

TOP 10 CHALLENGES

Customer Success Leaders Faced in 2024 & Actionable Paths Forward

GTM 10

Introduction

As part of the GTM10 nomination process, Cello conducted over 80 semi-structured interviews with customer success professionals from Big Tech giants, high-growth scale-ups, and GTM influencers. Based on these GTM10 interviews, Cello's research reveals the ten biggest challenges customer success teams faced in 2024.

By aligning your priorities with GTM10 honorees' proven playbooks, you can transform past hurdles into growth engines:

Core Challenges:

From hiring and retaining talent to reducing churn, scaling operations, integrating tools, driving engagement, managing resources, personalizing success, aligning functions, improving visibility, and proving ROI—each challenge directly affects customer growth and retention.

Actionable Playbooks:

Honorees tackled these with scalable tactics—like structured hiring, churn risk models, tiered motions, tech integrations, personalized engagement, and executive reporting frameworks.

Next Steps

Benchmark your CS function, prioritize two initiatives, and set review cadences with clear metrics.

Insights from the Front Line

"Decentralizing Customer Success into regional teams allowed us to tailor strategies by market, ultimately transforming retention and expansion across the board."

"By designing a two-month onboarding framework with weekly milestones, we turned at-risk accounts into success stories and built a repeatable playbook for scale."

— GTM10 Interviewees

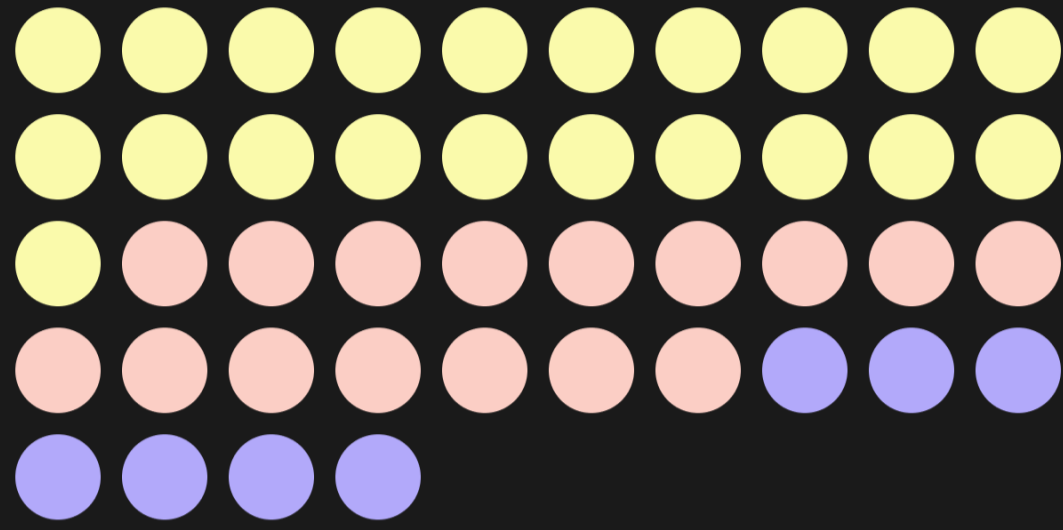
Top Challenges Overview

RANK	CHALLENGE	PREVALENCE	BUSINESS IMPACT
01	TOOLING & TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION	VERY HIGH	HIGH
02	SCALING CS OPERATIONS	VERY HIGH	CRITICAL
03	CROSS-FUNCTIONAL ALIGNMENT	VERY HIGH	HIGH
04	CUSTOMER RETENTION & CHURN REDUCTION	VERY HIGH	HIGH
05	ADOPTION & ENGAGEMENT	HIGH	HIGH
06	RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS	MODERATE	MEDIUM
07	ROI & BUSINESS IMPACT MEASUREMENT	MODERATE	MEDIUM
08	SEGMENTATION & PERSONALIZATION	MODERATE	HIGH
09	DATA & VISIBILITY	MODERATE	HIGH
10	TALENT ACQUISITION & RETENTION	LOW	CRITICAL

The GTM10 Awards in Numbers

806

TOTAL NOMINATIONS



386

STARTUP/SCALE UP

276

BIG TECH

144

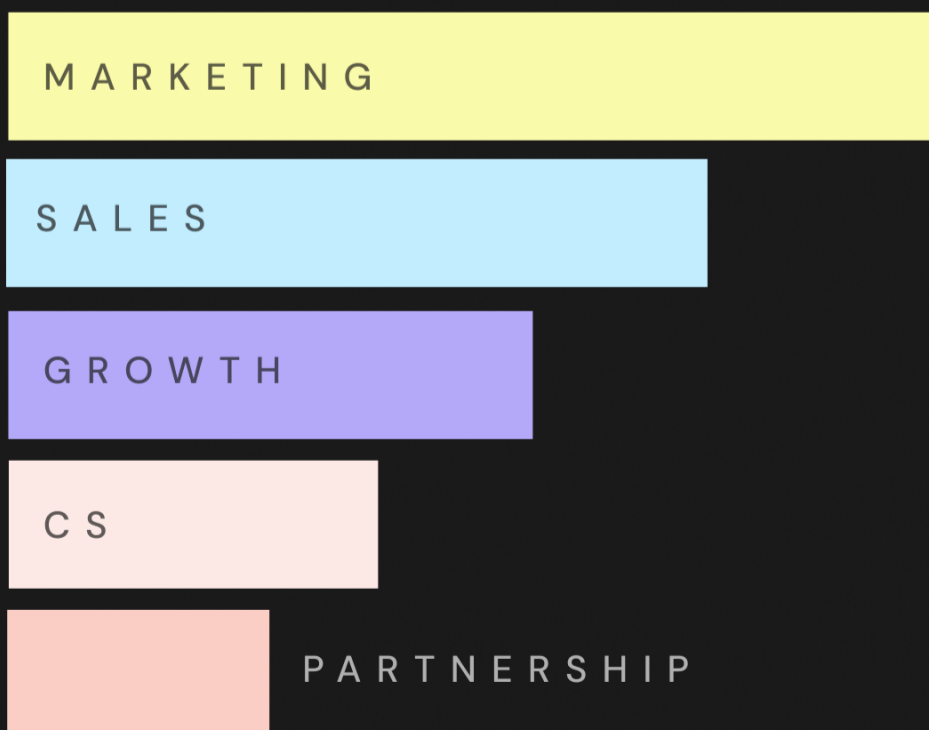
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Geography Distribution

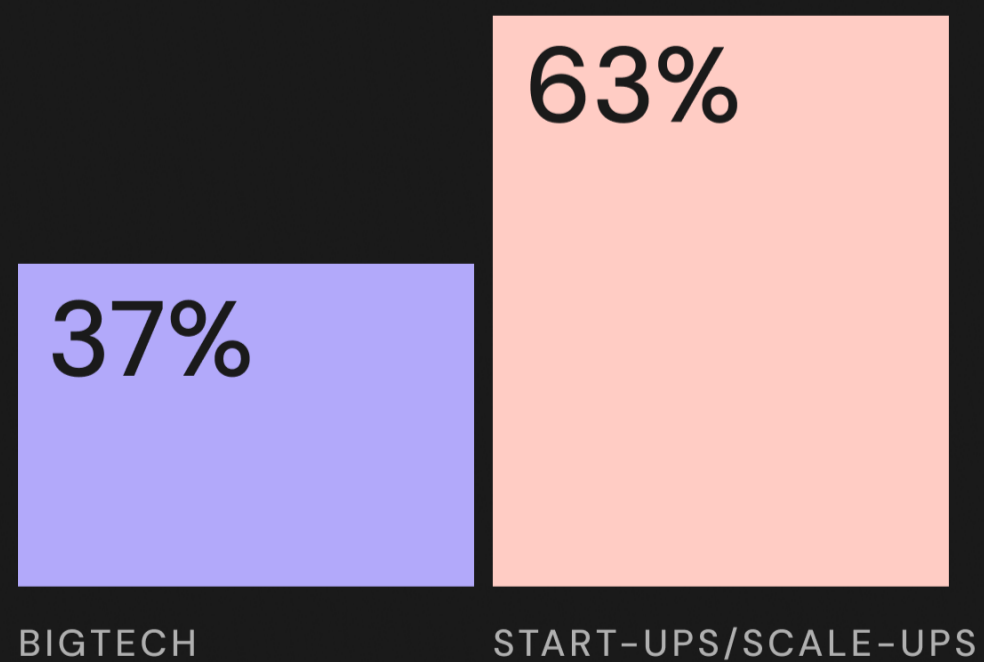
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COUNTRIES REPRESENTED

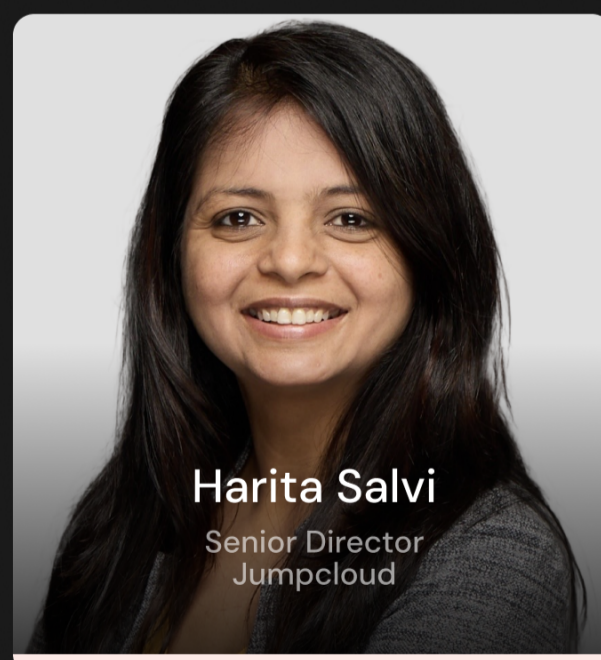
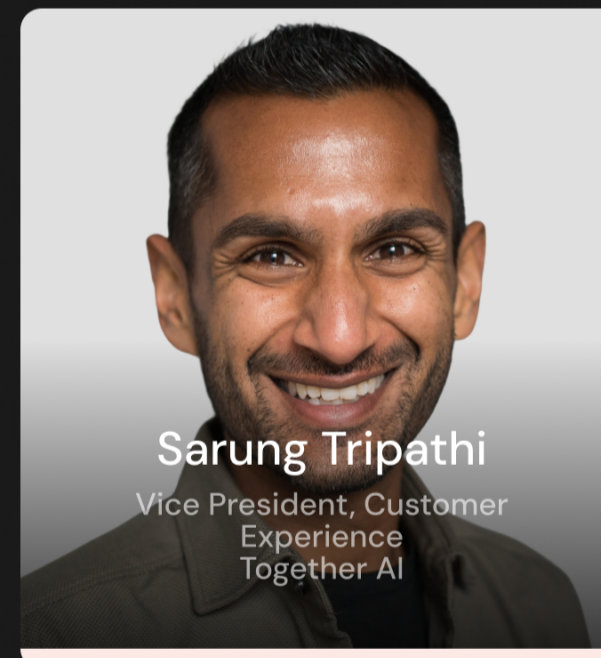
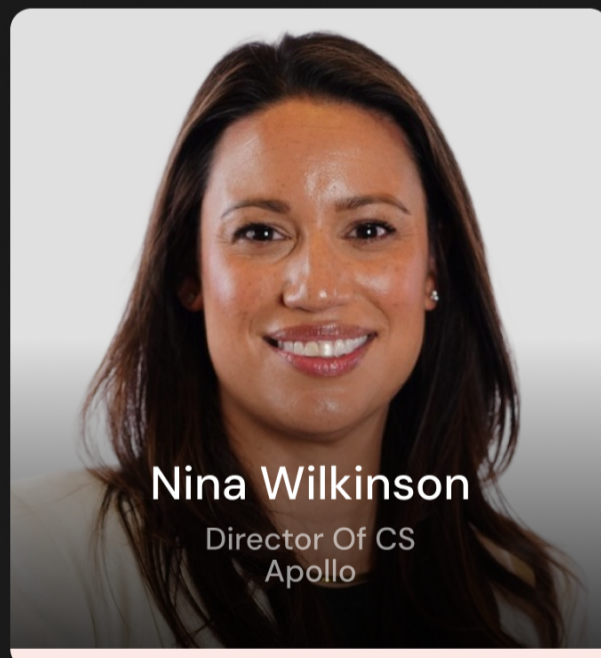
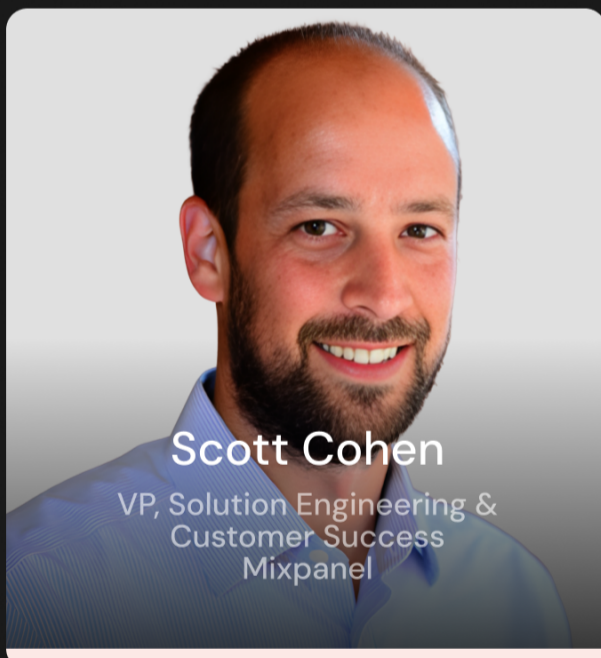
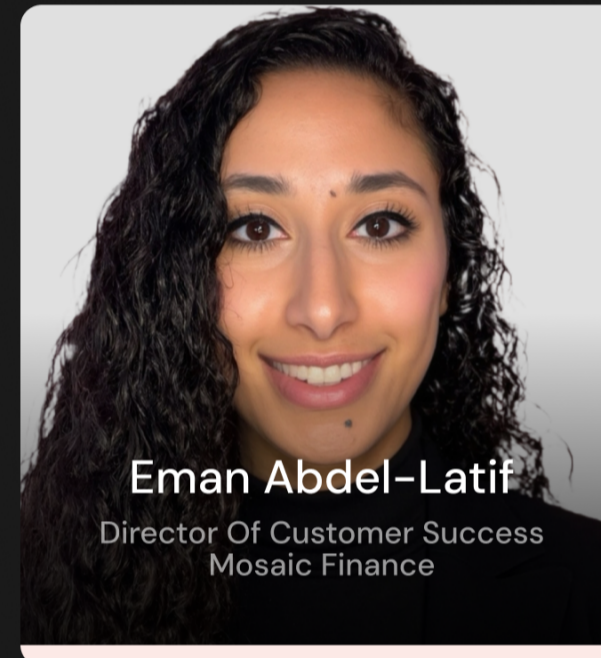
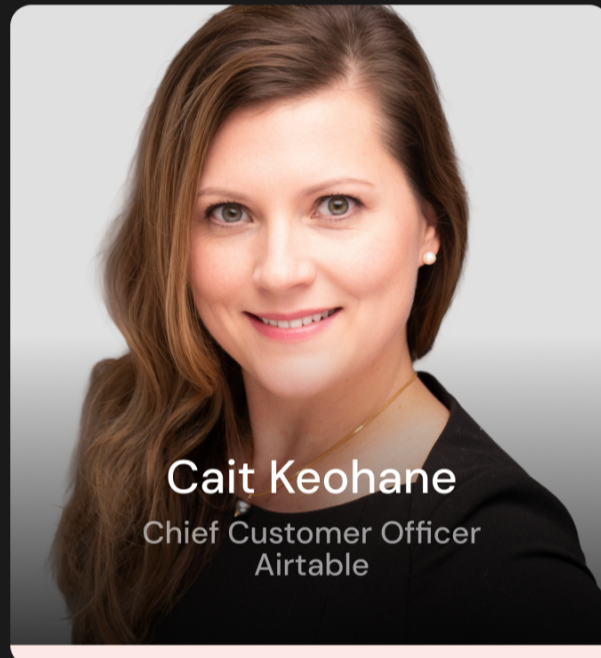
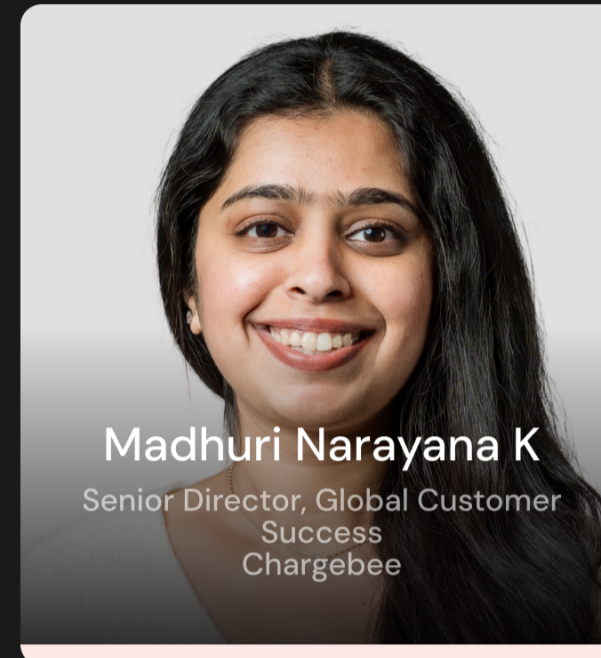
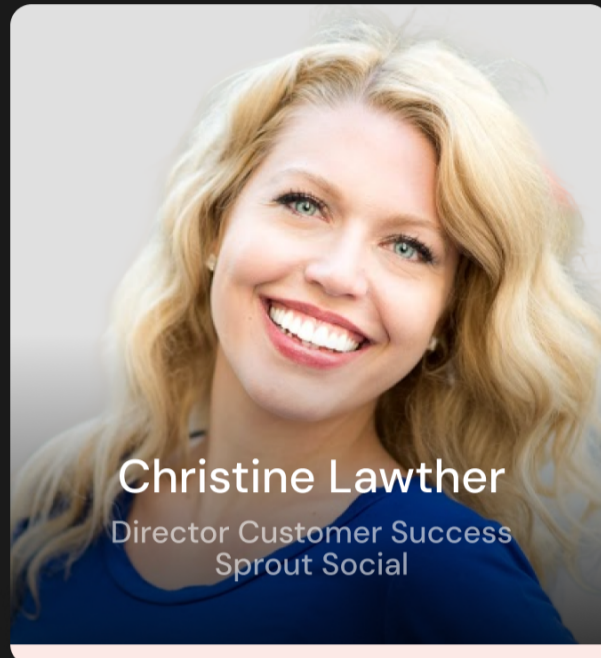
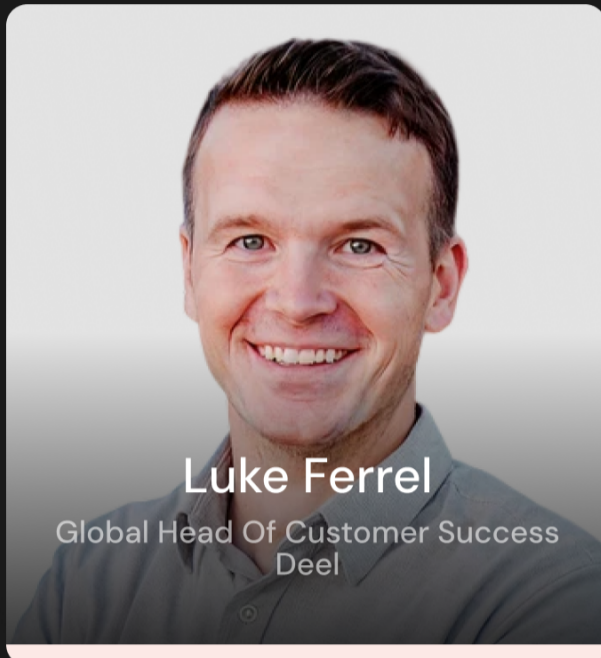
Most competitive category



Startups vs. BigTech



Meet the Customer Success Winners



The Customer Success Jury



Josh Abdulla

CCO • ASANA

Josh Abdulla is CCO at Asana overseeing success, support, and services; formerly with LiveRamp, Salesforce, and ExactTarget; also a Techstars mentor driving \$700 M+ ARR.



Allison Pickens

FORMER COO • GAINSIGHT

Allison Pickens was COO at Gainsight, scaling ARR to \$85 M; now a solo GP investing in AI/SaaS and serving on Commvault's board.



Nicholas Cochran

GLOBAL VP • DATABRICKS

Nick Cochran is Global VP at Databricks; he co-founded and sold DataScout, built CS at Mulesoft, and advises open-source startups on GTM.



Sasha Anderson

GLOBAL HEAD OF CUSTOMER • CANVA

Sasha Anderson leads Customer Success at Canva globally; she scaled Procore from \$20 M to \$1 B and specializes in GTM, revenue operations, and expansion.

Detailed Challenge Analysis

1. Tooling & Technology Integration

The Challenge

- Siloed collaboration and data tools force teams to hunt for context across Slack, email, CRM and ticketing systems.
- Legacy CS platforms cannot keep pace with hyper-growth, driving manual work-arounds that erode productivity.
- Unstructured AI adoption means teams miss out on automation gains that could scale outreach and insights.

Playbook

- Launch a unified **Customer Operating System** that stitches product usage, support, and success plans together.
- Augment the tech stack with an advanced CS platform plus standardized workflows to maximize efficiency and scalability .
- Run focused enablement sprints so every CSM embeds AI-powered automations into repetitive tasks.

Expected Impact

Interviews report > 97% renewal rates and a 7% lift in license utilization once data, workflows, and AI were centralized.

Detailed Challenge Analysis

2. Scaling CS Operations

The Challenge

- Manual, hero-based processes collapse beyond a few dozen accounts, slowing onboarding and time-to-value.
- High turnover and cultural shifts destabilize delivery, causing inconsistent outreach and missed renewals.
- Limited predictive visibility into risk and expansion opportunities hampers proactive planning.

Key pain points

- Deploy a dedicated CS platform with standardized **lifecycle playbooks** to create process continuity.
- Introduce tiered engagement models plus health-score dashboards that focus effort where it moves the needle.
- Institute weekly metrics reviews to build a data-driven, accountable culture.

Expected Impact

Teams sustained 97% renewal and supported 40+ high-touch accounts without extra headcount, laying a foundation for predictable NRR growth.

Detailed Challenge Analysis

3. Cross-Functional Alignment

The Challenge

- Disjointed hand-offs between Sales, CS, and Product create value gaps early in the customer journey.
- Fragmented communication workflows reduce productivity and increase churn risk.
- Compensation and OKRs mis-aligned across functions undermine shared retention goals.

Playbook

- Create cross-functional operating cadences—joint QBRs, deal reviews, and roadmap councils—to synchronize priorities.
- Standardize messaging and support protocols to rebuild trust and reliability across every touchpoint.
- Feed structured customer insight packets back to Product so roadmap decisions eliminate renewal blockers.

Expected Impact

- Interviewees highlighted 2-5% NRR uplift where CS insights directly informed product enhancements and renewal playbooks.

Detailed Challenge Analysis

4. Customer Retention & Churn Reduction

The Challenge

- Rising procurement scrutiny and tighter budgets elevate the risk of downgrades and logo loss.
- Early-warning signals remain hidden in scattered data, forcing reactive 'save' motions.
- Unclear paths to value for mid-market customers trigger churn spikes.

Playbook

- Deploy predictive health models that surface at-risk accounts weeks earlier (e.g., 48 risk cases identified in one quarter).
- Run proactive success-planning workshops replicating behaviours of top-performing cohorts.
- Tie CSM objectives to deal retention and NRR targets (90%+ logo retention; 110%+ NRR).

Expected Impact

Practitioners reported double-digit churn reduction and 110%+ NRR when early-warning and proactive playbooks were operationalised.

Detailed Challenge Analysis

5. Adoption & Engagement

The Challenge

- Product complexity overwhelms new users, delaying time-to-value.
- Inconsistent onboarding experiences lead to patchy feature adoption.
- Low seat and credit usage caps expansion potential.

Playbook

- Design segmented, in-app onboarding journeys aligned to user roles and use-cases.
- Monitor license-utilisation dashboards and trigger outreach the moment usage dips.
- Employ AI-driven nudges (email & in-product) steering users toward high-value features.

Expected Impact

License utilisation rose > 7% on average, unlocking earlier upsell conversations and multi-year contract commitments.

Detailed Challenge Analysis

6. Resource Constraints

The Challenge

- Budgets lag behind revenue ambitions, forcing lean teams to deliver enterprise-grade service.
- Burnout risk climbs when every account feels ‘mission critical’.
- Funding gaps for enablement and community roles stifle scalability.

Playbook

- Apply a value-tiering model that concentrates spend on high-ARR accounts while automating the long-tail.
- Stand-up self-service knowledge bases and peer communities to deflect low-complexity queries.
- Harness AI and workflow automation to stretch human capacity without increasing headcount.

Expected Impact

Several teams kept budgets flat yet lifted NRR year-over-year, demonstrating that smart automation offsets resource gaps.

Detailed Challenge Analysis

7. ROI & Business Impact Measurement

The Challenge

- Leadership scrutinises CS budgets and demands proof of revenue impact.
- Attribution gaps obscure which motions actually drive expansion.
- Noisy, ad-hoc reporting clouds strategic decision-making.

Playbook

- Stand-up standardized KPI dashboards blending retention, expansion, and adoption signals.
- Adopt unit-economics metrics—ARR per CSM, burn multiple—to normalise performance across segments.
- Hold quarterly executive reviews where CS leaders translate insights directly into P&L terms.

Expected Impact

Organisations that closed the attribution loop won 15–20% budget increases tied to demonstrable ARR impact.

Detailed Challenge Analysis

8. Segmentation & Personalization

The Challenge

- One-size outreach fatigues a customer base that spans SMB to Enterprise.
- Absence of clear segmentation criteria leads to reactive account coverage.
- Generic messaging dilutes perceived value and slows expansion.

Playbook

- Define firmographic- and usage-based segments that dictate distinct CS motions.
- Create modular content blocks with dynamic placeholders to personalise at scale.
- Route accounts automatically to specialised CSM pods aligned to segment needs.

Expected Impact

Interviewees cited double-digit engagement lifts and earlier expansion once tailored playbooks replaced blanket outreach.

Detailed Challenge Analysis

9. Data & Visibility

The Challenge

- CS teams operate blind without unified dashboards that surface health, risk, and opportunity signals.
- Data hygiene issues erode trust in scoring models and reports.
- Analysis paralysis sets in when teams track dozens of lagging metrics instead of a few leading ones.

Playbook

- Integrate product, support, and finance data into a single 'pane of glass'.
- Automate health-scoring algorithms and flag anomalies daily for fast intervention.
- Limit reporting to a focused set of leading indicators reviewed in weekly ops calls.

Expected Impact

Earlier risk detection and shorter ramp times led to more predictable renewals.

Detailed Challenge Analysis

10. Talent Acquisition & Retention

The Challenge

- Senior CS talent is in short supply, especially for specialised roles (data analysts, technical success engineers).
- Cultural transitions and unclear career paths drive employee churn.
- Compensation ambiguity undermines motivation and performance.

Playbook

- Establish clear competency models and transparent, performance-linked compensation structures.
- Invest in continuous mentorship and career-development programmes to reduce burnout.
- Expand sourcing into emerging markets and under-represented talent pools to widen pipelines.

Expected Impact

Teams that executed this playbook scaled headcount 3× while sustaining 90%+ employee retention, fuelling downstream customer outcomes.

Conclusion & Recommendations

The ten challenges outlined here define the battleground for Customer Success leaders in 2024. By adopting robust talent strategies, scaling operations with repeatable playbooks, and embedding data-driven measurement, teams can convert today's hurdles into tomorrow's customer champions.

Next Steps for Your Team

Benchmark

Evaluate your CS function against each challenge area to pinpoint strengths and vulnerabilities.

Prioritize

Choose one "quick win" (e.g., consolidated health-score dashboard) and one "strategic shift" (e.g., tiered playbook model) for the upcoming quarter.

Measure & Iterate

Define clear KPIs—churn rate, CSAT/NPS, time-to-value—and review progress monthly, refining playbooks based on results.

Prepared by the GTM10 Awards Research team at Cello.

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