

ARCHITECTURE · AI ECOSYSTEM 2026

Putting Something in the Middle

Every tool you own has added AI, and each one sees one slice of your business. The layer that belongs in the middle is the one every conversation already runs through.

■ The integration arithmetic. Not a matter of opinion

Systems	Point to point	Through a hub
4	6	4
6	15	6
9	36	9
12	66	12

Nobody builds sixty-six

They build eleven, and the other fifty-five are people copying things between screens, which is why this cost gets carried as staff time rather than software. Each connection is also not a one-off build but an ongoing relationship that has to survive both vendors changing their APIs and staff turnover at both ends. **Nine systems and eleven ad hoc integrations is eleven undocumented maintenance obligations**, discovered one at a time, always on a Friday.

■ Four properties that qualify the communications layer, and nothing else has all four

- **Intent arrives there first.** Customers do not update your CRM. They ring and say what they want.
- **It runs in real time.** A CRM syncs every fifteen minutes. A call lasts ninety seconds.
- **It holds a durable identity.** The phone number is the same across voice, SMS and messaging, and it is presented without anybody being asked.
- **It carries obligations.** A carriage service already has duties around recording, sender identity and outbound contact.

The test that decides everything else

Does anything in your stack hold a complete view of a customer at the moment that customer is being dealt with?

Around 88% of contact centres report using AI and only about a quarter say it is properly integrated. The three quarters in between are not failing because their AI is weak. They are failing because it was bolted to the side of systems that do not talk.

■ Three tiers. Nothing gets replaced

Tier	Responsible for
Channels in Voice, SMS, WhatsApp, chat, forms	Getting the conversation in however it started, and keeping it one conversation if the customer switches.
Orchestration, the brain Identity, context, agents, routing, logs	Who is this, what do we know, what happens, do what can be done, record all of it.
Systems of record CRM, jobs, calendar, accounting	Staying authoritative for their own data. The hub reads and writes. It never becomes a second copy.

■ Ninety days, in this order. The agent goes last on purpose

- Weeks 1 to 2, identity.** Match inbound numbers to the CRM and show the customer to whoever answers. Surfaces your data quality problems while they are cheap.
- Weeks 3 to 5, write-back.** Every call produces a note and a task automatically. Highest value per hour in the sequence.
- Weeks 6 to 8, missed call recovery.** Detect, SMS within thirty seconds, task, ordered callback list. An automation, not an agent, and it usually pays for the project.
- Weeks 9 to 12, one queue, then one agent** on one narrow job. An agent without identity, context and write-back is a stranger answering your phone with no notes.

■ Demand these six

- API in **both** directions. Read-only is a report.
- Webhooks on every event.
- Integrations included, not per connection.
- You own and can port the numbers.
- Exportable per-event log.
- Australian hosting, stated plainly.

■ Six signs you have no hub

- Someone retypes the same thing into two systems daily.
- Your CRM has no record of phone calls.
- Texting you is slower than ringing you.
- Nobody can count a customer's contacts last month.
- A new system means a quote for an integration.
- Your AI features impress and change nothing.

Centralising is a compliance simplification too

Recording notification, SMS sender identity, Do Not Call obligations, messaging platform session rules, and from **10 December 2026** the disclosure of kinds of personal information used in substantially automated decisions. **Each is easier to satisfy once, at the hub, than repeatedly in every application that might send a message or make a decision.** Automation does not change your obligations. It changes how fast you can breach them.