have best-in-class CSAT scores too — they're even willing to make them public!

Front is the all-in-one customer service platform built for collaboration.

We help over 9,000 businesses give 5-star service by bringing core support channels in one intuitive, AI-powered workspace where teams can build collaborative workflows across the entire customer lifecycle.

As your customer base and its needs grow, Front's AI features and customer intelligence serve up the efficiency and insights needed to keep your entire organization customer-first, every day.

01

Resolve customer issues faster with real-time team collaboration

Uniting teams into one workspace prevents communication bottlenecks and data silos.

80% of agents say better access to data from other departments would improve their work. Seamless, cross-functional collaboration is key for agents to easily get feedback, speed up approvals, and streamline escalations.

Front was built to do just that. For example, a customer writes into Tier 1 support asking for help with setting up a complex workflow. The support agent is able to confirm within Front that the inquiry is coming from a high-value account.

Without needing to use a different tool, the agent loops in a Customer Success Manager to handle the workflow consultation, expediting a deeper relationship with the customer.

In Front, support tickets no longer need to stay in their own swim lane when, in reality, fluid teamwork helps resolve the issue faster.

How does this improve CSAT?

✓ Speedy resolution with less handle time

✓ Seamless and consistent experience
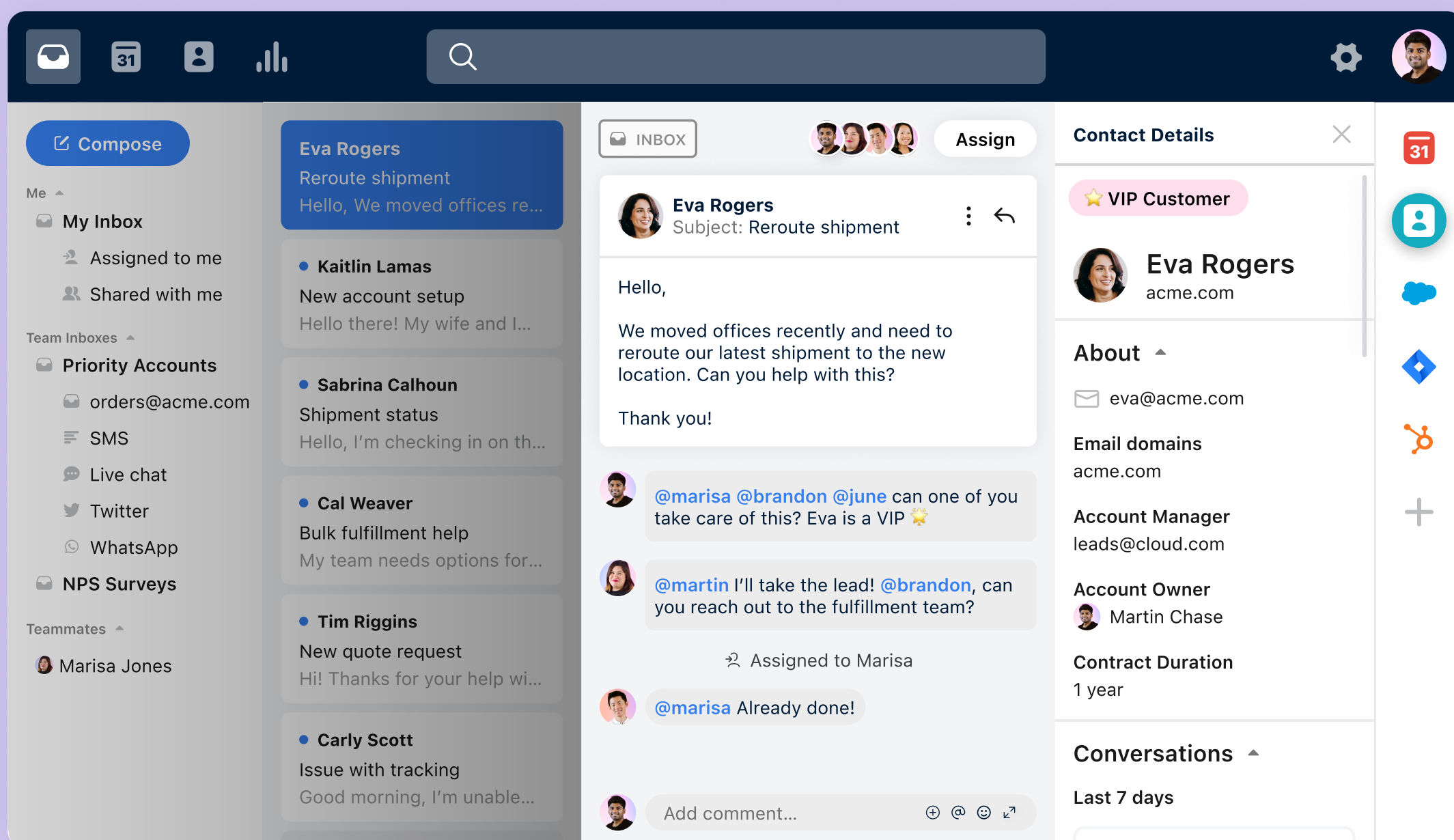
Teammates can internally collaborate in real time about a customer message — no need to start a new thread in a different tool or channel.

02

Centralize customer communications for the full picture

The customer service tech stack is looking more complicated than ever with organizations broadening their range of channels to meet customers where they are.

As brands invest in their omnichannel customer experiences, they can reduce context switching when communications are consolidated into one place for their agents. Centralizing customer communication into Front makes it easy for teams to have everything they need at their fingertips while giving customers a seamless experience.

At Branch Insurance, co-founder and CTO Joe Emison was thrilled to be able to hook all his channels into Front to easily connect his agents:

> "We saw our productivity improve by 40% in our member support team managing email, text, and chat. We wanted our outbound programmatic email and text communication to connect into a high-touch conversation with a human agent. And that's exactly how Front is built."

In the first six months of switching to Front, Branch saw its CSAT score jump from 85% to 90%.

And the integrations don't end there. Front gives a unified view of the full customer context by integrating key business systems. Salesforce, HubSpot, or Microsoft Dynamics can be brought into Front to sync contacts and accounts, so all the necessary customer data can be accessed in one view to streamline responses.
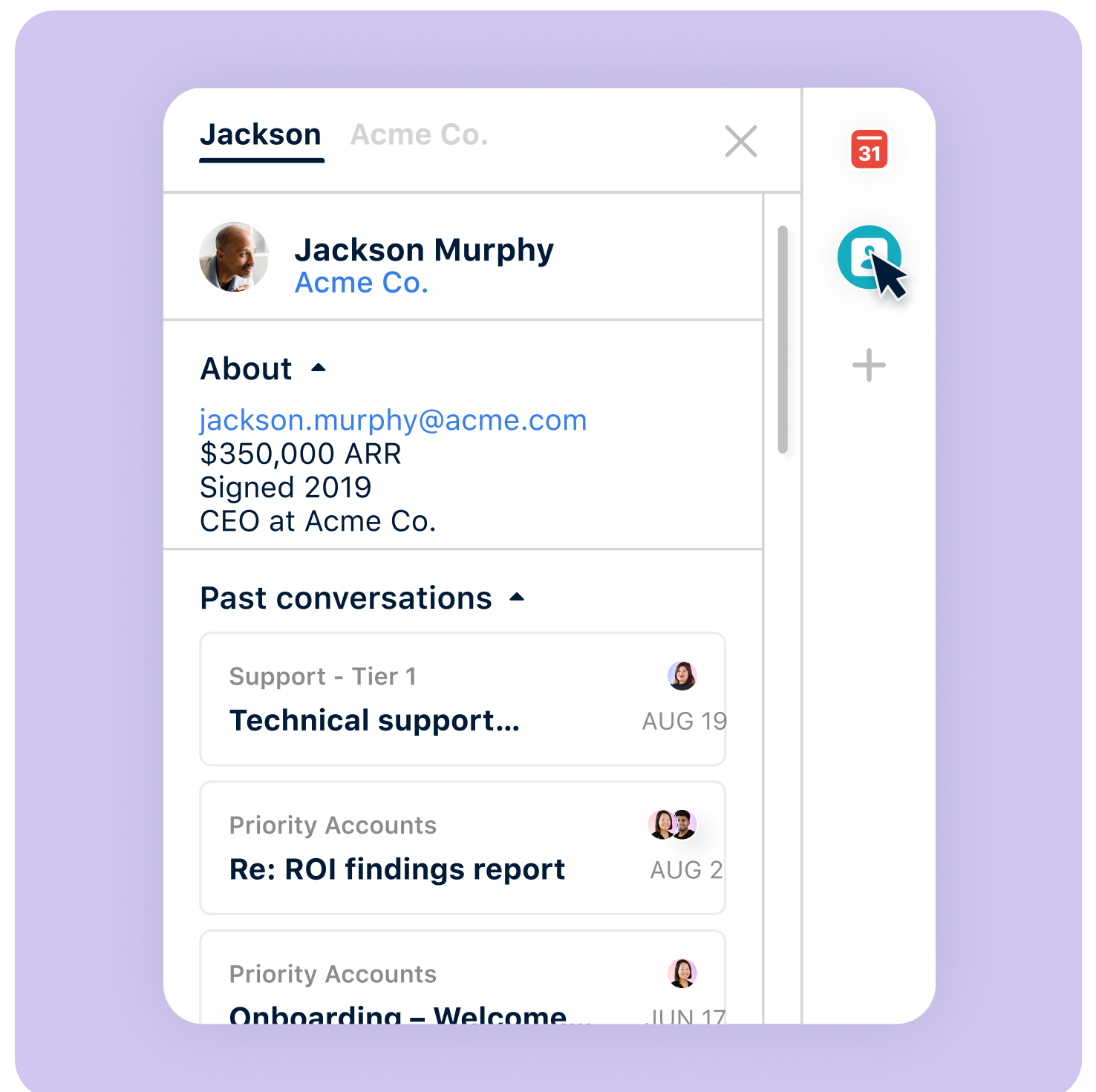
Agents can have customer details from their CRM at their fingertips when crafting their responses.

How does this improve CSAT?

✓ Reduces customers repeating themselves

✓ Consistent experience across channels

✓ Faster, more accurate service

03

Boost productivity with a little help from AI

AI is reducing the mental load of repetitive tasks for support agents, so they can reserve their brainpower for higher impact work.

A recent study showed support agents using AI could handle 13.8% more customer inquiries per hour and onboarded 4X faster than agents not using AI.

How does this improve CSAT?

✓ Attentive and empathetic service

✓ Faster, more accurate service

Front's AI features can help agents with:

- Summarizing long threads or refining replies to customers with AI Summarize and Compose

- Responding to customers faster with AI-generated suggested replies based on knowledge base content*

- Referencing similar conversations to quickly get historical context and jump-start the solution*

- Translating customer messages into their preferred language*

- Easily searching their knowledge base via internal AI Answers*

- Streamlining resolutions with AI tagging conversations for faster follow up*
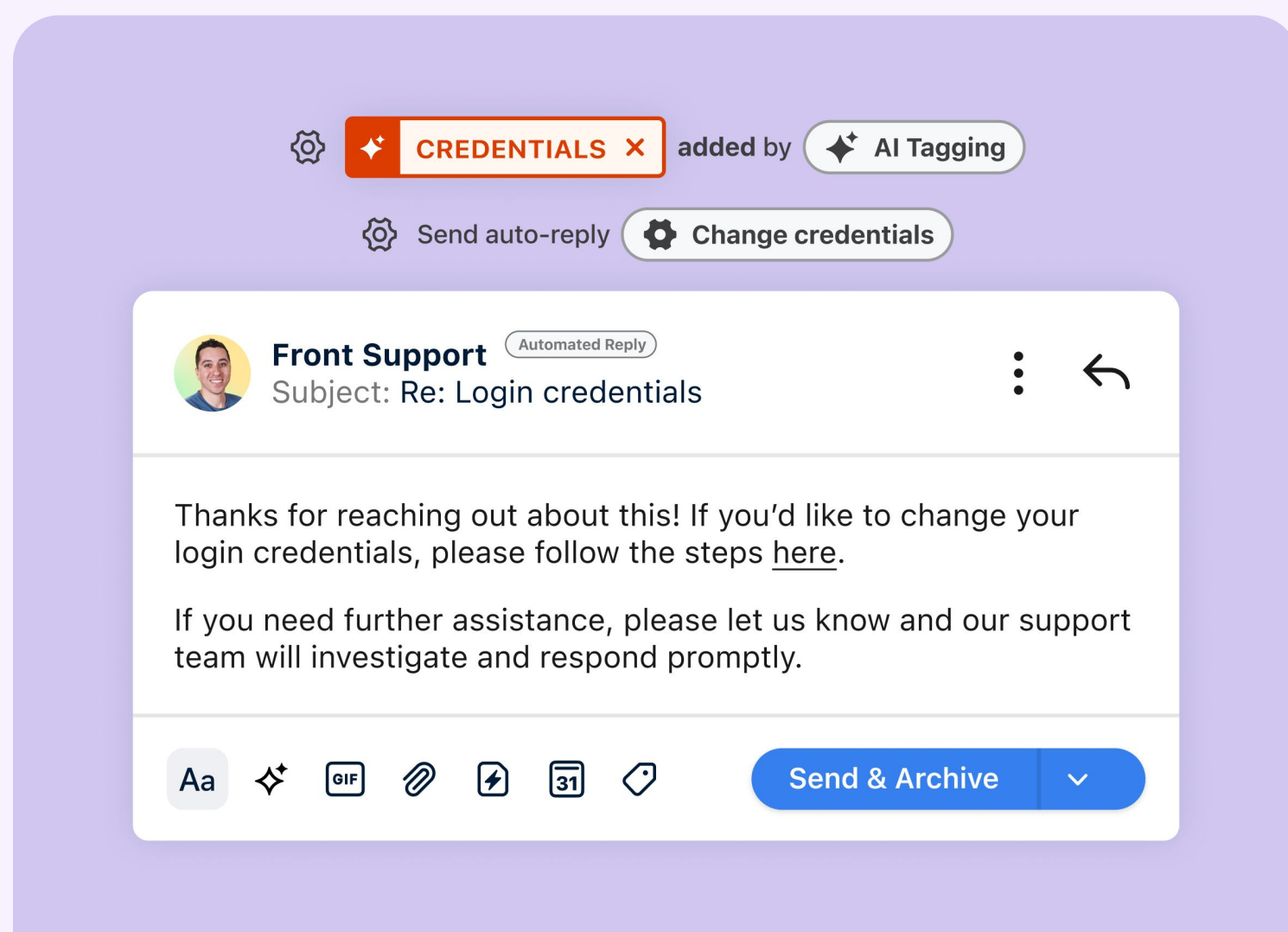
*These features are in open beta.
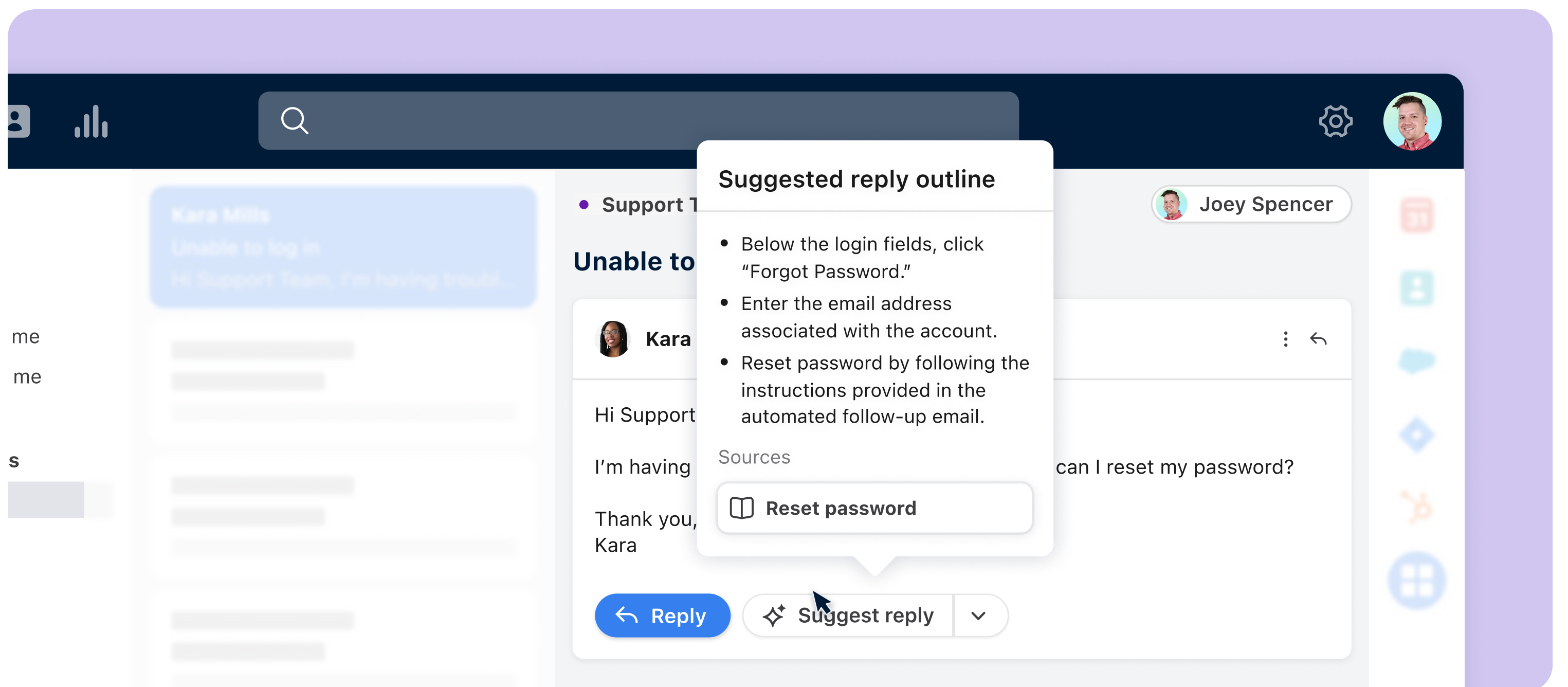
Suggested replies take the guesswork out of responding to customers when there's a help center article to resolve their question.

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[o]Front on Front
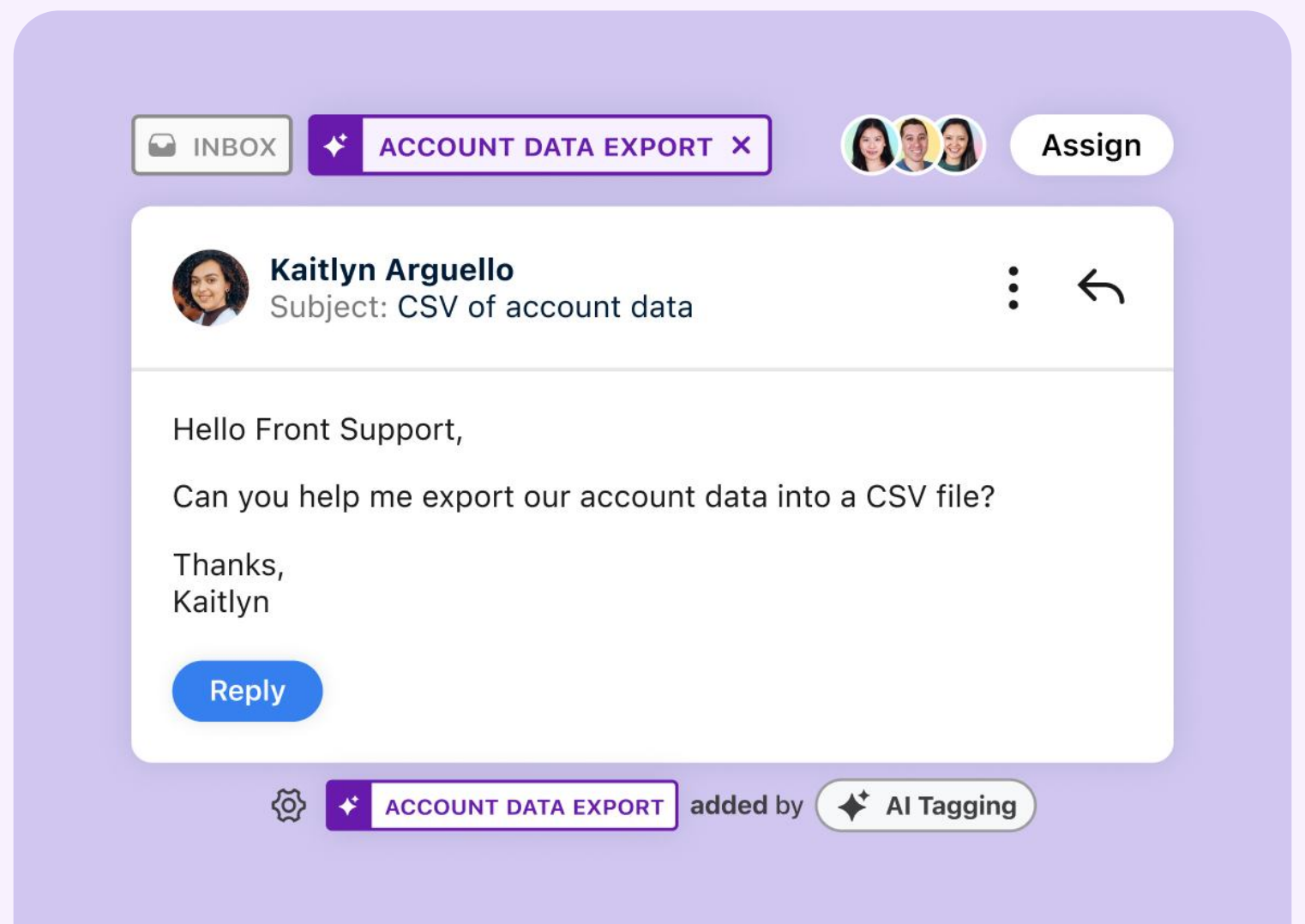
Streamline resolutions with AI tagging

Here's how Front's support team reduces response times and minimizes back-and-forth for better CSAT.

USE CASE #1

Send auto-replies with help center articles to help customers self-resolve.

For example, AI tags incoming messages recognized as "change credentials" with instructions on how to change the email login.

USE CASE #2

Tag conversations that require follow-up requesting additional information.

For example, some customer inquiries need conversation IDs, screenshots, or confirmation they're the company admin before the agent can resolve the issue.

[o]Front

"The goal is to make our agents' lives easier by having AI reply to the easy, low-hanging-fruit-type questions to resolve those right away.

Every auto-reply invites the customer to reach out if the solution offered was unhelpful, reassuring them that our team will investigate and follow up promptly."

Patrick Valenciano
Customer Support Specialist, Front

04

Cut down context switching with automated, no-code workflows

With tool sprawl being a top pain point for service leaders, 74% admit that tool switching drags out ticket resolution.

That's where Front's Connectors can help cut back app switching with a low-code framework for integrations.

Out-of-the-box Connector integrations reduce setup time so service teams can hit the ground running. For example, the Jira Connector streamlines developer workflows by auto-creating and linking Jira issues, sending and receiving comments, and providing real-time Jira status updates — all within Front.

Because not all service teams have the technical expertise or developers at their disposal, Front also offers no-code workflows like macros and rules to automate more of the repetitive tasks.

For example, Front's support team uses macros to easily escalate certain tickets in just one click. With the intuitive Flow Builder, clicking the "Escalate" button moves the conversation to the next Support Tier inbox.

The macro is also set up to move qualifying conversations to other teams like Product, Account Services, Billing, Sales, and Security along with a comment that gives a heads-up on next steps.

How does this improve CSAT?

✓ Faster, more accurate service

✓ Speedy resolution with less handle time
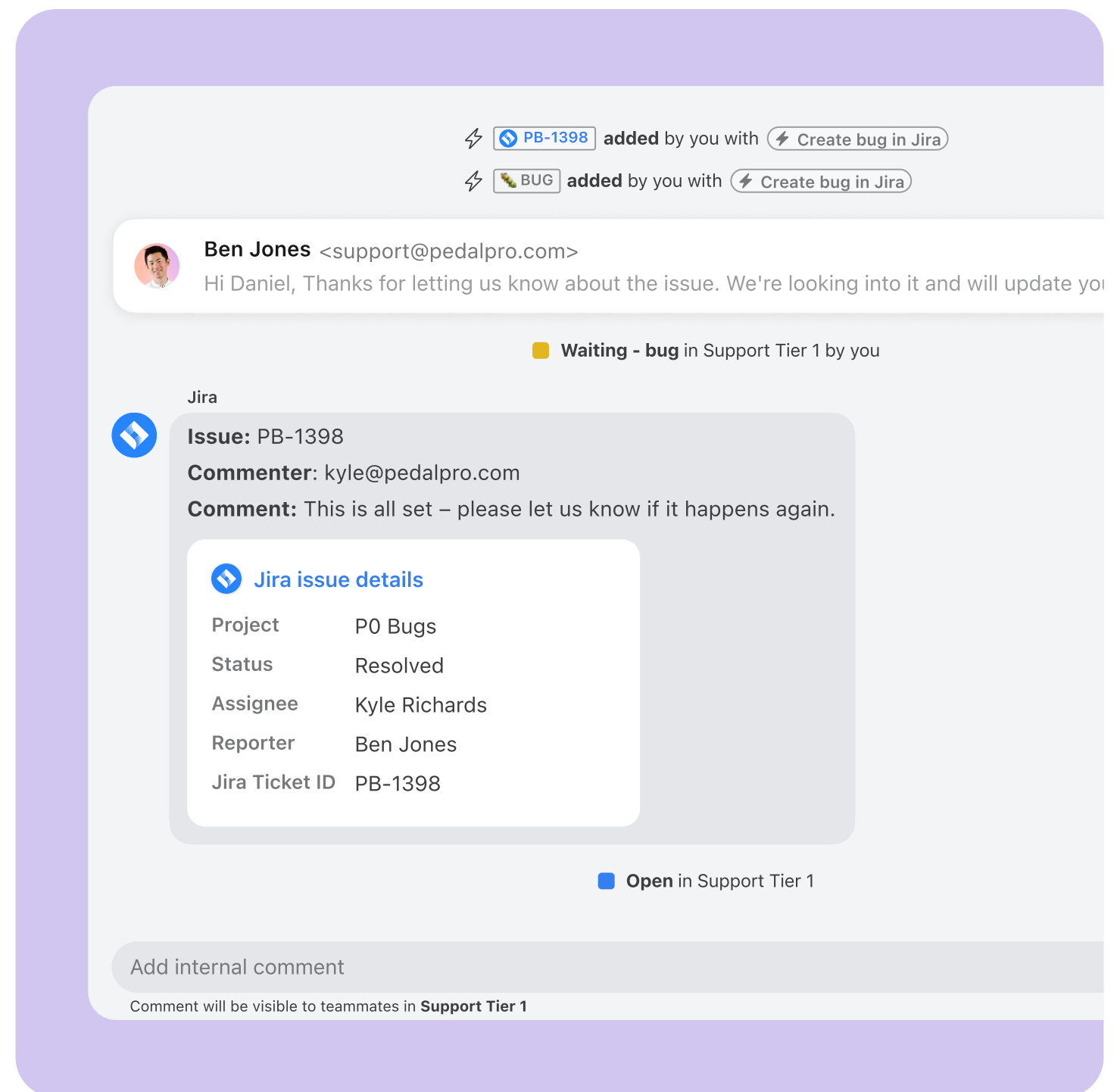
Resolve without skipping a beat when the Jira Connector integrates developer workflows right in Front.
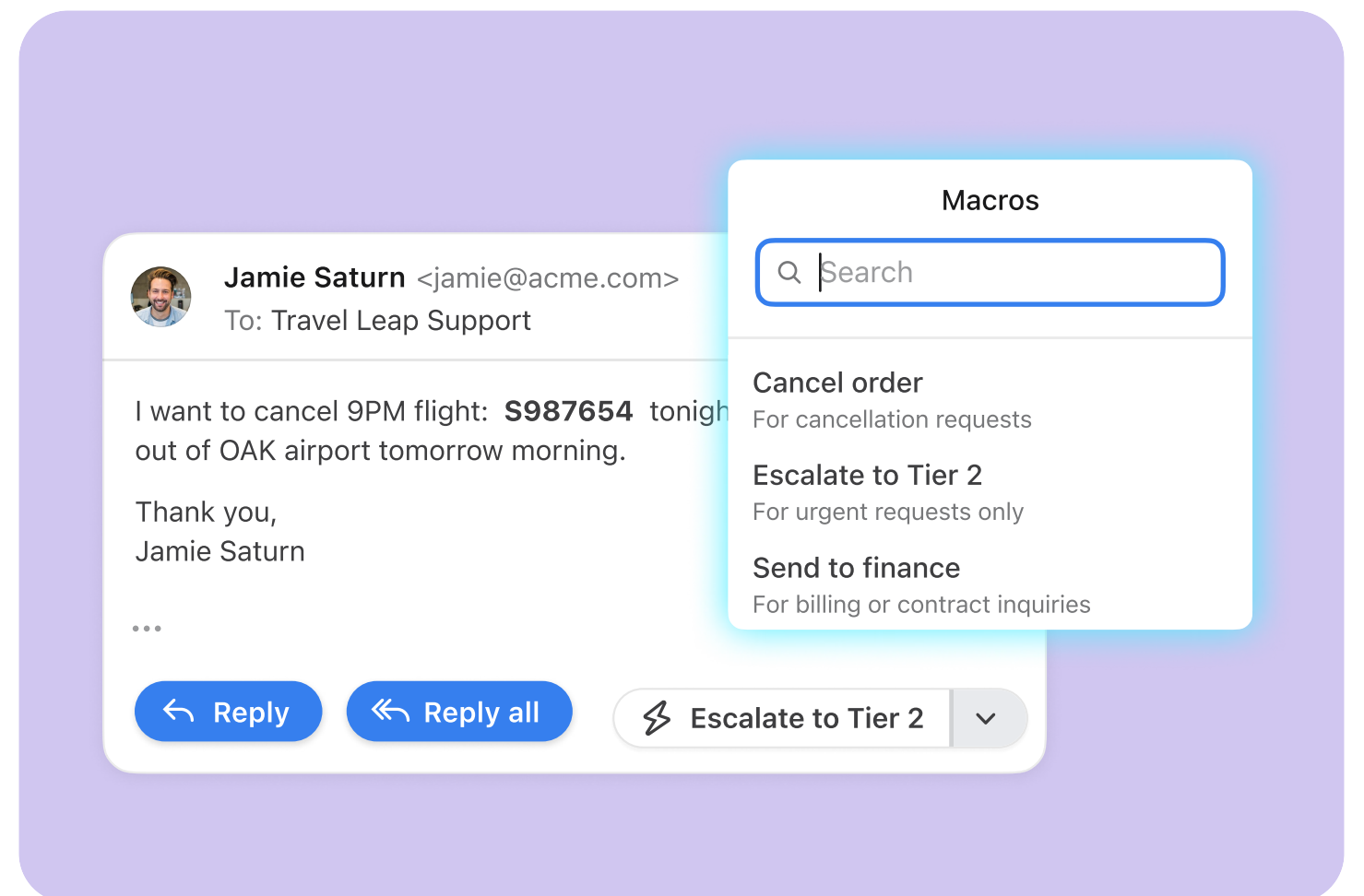
Save time by consolidating steps into one-click macros.

"Implementing macros has been a game changer for our support team, significantly reducing the clicks and time spent manually typing or searching within the inbox. The macros flow builder lets us streamline multiple workflows into a single macro, simplifying our processes.

We've only begun to explore the full potential of macros, yet it's already doing much of the heavy lifting. This is crucial for scaling our internal operations, boosting efficiency, and enhancing the customer experience."

Lemuel Chan
Support Operations Analyst, Front

05

Track and act on metrics that matter

Companies are tracking more metrics every year, paying more attention to KPIs like revenue and customer retention. Front's Analytics gives teams the visibility and insights they need to quickly make data-backed decisions with confidence.

Here are a few ways to track metrics in Front:

Key metrics or insights to track	Monitoring tool	Function	Example use case
Conversation status: • Open • Unassigned	Live dashboard	Manage open conversation queues in real time.	Agents who can log into their shift can jump into the conversations that have been open the longest to help get to a waiting customer service.
• Total resolved conversations • Resolution time • Time spent per status	Ticketing analytics*	Get a visual breakdown of resolution status and how well tickets are getting resolved.	Managers can spot one particular topic is accumulating in the Waiting status, so they can investigate to see what's causing the holdup.
• New conversations • Average resolution time • Average reply time	Workload report	Understand how to staff teams.	Managers can see when a peak time is to ensure there's enough coverage to address incoming inquiries without breaching SLAs.
• Customer sentiment • Topic trends	AI tagging*	Categorize and tag messages to make them easier to organize, search, and report on.	Teams can see a recent product launch is creating a spike in tickets and is time sensitive due to the same sentiment shared across the board. They can flag it for the product team to begin troubleshooting ASAP.

*These features are in open beta.

How does this improve CSAT?

✓ Increased responsiveness

✓ Speedy resolution with less handle time

✓ Improved self-service support

✓ Proactive customer support

BOUNDLESS

Front

"Front's ticketing makes it easy for our support team to manage queues and track progress, giving us a clear view of what needs attention and what's fully resolved. The intuitive design streamlines our workflow without adding extra complexity."

Erik Finch
Director of Operations, Boundless Immigration

An empowered service team is good for business

Empowering agents is the key to increased CSAT scores, reduced support costs, improved operational efficiency, lower attrition — and even more revenue.

Front's award-winning support team relies on Front to serve customers at the speed, quality, and scale that meet their high standards. They operate on the same five plays that help them score an average 98% CSAT and hit their customer service goals, as shown by their public support metrics.

Companies investing more in automation and adopting disruptive technologies like AI consistently report higher cost savings — as much as a 14-point difference. Spruce was able to reduce support costs by 31% through a combination of consolidating communication channels into live chat and appropriately staffing through insights gained from Front Analytics. These improvements enabled through Front increased its CSAT by 23%.

Customer service teams that are taking advantage of technology are also able to be more productive.

Private jet charter company Talon Air integrated its aircraft scheduling software with Front to reduce app switching and repetitive copy/pasting of data that saved up to 30 hours per agent per week — totaling 20,000 hours in one year.

This shift toward higher-value work allows agents to focus on providing the best customer experience and seize opportunities to cross-sell or upsell customers. When agents can offload routine tasks to automation and AI, they reduce their risk of burning out. Service leaders watch attrition levels to monitor the overall health of their team, with the aim to retain talent and boost morale while minimizing costly hiring and lengthy onboarding.

"Even though high attrition is normal in the support industry, I'm proud that my team has zero regretted attrition. Support leaders absolutely have control of the employee experience where agents can be more than just cost centers, but rock stars.

When attrition is high, institutional knowledge is lost, and the customer experience can suffer due to less experienced staff. Investing in culture, providing clear paths for growth, and hiring strong candidates helps keep attrition levels at bay."

Kenji Hayward
Head of Support, Front

Front is the all-in-one platform for 5-star customer service

Front empowers customer service teams with five key plays to deliver 5-star customer experiences. Real-time team collaboration, centralized communications, AI assistance, automated, no-code workflows, and actionable metrics enable agents to work smarter and more efficiently to focus on what matters most: going above and beyond for their customers.

Front's customers and support team use these plays to set a new bar for customer service, proven by their consistently high customer satisfaction scores — all made possible through Front.

Try Front for free   **Request a demo**

Join 9,000 companies who use Front to power their customer service

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