SAP

United States Engagement Index Report

How Signals, Micro Moments,
and AI Transform
Enterprise Engagement

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Introduction

Sara Richter
CMO,
SAP Engagement Cloud

" **Customer expectations are moving at a new speed.** With AI at their fingertips, people compare, decide, and switch in an instant, and those micro moments now define whether a brand wins or loses a relationship.

Most organizations are investing in AI, but the real challenge lies beneath the surface. Disconnected teams, scattered systems, and data that can't be activated in real time make it hard to show up with the clarity and consistency customers expect.

This is the **Engagement Divide:** the distance between what customers need in the moments that matter and what brands can deliver today. This year's Engagement Index breaks down how to close that divide and what it takes to create personal, connected, intelligent experiences at every touchpoint. "
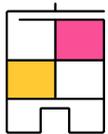
Key Findings

71% of consumers are put off by disorganized brands that pass them between multiple individuals or teams just to solve a single problem

80% of brands see AI as essential for retaining customers in 2026

46% of enterprises can't access and use real-time data (and **53%** suffer from dark data—collected but unused data)

78% of brands say their engagement strategies generate seamless experiences with positive outcomes, including increased CLV, customer retention and advocacy

What Is the Engagement Divide?

The Engagement Divide represents this widening gap between what consumers now expect and what most organizations can realistically deliver.

- **Consumers move at the speed of AI. They anticipate, compare, and switch with little friction.**
- **Yet, many businesses remain slowed by siloed teams, disconnected systems, and data they can't fully activate.**
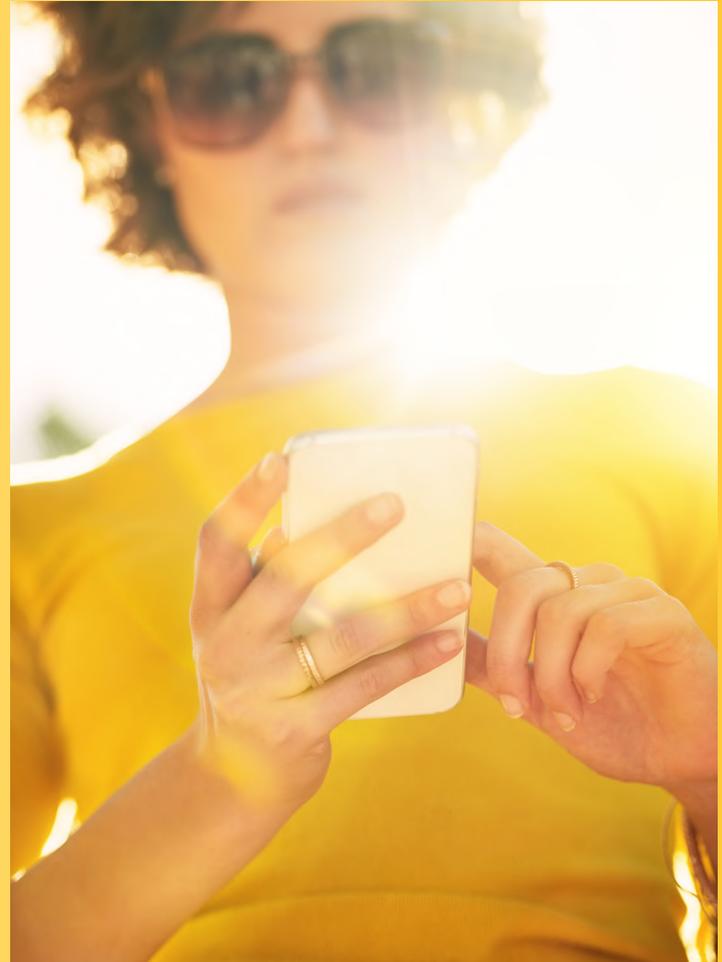
This divide erodes loyalty, stalls innovation, and increases the cost of every interaction. And for most organizations, it's growing.

78% **of consumers** admit that a brand disappointed them
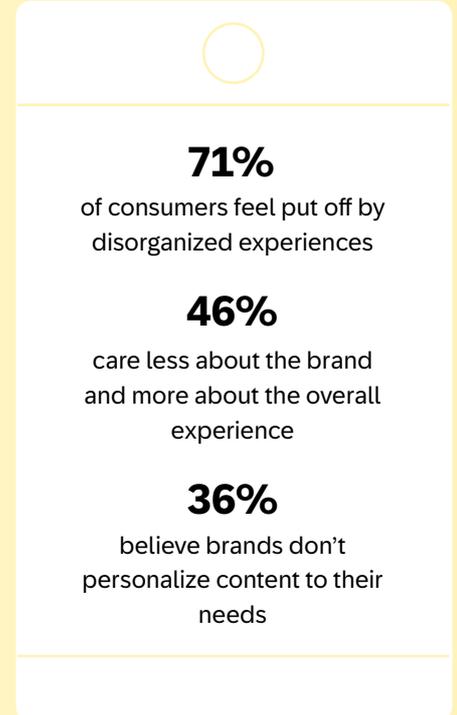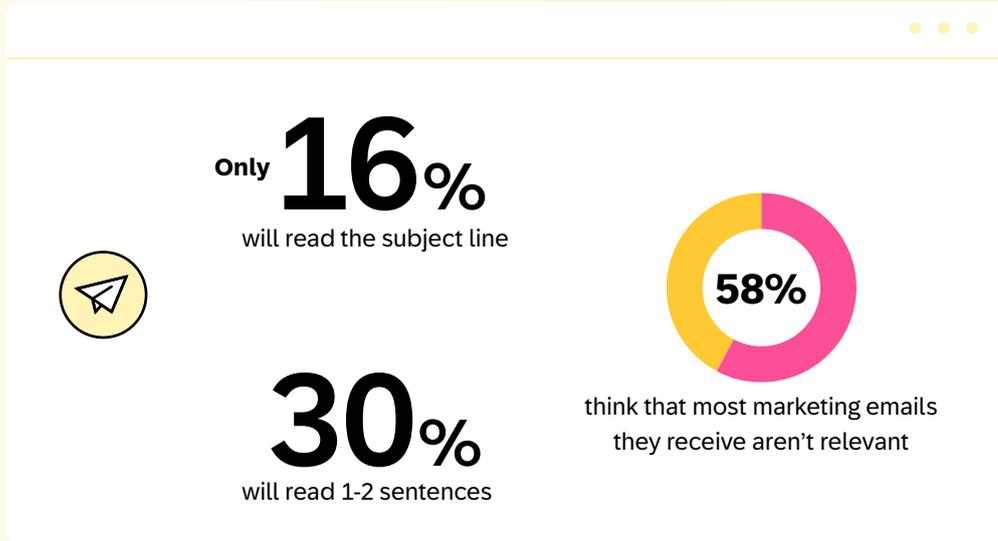
56% don't pay attention to brands, even if the product meets their needs

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Engagement Is Breaking: What the Data Reveals

Consumers judge brands based on how effectively they meet their needs in the moment. And if experiences aren't timely, contextual, or personalized, they simply get ignored.

Only **16**% will read the subject line

30% will read 1-2 sentences

58% think that most marketing emails they receive aren't relevant

71% of consumers feel put off by disorganized experiences

46% care less about the brand and more about the overall experience

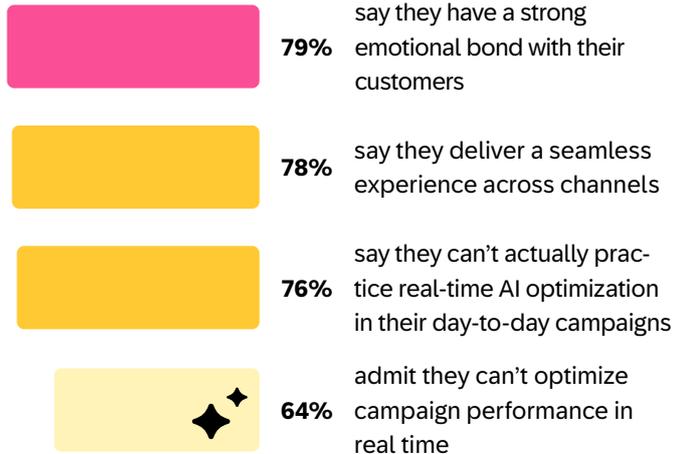**36%** believe brands don't personalize content to their needs

Engagement is any interaction that actively influences how a consumer perceives your brand—across marketing, commerce, sales, product, service, operations, partners, or community.

How Fragmentation Impacts the Consumer Experience

Most brands believe consumer experiences are consistent and emotionally resonant. While brands' confidence is high, consumers say that emotional connection is actually low.

Brands

79% say they have a strong emotional bond with their customers

78% say they deliver a seamless experience across channels

76% say they can't actually practice real-time AI optimization in their day-to-day campaigns

64% admit they can't optimize campaign performance in real time

Consumers

45% say customer service is too impersonal

42% believe brands don't understand them as a person

37% believe that brands know who they are and what they need when contacted

31% agree that AI will help brands understand them as a person

The SAP Engagement Maturity Index

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The SAP Engagement Maturity Index

In our **2025 Engagement Maturity Index**, we measured how effectively marketing teams used data, channels, and intelligence to engage customers. As consumer expectations have evolved, **engagement is no longer a marketing-only responsibility.** The 2026 Index reflects this shift, evaluating maturity across the entire business.

With 25 years of expertise in customer engagement orchestration, we've expanded our **Customer Engagement Maturity (CEM)** scoring model to assess how well brands align people, processes, and technology to deliver cohesive, intelligent experiences.

AI and automation adoption

Connected data strategy

Customer loyalty

**Omnichannel engagement**

Real-time personalization

Use of email marketing

Expert Insights

> **The brands winning in the Engagement Era aren't running more marketing campaigns—they're building engagement as a comprehensive enterprise-wide capability. When AI is grounded in ERP, Supply Chain, CX, and real-time customer data, organizations stop reacting and start delivering on customer expectations that drive measurable growth.**
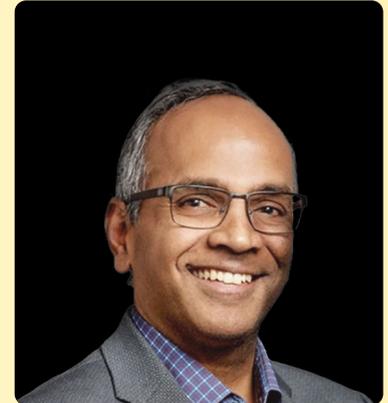
Balaji Balasubramanian
President, Chief Product Officer,
SAP Customer Experience

SAP

The Stages of the SAP Engagement Maturity Index

Our latest data shows that most brands remain stuck in the developing stage, underscoring how difficult it is to integrate data, systems, and teams across the business.

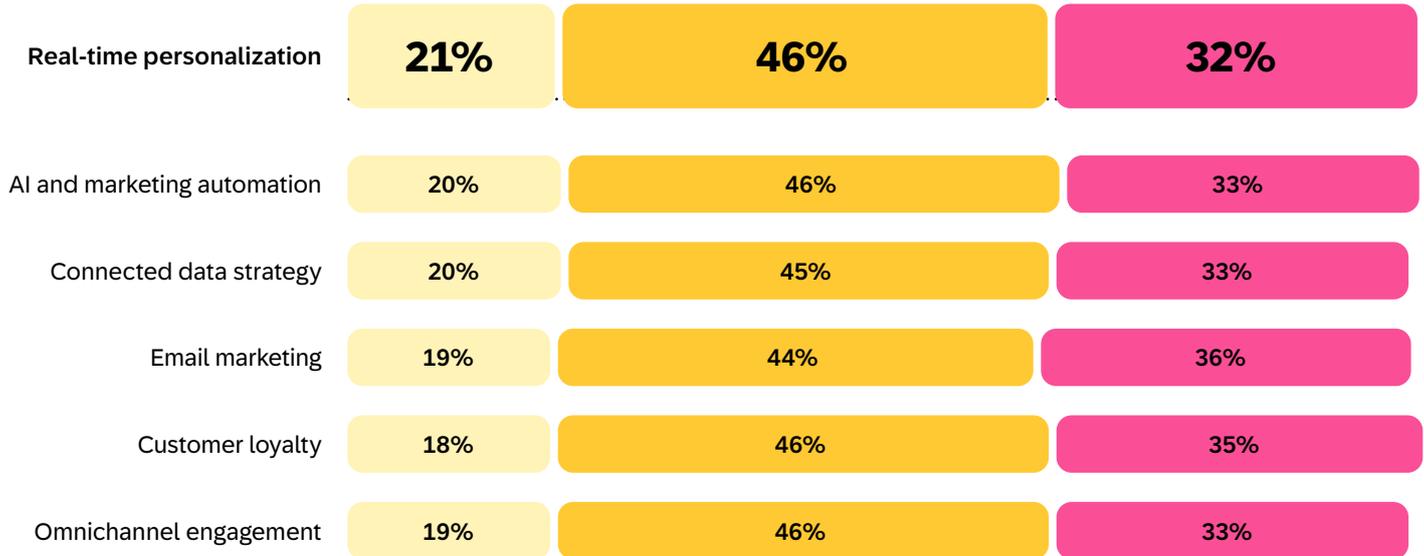|	Engagement Adoption	Engagement Capabilities	2026 levels
Low CEM Score	Minimal adoption of enterprise-wide customer engagement technologies and strategies.	Data remains siloed across business functions, making it difficult for teams—across marketing, sales, service, and operations—to access shared insights or respond in real time. Limited integration and low AI readiness hinder consistent experiences and long-term loyalty.	**15%**
Moderate CEM Score	Moderate adoption of customer engagement technologies and cross-functional strategies.	Teams can access portions of shared data and deliver basic personalization, but coordination across marketing, sales, service, commerce, and product teams remains uneven. Experiences often feel disconnected, forcing brands to rely on short-term tactics rather than building deeper relationships.	**61%**
High CEM Score	Advanced adoption of integrated engagement technologies and enter-prise-wide strategies.	High-maturity brands connect data and intelligence across all functions—marketing, service, sales, commerce, and opera-tions—to adapt quickly and anticipate customer needs. They use AI and automation to deliver personalized, omnichannel engagements in real-time, at scale.	**23%**

A Flat Maturity Curve Across Key Engagement Areas

All engagement approaches are marginally close in comparison. However, real-time personalization remains the leader.
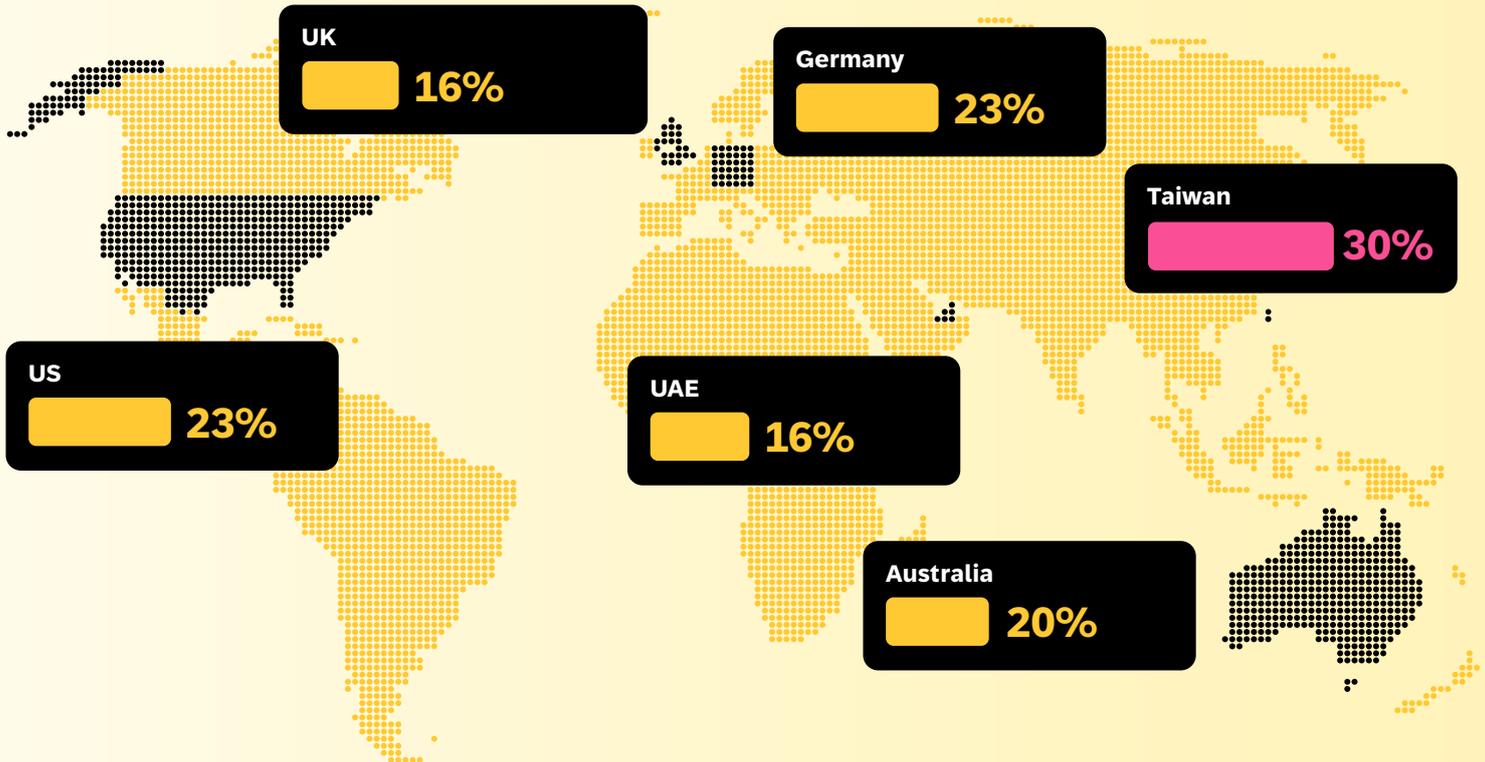
Stage of Different Engagement Approaches
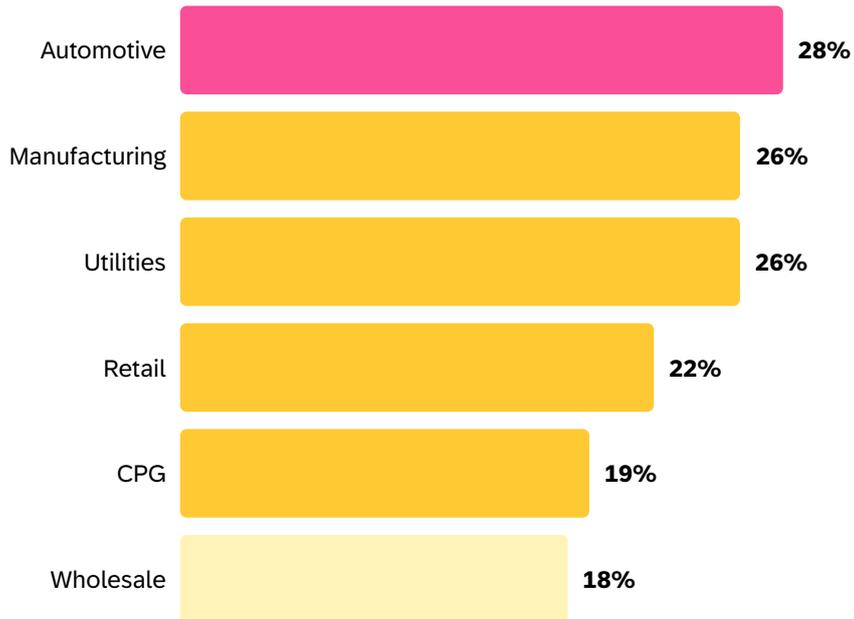
Low CEM · Moderate CEM · High CEM

	Low CEM	Moderate CEM	High CEM
Real-time personalization	21%	46%	32%
AI and marketing automation	20%	46%	33%
Connected data strategy	20%	45%	33%
Email marketing	19%	44%	36%
Customer loyalty	18%	46%	35%
Omnichannel engagement	19%	46%	33%

High Engagement Maturity Across Countries

UK 16%

Germany 23%

Taiwan 30%

US 23%

UAE 16%

Australia 20%

High Engagement Maturity Across Industries and Departments

Industries*

Industry	Percentage
Automotive	28%
Manufacturing	26%
Utilities	26%
Retail	22%
CPG	19%
Wholesale	18%
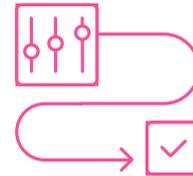
Departments

2 in 5

decision-makers believe
their departments are truly coordinated,
revealing how far most organizations
are from delivering connected customer
journeys.

←

Expert Insights

❝ **Marketing is shifting from being the company's megaphone to becoming its steering wheel. No matter where you sit in the organization or what data you have access to, you have an opportunity to build a growth intelligence engine—one that helps you learn intent signals about your products, customers, competitors, and the broader market.**

When marketers harness the data available to them and feed those insights into content, decisions, and strategic direction, they do more than support the business—they help steer its future. ❞

Liat Ben-Zur
a transformative executive board director and AI strategist who has driven billions in growth across Microsoft, Philips, and Qualcomm

Maturity Is Slowly Rising, but Top Performers Are Still Rare

The medium-maturity tier remains crowded—a sign that achieving true high-maturity engagement requires better-connected systems, real-time data, and AI-driven orchestration across the business.
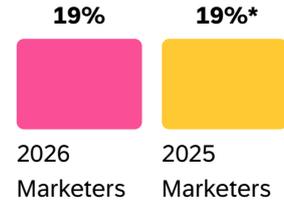
Low CEM Score

16%	**18%***
2026 Marketers	2025 Marketers

Moderate CEM Score

65%	**63%**
2026 Marketers	2025 Marketers

High CEM Score

19%	**19%***
2026 Marketers	2025 Marketers
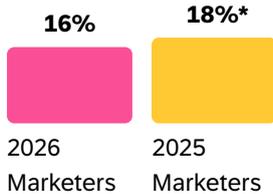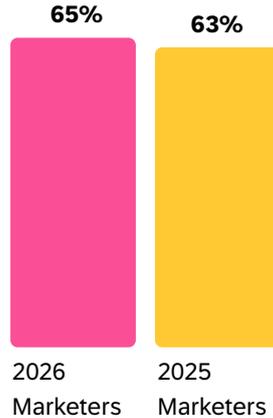
Engagement Accelerator
Pick one high-impact journey and connect all relevant data sources around it. When marketers test real-time signals and AI-driven decisions on a specific use case—like cart abandonment or post-purchase—they build momentum that quickly scales across the business.

Mature Brands View Engagement as an Enterprise-Wide Priority

Marketing remains central to enterprise engagement, but its role expands from executing campaigns to orchestrating signals, data, and actions across the business. Then, engagement becomes a shared outcome rather than a function-specific metric.

Activity	Old World	New World
Engagement owned by	Marketing	The business
Engagement measured by	Opens, clicks, conversions	Retention, loyalty, lifetime value
Data lives	Siloed by function	Marketing, commerce, service, supply chain; all integrated and shared
Personalization is	Campaign-based	Lifecycle and behavior-driven
Failure shows up as	Marketing underperformance	Friction anywhere in the customer journey
Typical question	How did the campaign perform?	Where are we losing customers and why?

Why the Engagement Divide Persists

Challenge 1: AI Adoption

Consumers are increasingly eager for brands to use AI to create experiences that are faster, easier, and more relevant. But organizations are slowed by data challenges, integration issues, and uncertainty around responsible AI use.

Brands & AI Adoption	Barriers Holding Enterprises Back	The Strategic Reality	Consumer Expectations
35% say automated content, predictive personalization, chatbots, and virtual assistants are key use cases	**33%** say integration with existing systems, cybersecurity, and privacy risks limit their ability to scale AI	**80%** agree AI will be essential for acquiring and retaining customers	**Only 39%** feel they understand the value they get from sharing personal data
33% see social listening and trend analysis as one of AI's key benefits	**32%** struggle with data quality and availability, as well as a lack of skilled talent and expertise systems	**79%** say they already have AI guardrails in place	**while 38%** don't believe brands use their data at all
32% believe real-time decisioning and recommendations are important use cases		**77%** expect AI to be embedded in workflows, not siloed tools	**10%** of consumers already expect brands to use AI or automation to speed up and simplify their experience

Brands Are Investing in AI, but Their Systems Aren't Ready

Without a unified data foundation, brands are building on quicksand—fragmented systems and unstructured data that widen the Engagement Divide and keep AI from performing.
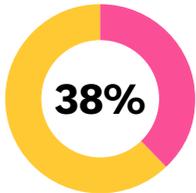
Brands
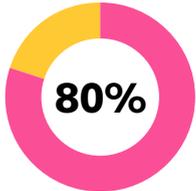
80% see AI as essential for retaining customers in 2026

Only

38% share their customer engagement data with a CX platform and **40% with CRM**

Consumers

29% have used AI agents that make decisions and act on their behalf when buying from brands

Engagement Accelerator
Boost efficiency and loyalty using embedded and agentic AI to deliver the right product at the right price at the right time for every customer.

Challenge 2: Team Coordination

Our data reveals deep operational silos across sales, service, marketing, and technology—and **nearly half (45%)** of consumers say customer service feels impersonal as a result. These internal gaps directly translate into inconsistent, frustrating experiences across the business.

Service

This chart shows how many respondents believe different departments in the organization are 'fully coordinated' with each other:
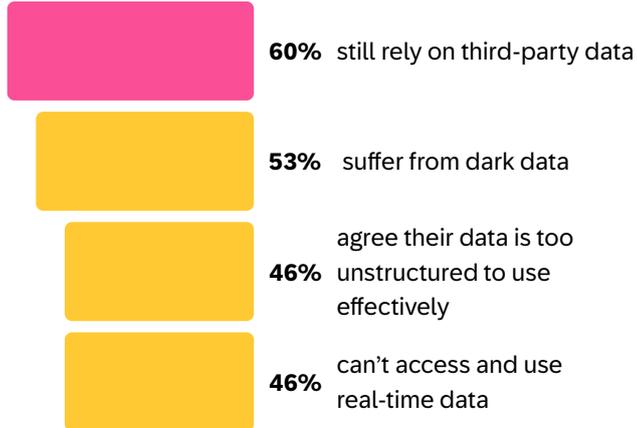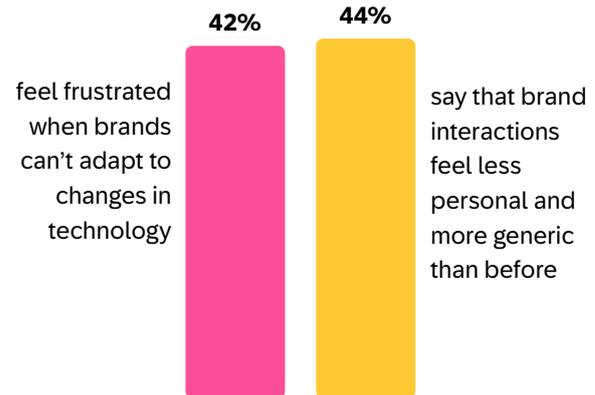
39%	Technology ⟷ Service
38%	Marketing ⟷ Technology
38%	Sales ⟷ Marketing
38%	Sales ⟷ Technology
37%	Technology ⟷ Marketing
36%	Marketing ⟷ Service
36%	Sales ⟷ Service
36%	Service ⟷ Sales
35%	Service ⟷ Marketing
35%	Marketing ⟷ Sales
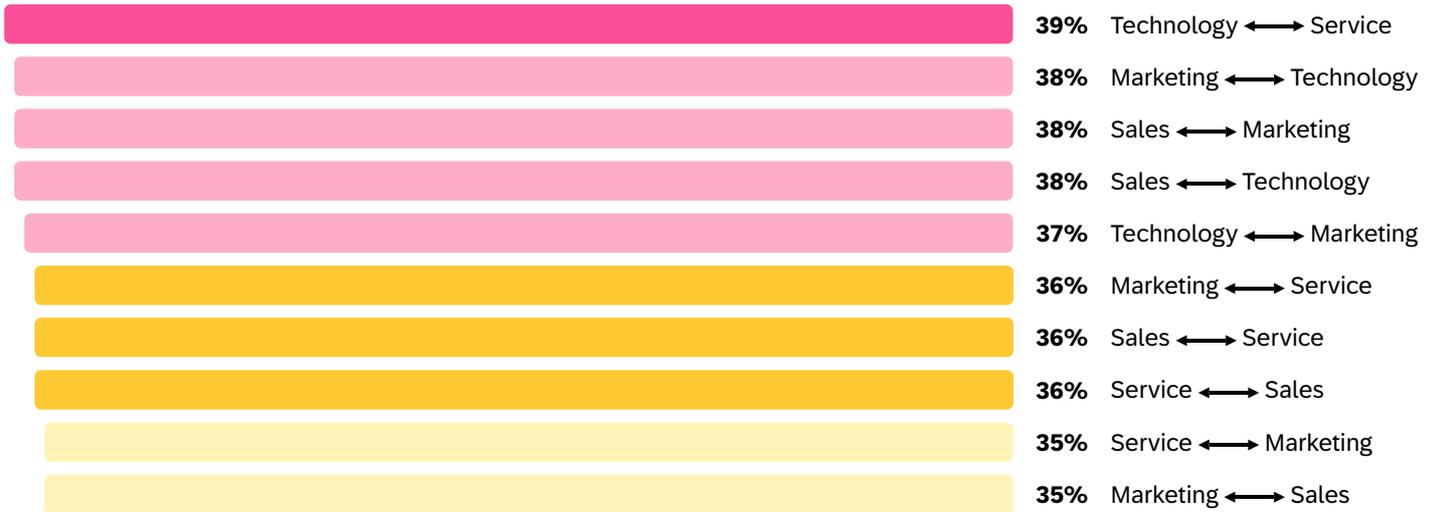
Challenge 3: Unstructured Data

Most businesses struggle to unlock the data they collect. Fragmented systems and unstructured formats block real-time insight, personalization, governance, and the ability to power AI agents. As dark data grows and experiences stagnate, consumers question why their information is collected at all.

Brands

60% still rely on third-party data

53% suffer from dark data

46% agree their data is too unstructured to use effectively

46% can't access and use real-time data

Consumers

42% feel frustrated when brands can't adapt to changes in technology

44% say that brand interactions feel less personal and more generic than before

How to Close the Divide

Expert Insights

" Engagement isn't something one department can fix. Every team shapes the brand, and the real progress comes when they work from the same understanding of the customer. With that shared view, AI can take on the hard work and help deliver the personalized experiences people expect. "

Mark Ritson
Professor and Founder, MiniMBA

MiniMBA

5 Principles of Modern Engagement

Without these, brands are already falling behind, and most don't realize it until it's too late.
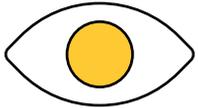
1

A Unified Customer Profile

Fragmented data leaves every team guessing. A single, real-time customer view cuts through the noise and stops churn before it starts.

2

AI Agents that Reduce Manual Effort

Competitors aren't waiting around. Manual processes are quietly costing you speed, revenue, and good people.

3

Real-Time Personalization

Delayed relevance is just irrelevance. Brands that can't adapt to behavior and intent in the moment? Then, customers will move on—fast.
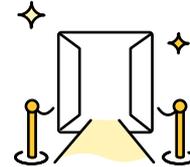
4

Cross-Functional Orchestration

Siloed teams break customer journeys. Connecting sales, service, and operations isn't optional anymore; it's the baseline.

5

Embedded Consent & Governance

In the US market, trust is a real growth lever. Non-compliance is both a legal exposure and a direct hit to revenue.

Engagement that Drives Trust, Loyalty, and Growth

When engagement is treated as a shared business discipline, organizations see benefits across both customer-facing and operational dimensions. But businesses aren't the only ones who feel the impact.

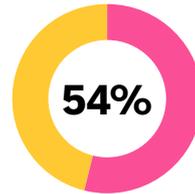**Consumers are signaling, unequivocally, what great engagement looks like to them:**

65%
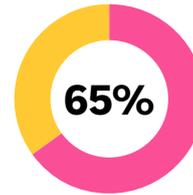
say their favorite brand delivers seamless, connected experiences across mobile, web, and in-store
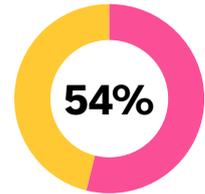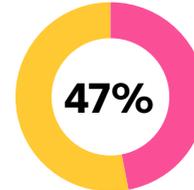
55%
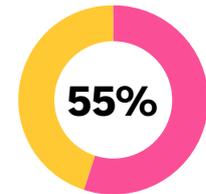
appreciate highly personalized content

Consumers are signaling, unequivocally, what great engagement looks like to them:

54%
value personalized product recommendations

54%
respond positively to localized content

47%
believe their favorite brand uses their data to make interactions better

Brands Must View Engagement as an Enterprise Discipline

Businesses are entering a new phase of engagement—one defined by connected data, AI-driven personalization, and seamless omnichannel experiences.
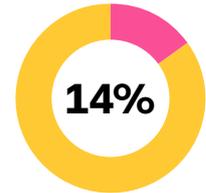
79%
of businesses plan to invest in AI-powered customer engagement in 2026

77%
of businesses are investing in omnichannel engagement technologies to meet customer channel preferences

28%
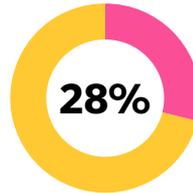
say their number one priority is connecting customer and stakeholder data across marketing, sales, service, commerce, and ERP systems

14%

believe seamless integration of engagement systems will be one of the **biggest** drivers of success in 2026 and beyond

Engagement Accelerator
Create a comprehensive view of your product data to drive consistent omnichannel experiences. Use commerce AI agents to organize and enhance product catalogs so customers can easily discover, research, and buy while commerce teams are freed from routine tasks.

Customer Insights

" Mod collection guitars are a thing that are exclusive to Gibson.com, and they are all one-off, one-of-one guitars that are released in batches each week. And so, through SAP Engagement Cloud we're using the product affinity segment. So, it's looking at their web behavior, their purchase behavior to predict if they're going to buy from a certain category. And so, because mod collection is a weekly thing, we want to promote it to everyone, but we don't want to bombard everyone if they're not interested in that.
So, we're able to use smaller segments to send mod collection emails to people more frequently if they're super interested in that category. "

Jonathan Martz
CRM Manager, Gibson, Inc.

Gibson

Conclusion

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Final Thoughts

Brands want to deliver personal, connected experiences, but customer and operational data often sit in silos, and systems don't always work together—making it hard for brands to deliver. Organizations need an engagement system that unifies data, intelligence, and action.

SAP Engagement Cloud is built to:

• Power AI-enhanced segments, triggers, and journeys with trusted SAP and enterprise data

• Accelerate campaign execution with role-based assistants and embedded AI

• Connect operational data (inventory, order status, fulfillment, etc.) with customer insights to drive engagement

• Scale securely with API-first architecture and enterprise-grade compliance

Sean Thornber
Functional Consultant,
BASE1

BASΞ1

" **Business Areas and the Brand Center will be extremely useful tools for global companies with multiple teams. The ability to create regional or siloed groups, and to design attributes that can be used based on their Business Area, means that enterprises can create marketing content in a streamlined way, at scale.** "

The Road Ahead for Enterprise Engagement

The Engagement Index gives leaders insights and a road-map for transforming engagement across the organization. And SAP Engagement Cloud empowers them to execute that vision with confidence. We bring enterprise teams the power of orchestrated, real-time engagement—connected to data, processes, AI, and decisions across the business.

This is the **new gold standard:** Real-time intelligence, connected systems, and engagement that builds trust, loyalty, and long-term growth—consistently and responsibly.

The future belongs to brands that treat engagement as a core, enterprise-wide function. SAP provides the foundation to make that future possible.

> **With SAP customers generating 84% of total global commerce**, SAP has unmatched visibility into the operational data and customer signals that drive deeply personalized moments.

Methodology

This research was conducted in the US by Opinium as part of global research among a sample of 3,000 general respondents and 1,500 senior decision makers in IT / Technology / Marketing / Revenue / Service departments and who work in the Retail, Consumer Products & FMCG, Automotive, Manufacturing, Utilities or Wholesale industries.

Only enterprise-level businesses with 500+ employees and with $250m+ annual turnover were surveyed across the US. The data was collected from both audiences between 31st December 2025 and 16th January 2026.

Opinium abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct, which is based on the ESOMAR principles. Opinium is also a member of the British Polling Council.

To view global or country-specific reports, please click here.

* base size is below 50 respondents, hence figures to be interpreted as indicative only.

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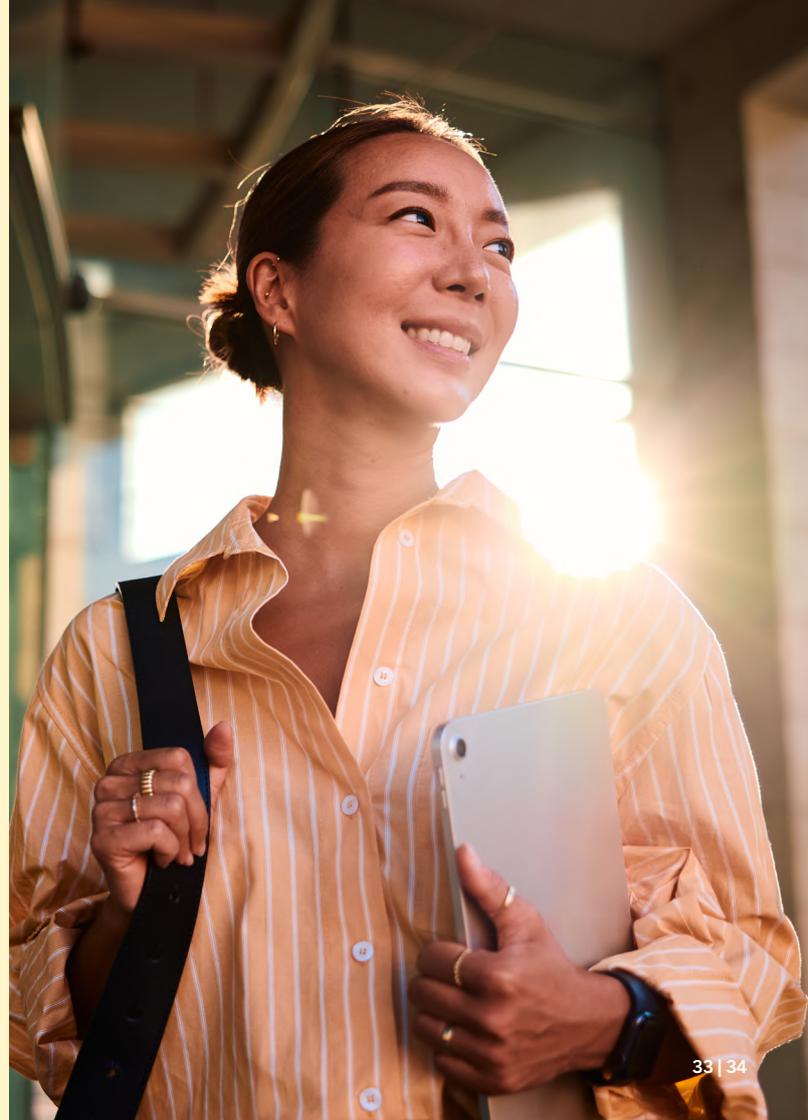
SAP Engagement Cloud helps organizations power unique engagement by connecting real-time customer insights with the operational signals that run the business. As part of the SAP Customer Experience (CX) portfolio, Engagement Cloud enables personalized, AI-driven interactions across every channel—turning moments like orders, service events, and loyalty milestones into timely, relevant experiences that build trust, strengthen relationships, and drive growth. For more information, visit emarsys.com or www.sap.com