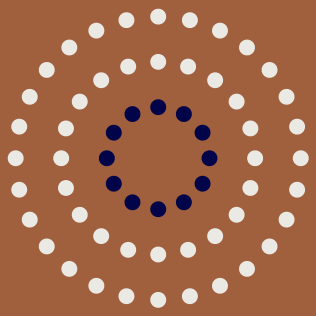


CONVERSATIONAL CAPITAL

How do your conversations leave customers feeling?

How the Conversational Capital Rating (CCR) reads whether a customer leaves a conversation with an assistant in a worse frame of mind than they arrived.

Conversation Design Institute

TOPICS

Conversational Capital Rating · Sentiment Decay · Trust signals · Evaluation · AI assistants

A customer opens a chat politely: “Hi, could you tell me where my claim has got to?” Ten minutes later their last message reads: “I've given you the number twice. Just tell me when I'll be paid.” Nothing in the transcript is technically wrong. The assistant replied every time and the conversation closed. But the customer has left in a worse frame of mind than they arrived, and that is what they carry into their next contact with your brand.

Sentiment Decay is how the Conversational Capital Rating (CCR) counts conversations that leave that aftertaste. It compares the customer's tone at the start with their tone at the end, and counts the conversation when the close is worse and has tipped into impatience or beyond. It is the lightest of the trust signals, because tone can shift for reasons that have nothing to do with the assistant. But it captures what the other signals cannot: how the conversation felt.

01 Summary

WHAT IT IS	The share of conversations in which the customer ends in a worse tone than they started, and ends curt or worse.
WHY IT MATTERS	Customers remember how a conversation ended. An exchange that leaves them impatient or demanding spends trust even when the task got done, and it is an early warning of complaints and repeat contact.
HOW IT WORKS	A language model reads each conversation, places the customer's opening and closing tone on a five-step scale from polite to angry, and quotes the words that decide each.
HOW WE KNOW IT WORKS	The same conversation read twice lands on the same closing tone almost every time, and the readings agree closely with expert review on hard cases.[1]

02 How it works

The customer's tone is placed on five steps.

- Polite: courteous or warm.
- Neutral: plain and businesslike, no strain.
- Curt: strain shows; short, impatient or sarcastic.
- Demanding: insists, states frustration outright or demands a person.
- Angry: anger or contempt, or threats to leave or go public.

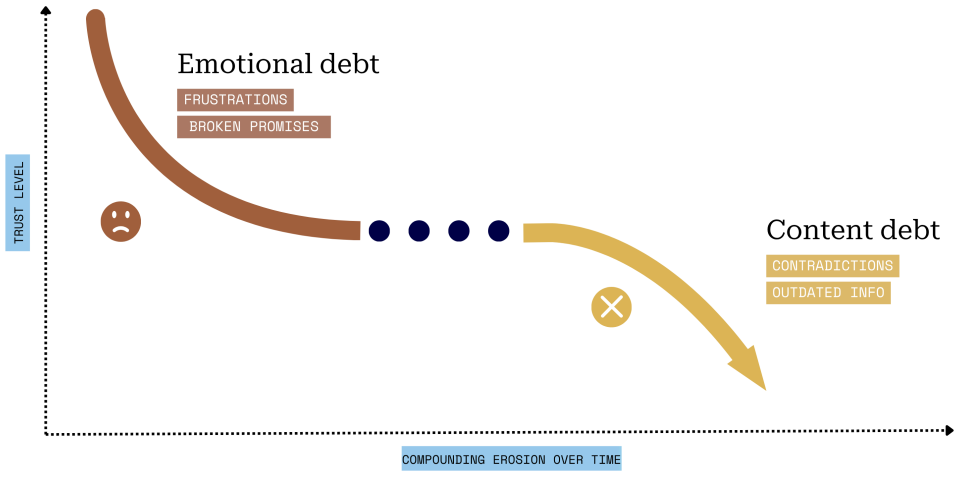
A conversation counts only when the close is worse than the opening and at curt or beyond.

A language model[2] reads each conversation, places the customer's opening and close on the scale, and quotes the turn that decides each; a check confirms the quoted words are in that turn.

Take an insurance customer chasing a claim. They open politely: “Hi, could you tell me where my claim has got to? I sent it in three weeks ago.” The assistant asks for the policy number, then asks for it again, then offers a link to the claims page the customer has already used. Their last message reads: “I've given you the number twice. Just tell me when I'll be paid.” The opening is polite and the close is demanding, so the conversation counts.

03 What it means for clients

Sentiment Decay shows which kinds of conversation leave customers worse off than they arrived. Because every reading quotes the customer's own words at the start and at the end, the reason is usually visible in between: a question asked twice, a redirect, a fix that did not work.



Emotional debt builds from frustrations and broken promises, content debt from contradictions and outdated information; both erode trust over time.

It is read alongside Friction, which counts the moments a conversation visibly broke down. In our analysis of early samples, decay was about twice as common in conversations with a breakdown as in those without, and about a quarter of decaying conversations showed one.

That is why the measure matters commercially. Lost trust shows up in conversations months before it reaches the accounts: first in tone, then in repeat calls, then in customers who stop using the assistant, and last in customers who leave. Sentiment Decay reads the first of these, while the damage is still cheap to repair.

1 Reliability is reported as two figures with 95% confidence intervals. For everyday conversations the figure is consistency rather than expert agreement: the same conversation read twice, independently, lands on the same closing tone 95% of the time (89 to 98%). For complex conversations, recent conversations chosen to include hard cases, the closing tone matched an expert reviewer's ruling 83% of the time (66 to 93%). These figures describe one step in producing a CCR. They are not a measure of the accuracy of the CCR as a whole, which depends on every step in the process.

2 Anthropic is our model provider. Where conversations are processed is agreed with each client before any data is sent, every model call is logged, and client data is not used to train models.

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About Conversational Capital and the CCR

Conversational Capital is the trust, goodwill and willingness to engage that an organisation builds up when people feel respected, understood and helped in their conversations with it, and loses when they do not.

The Conversational Capital Rating (CCR) is how we measure it. It weighs two sides of every conversation with an assistant: the value it creates, by handling what the customer came for well and at the right pace, and the trust it spends, where the conversation breaks down or the customer leaves worse off than they arrived. The outcome is a single rating out of 100, with the evidence behind it, and a priority list of how to raise it, and so build the trust your brand depends on. It is built for assistants that use large language models and increasingly do things for the customer, not just answer their questions.

The CCR turns the quality of your AI conversations into a measure you can track and act on. It shows which kinds of conversation are building trust and which are spending it, and where you should invest first. It also shows what the assistant really saves, and what it is really costing you in repeat calls, lost customers and trust, months before those costs reach your accounts, so that further investment can be judged on its return.

