

■ THE FRAME CHECKLIST

Don't YOLO **your chatbot.**

Five questions to settle before you put an AI-powered tool in front of customers. Print it, pass it around, and check every box before launch.

F

01 / FUNNEL STAGE

R

02 / RISK

A

03 / AUTHORITY

M04 / MECHANISM
OF TRUTH**E**

05 / ESCALATION

Easy to launch. Harder to get right.

It is now possible to connect a chatbot to a CRM, scheduling platform, billing system, or internal database with relatively little effort. The hard part is making sure it does those things safely, accurately, and in a way that does not create a worse customer experience than the one it was meant to improve.

F	Funnel stage Where does it sit in the customer journey?	PAGE 03
R	Risk What is the blast radius if it gets something wrong?	PAGE 04
A	Authority How much authority does it have?	PAGE 05
M	Mechanism of truth Where does the authoritative information come from?	PAGE 06
E	Escalation What happens when it reaches the limits of what it can safely handle?	PAGE 07

01

Get product, engineering, support, and compliance in one room.

02

Work through each letter and check a box only when the answer is written down.

03

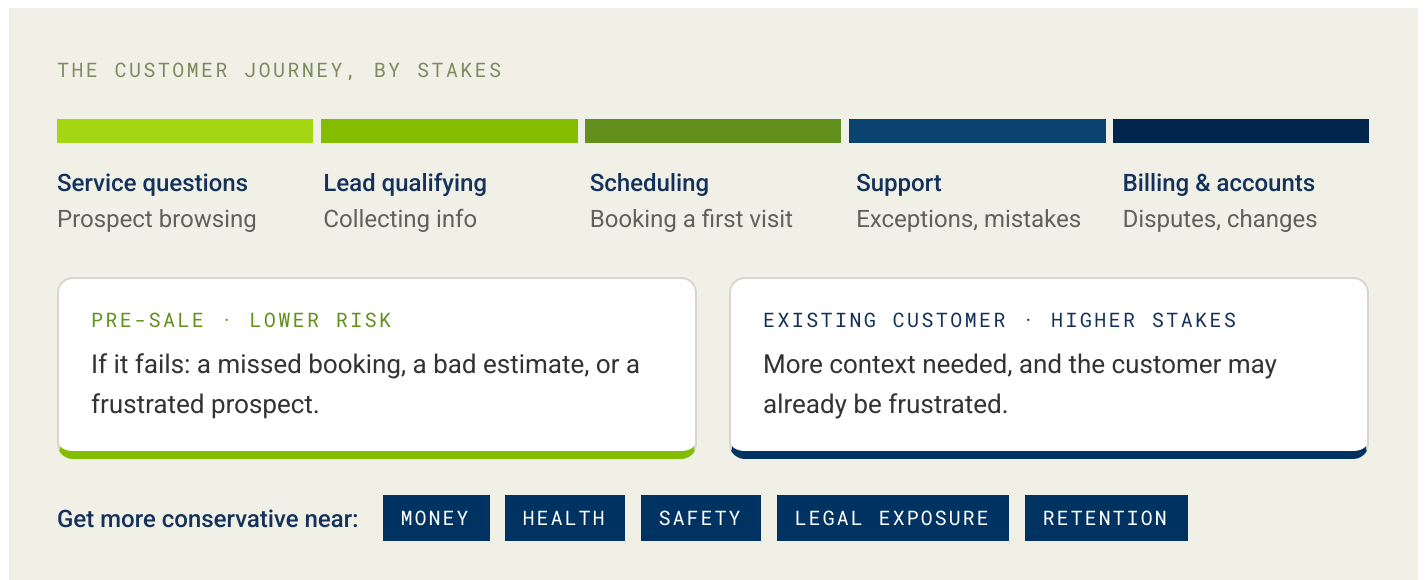
Any empty box means the system probably is not ready for production yet.



FUNNEL STAGE

Where does the automation sit?

A chatbot answering basic questions for a prospective customer should not be treated the same way as a system handling billing disputes, account changes, or support issues for an existing customer.



BEFORE LAUNCH

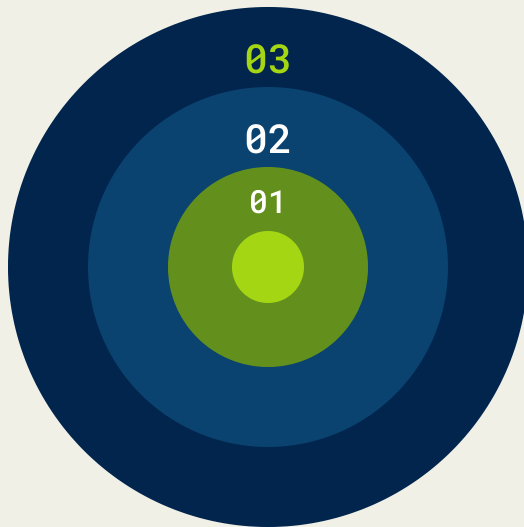
- ☐ We have identified exactly where the AI sits in the customer journey.
- ☐ We have listed the kinds of interactions it is allowed to handle.
- ☐ Interactions close to money, health, safety, legal exposure, or retention have tighter limits.



RISK

How big is the blast radius?

Ask what happens if the AI gets something wrong. The answer should directly influence how much freedom you give the automation.

**01 Small**

An incomplete description of a service. Some frustration, maybe a lost booking.

02 Large

Changing the wrong account or giving incorrect billing information.

03 Very large

Exposing the wrong patient's healthcare information.

Every system can be wrong. The real question is what that error can cause.

BEFORE LAUNCH · COULD A BAD RESPONSE...☐ Expose private information?☐ Trigger a financial action?☐ Create legal liability?☐ Alter an important record?☐ Seriously damage a customer relationship?☐ **Safeguards scale with every "yes."**

Some tasks may simply not be worth automating if the potential downside is much greater than the convenience gained.



AUTHORITY

What is the AI allowed to do?

This is where many implementations become more dangerous than they first appear.

Read

SAFER

Appointment availability · account status · order history · billing records

Still a privacy and accuracy concern, but it cannot alter the data.

Write

MORE POWER

Reschedule · cancel · update accounts · modify records · trigger transactions

Possible failure modes increase significantly.

WATCH FOR FALSE CONFIRMATION

CHATBOT

All set, your appointment is moved to Thursday.

SCHEDULING SYSTEM

Confirmed: moved to Thursday. Confirmation sent.

SCHEDULING SYSTEM

Still booked for Tuesday.

CHATBOT

You should see the confirmation in your inbox.

× THE CHATBOT SAID SO

✓ THE SYSTEM OF RECORD SAID SO

BEFORE LAUNCH · FILL THIS IN

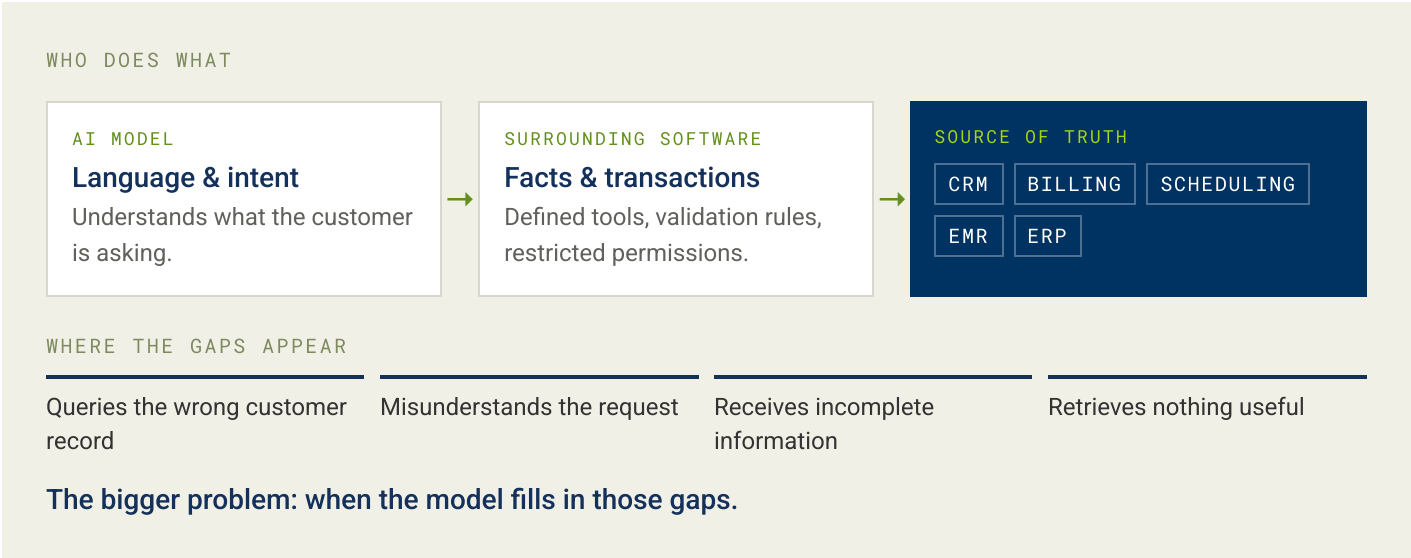
- ☐ It can read
- ☐ It can change
- ☐ It can trigger
- ☐ Verified by a system
- ☐ Approved by a human



MECHANISM OF TRUTH

Where does the real answer live?

Every customer-facing AI tool needs a clearly defined source of truth. The chatbot itself should not be treated as authoritative.



Fresh, complete, reliable identity match. Answer more definitively.

Stale, incomplete, poorly matched. Respond more cautiously.

- BEFORE LAUNCH
- ☐ The AI is connected to the correct source of truth.
 - ☐ The connection is as structured as possible: defined tools, validation, restricted permissions.
 - ☐ Confidence reflects data quality, and the AI says so when it doesn't know.



ESCALATION

What happens when the AI can't help?

Design this before launch, not after the first angry customer gets trapped in a dead end.

ESCALATE EARLY IF ANY ANSWER IS YES

Missing the information to resolve it?

YES →

Missing the authority to resolve it?

YES →

Not confident in the answer?

YES →

Customer shows a receipt, email, screenshot, or transaction record that contradicts the system?

YES →

HAND OFF

Route to the right human

With enough context that the customer doesn't repeat the whole conversation.

BETTER

A quick admission of uncertainty.

WORSE

A long conversation full of confident but incorrect answers.

The goal of customer service automation is to **resolve problems, not win debates.**

BEFORE LAUNCH · WE HAVE DEFINED...

☐ The conditions that trigger escalation

☐ Where the customer goes next

☐ What information follows them

☐ How our team reviews it afterward

One more box: can you audit it?

When something goes wrong, your team should be able to replay the interaction. Without logging and traceability, diagnosing failures becomes guesswork.

01	ASKED	What the customer asked
02	RETRIEVED	What data the AI retrieved
03	ATTEMPTED	Which action it attempted
04	RESPONDED	How it responded

Keep testing after launch. Models, prompts, integrations, and data all change over time. Off-the-shelf products still need to be configured around your processes, permissions, exceptions, and risk tolerance.

LAUNCH READINESS · WE CAN CLEARLY ANSWER

- ☐ **F** Where does it sit in the customer journey?
- ☐ **R** What is the blast radius if it gets something wrong?
- ☐ **A** How much authority does it have?
- ☐ **M** Where does the authoritative information come from?
- ☐ **E** What happens when it reaches the limits of what it can safely handle?
- ☐ **+** Can we see exactly what it did, and why?

The right amount of autonomy for the task.

Sourcetoad helps organizations design and build AI-enabled software that works within real operational, security, and compliance constraints.



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