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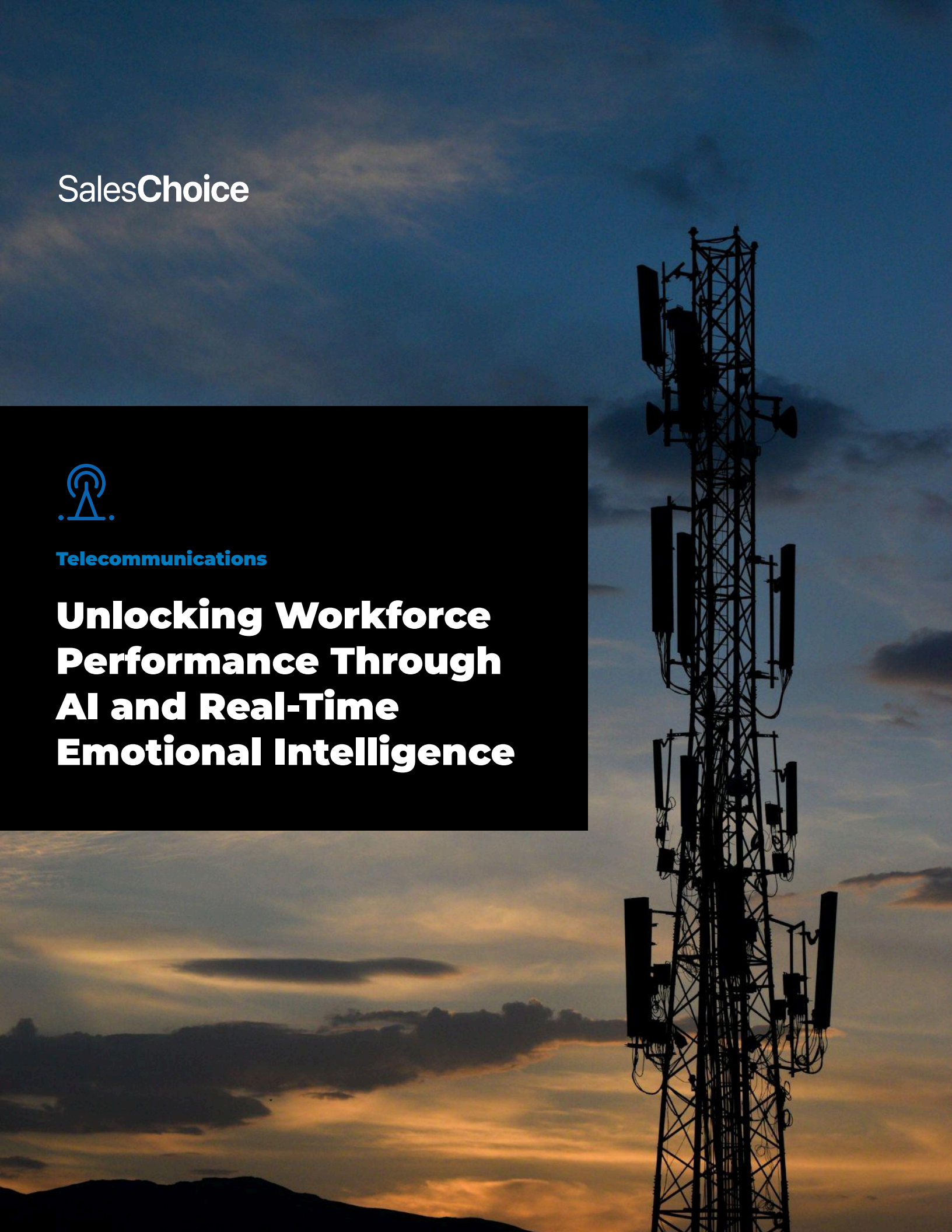

Telecommunications

Unlocking Workforce Performance Through AI and Real-Time Emotional Intelligence

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Executive Summary

The telecommunications industry is entering a critical phase of transformation in which traditional sources of value—network scale, infrastructure investment, and pricing strategies—are no longer sufficient to sustain competitive advantage. Industry leaders are increasingly turning to artificial intelligence (AI) to drive productivity, reduce costs, and enhance customer experience. Recent research indicates that AI could improve telecom EBITDA margins and return on invested capital by up to ten percentage points within five years when deployed effectively.

However, a fundamental constraint remains under-addressed: workforce engagement and emotional performance.

Telecommunications organizations operate complex, high-pressure environments spanning call centers, retail stores, field operations, and network engineering teams. Employees are required to deliver both technical precision and empathetic customer interactions, often under significant stress. Research shows that employees in such environments face high cognitive and emotional load, particularly in customer-facing roles where rapid resolution and empathy are simultaneously required.

SalesChoice worked hand-in-hand with our sales, service, IT and revenue enablement teams to develop a modernized sales workflow process. These changes streamlined and set the stage for our division to accelerate our growth and, more importantly, better serve our customers.

– Justin Ingenthron, Director of Finance, Business Sales

SaskTel

This paper argues that the next frontier of telecom performance lies in integrating emotional intelligence—grounded in Marc Brackett's research—with real-time AI-driven workforce analytics. Traditional engagement surveys are insufficient in this context. Instead, real-time monitoring solutions such as SalesChoice MoodInsights™ enable telecom leaders to capture and act on workforce sentiment continuously, unlocking measurable gains in productivity, retention, and customer experience.

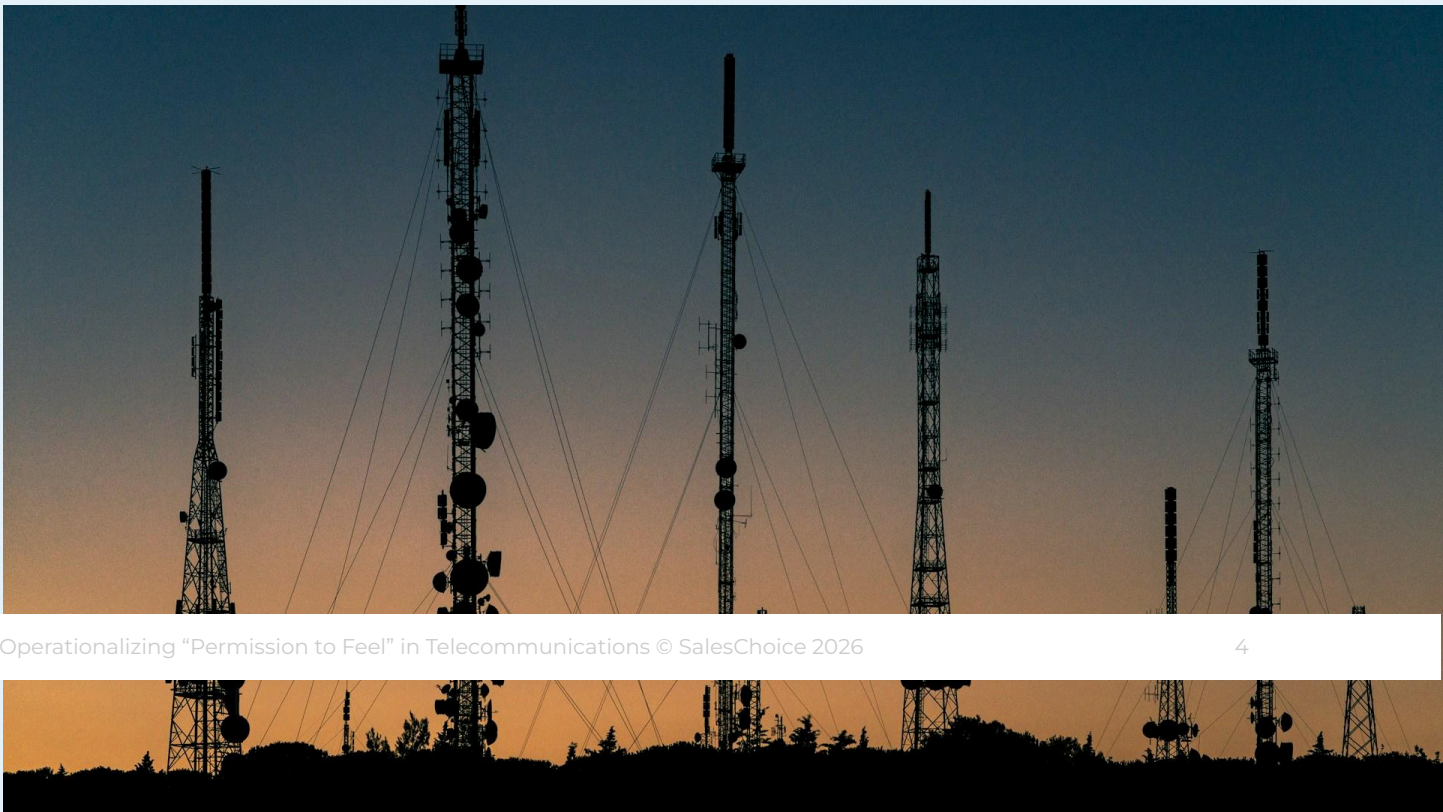
Industry Context: Telecommunications Under Transformation Pressure

Telecommunications companies are facing a structural paradox. While demand for connectivity continues to grow, revenue growth remains constrained, and cost pressures are increasing. At the same time, AI adoption is accelerating across the industry, with nearly one-third of telecom operators already integrating AI into operations, particularly in customer service.

Despite these investments, the realization of value has been uneven.

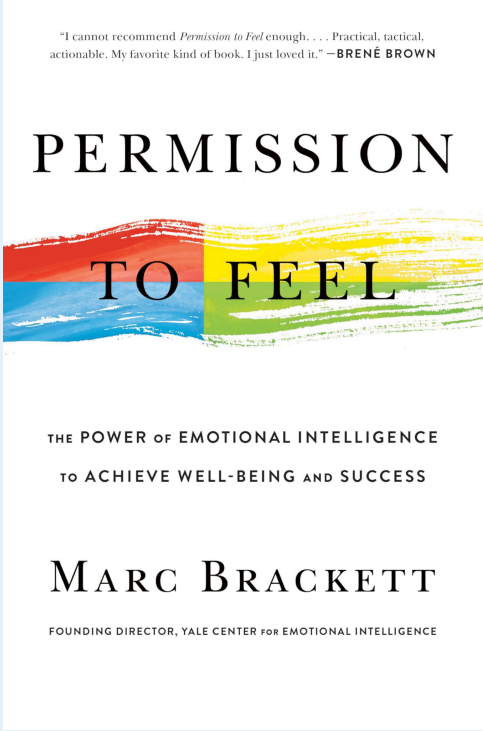
Only 12% of telecom operators report having captured significant impact from AI initiatives, with the majority struggling to scale beyond pilot programs. This gap highlights a critical issue: technology alone does not drive transformation. Organizational adoption, employee engagement, and operating model alignment are equally important.

Employee-related challenges are consistently identified as a primary barrier to AI value realization. More than half of telecom executives cite workforce adoption and change management as the biggest obstacles to scaling AI impact. This underscores the importance of understanding and managing employee sentiment as a core component of transformation.



The Role of Emotional Intelligence: Permission to Feel as a Performance Lever

The work of Marc Brackett, Founding Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, provides a critical framework for addressing workforce challenges in telecommunications. Emotional intelligence enables employees to navigate stress, communicate effectively, and maintain performance in demanding environments. In telecom, where employees must balance technical problem-solving with customer empathy, these capabilities are essential.



Telecom employees, particularly in customer service roles, are required to handle high volumes of interactions while maintaining service quality and emotional composure. Research indicates that these roles are characterized by significant emotional labor, which, if unmanaged, leads to burnout, disengagement, and attrition.

Brackett's concept of "permission to feel" suggests that organizations must create environments where employees can recognize and express emotions constructively. **This is not merely a cultural initiative; it is a performance imperative.** Organizations that enable emotional intelligence at scale experience improved collaboration, higher engagement, greater resilience, and higher performance levels.

Table 1: Emotional Intelligence in Telecommunications

Capability	Workforce Impact	Business Outcome
Emotional awareness	Reduced stress and improved decision-making	Lower burnout and absenteeism
Emotional regulation	Greater resilience in customer interactions	Improved service quality
Empathy	Stronger customer relationships	Increased satisfaction and loyalty
Emotional expression	Higher engagement and trust	Improved retention

The Limitations of Traditional Engagement Surveys

Most telecommunication organizations rely on annual or quarterly engagement surveys to assess workforce sentiment. While these tools provide useful benchmarking data, they are inherently limited in their ability to drive timely action.

Survey-based approaches suffer from several structural weaknesses.

- First, they provide lagging indicators, capturing sentiment after issues have already impacted performance.
- Second, they lack granularity, making it difficult to identify specific drivers of engagement at the team or operational level.
- Third, they often fail to generate trust among employees, particularly when feedback does not result in visible action.

In fast-moving telecom environments, where customer demand and operational conditions can change rapidly, these limitations are particularly pronounced. By the time survey results are analyzed, the underlying issues may have evolved or escalated.

Table 2: Traditional Surveys vs Real-Time Monitoring in Telecom

Dimension	Traditional Surveys	Real-Time Monitoring
Data type	Retrospective	Continuous and predictive
Frequency	Annual / quarterly	Real-time
Actionability	Delayed	Immediate
Relevance to operations	Limited	High
Impact on performance	Incremental	Transformational

Real-Time Monitoring: A New Operating Model

Real-time monitoring represents a fundamental shift from reactive to proactive workforce management. By continuously capturing employee sentiment, telecom organizations can identify emerging issues and intervene before they impact performance.

The value of real-time analytics is already evident in customer-facing applications. Telecom operators are using AI to analyze customer interactions in real time, improving resolution times and customer satisfaction. Extending this capability to employee sentiment represents a natural and necessary evolution.

Real-time monitoring enables telecom organizations to:

- Detect early signals of disengagement or burnout
- Improve manager effectiveness through data-driven insights
- Align workforce sentiment with operational performance
- Enhance agility in responding to changing conditions

Table 3: Business Value of Real-Time Monitoring

Value Driver	Mechanism	Outcome
Engagement	Continuous feedback loops	Increased productivity
Retention	Early risk detection	Reduced attrition
Customer experience	Improved employee sentiment	Higher customer satisfaction
Operational agility	Real-time insights	Faster decision-making

Leading Practices: AI-Driven Employee Engagement in Telecom

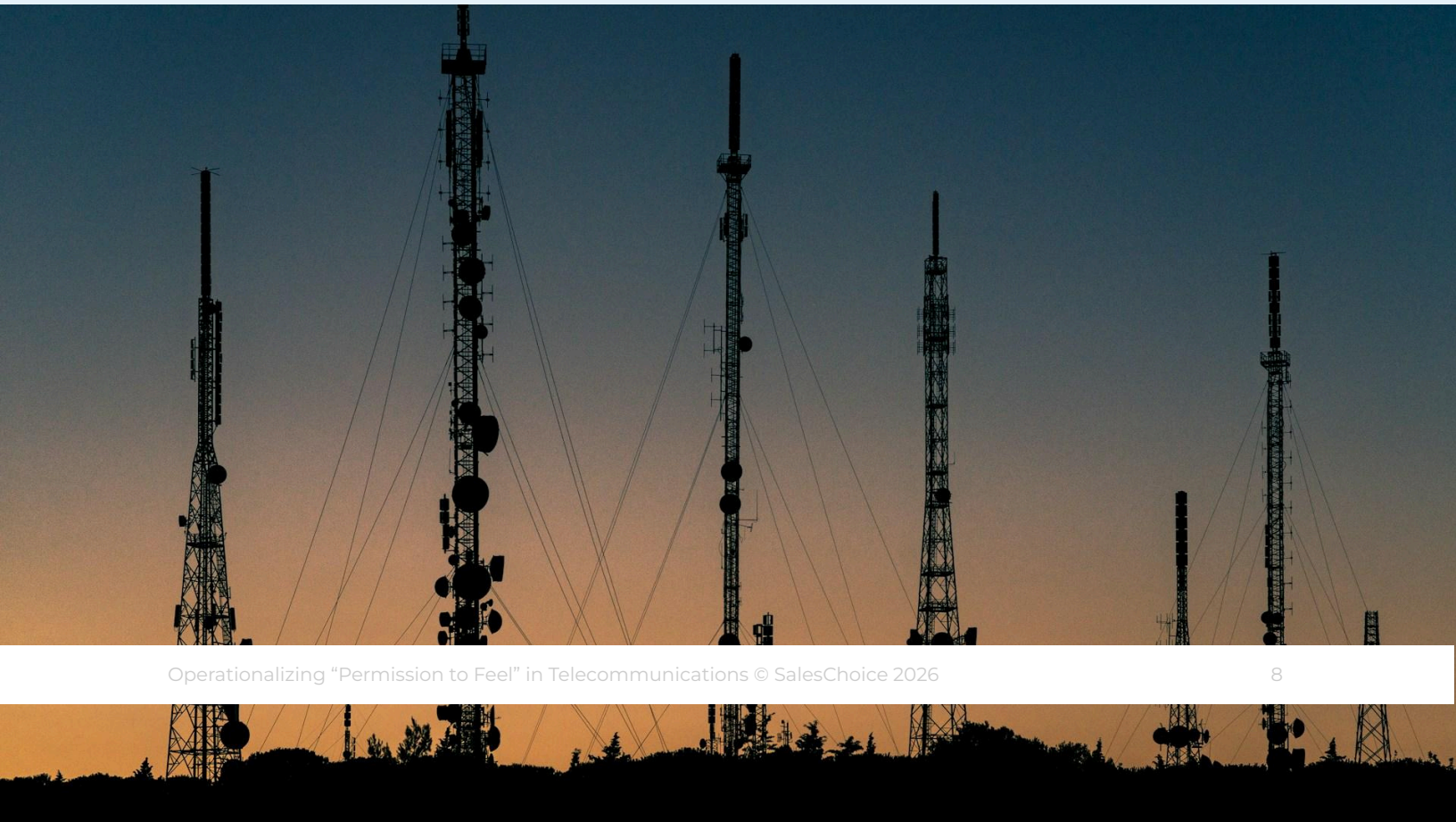
Telecommunication companies are increasingly adopting AI-driven approaches to improve both customer and employee experiences. Organizations such as Telstra and Bharti Airtel are investing heavily in AI-enabled workforce and operational transformation initiatives.

These initiatives include:

- AI-powered workforce optimization platforms
- Real-time analytics for customer and operational data
- Predictive insights to improve service delivery and engagement

However, many of these efforts remain focused on operational efficiency rather than emotional intelligence.

The next phase of transformation will require integrating emotional data into these systems, enabling a more holistic approach to workforce performance.



ROI of Real-Time Mood Monitoring in Telecommunications

The financial impact of real-time mood monitoring is driven by its ability to improve key performance levers simultaneously.

- First, increased engagement leads to higher productivity, particularly in customer-facing roles where employee behavior directly influences outcomes.
- Second, reduced turnover lowers recruitment and training costs, which are significant in telecom call centers and field operations.
- Third, improved employee experience enhances customer satisfaction, reducing churn and increasing lifetime value.

AI-enabled transformation in telecom is expected to deliver cost savings of at least 10% in key operational areas within the next one to two years, with potential to reach 30% by 2030. When combined with improvements in engagement and retention, real-time monitoring solutions can significantly amplify these benefits.

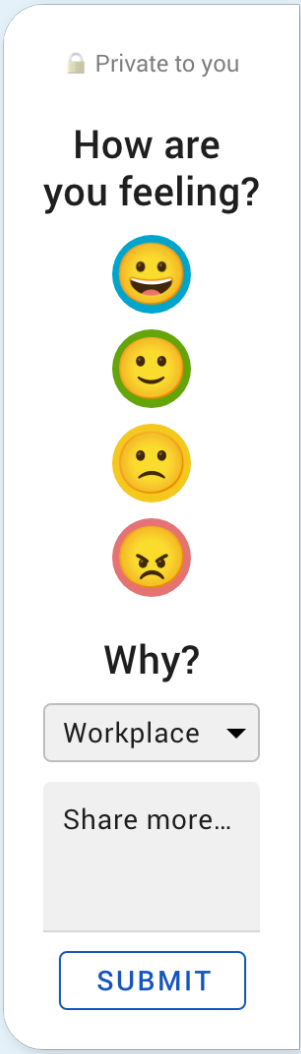


Table 4: ROI Comparison – Traditional vs Real-Time Approaches

Dimension	Traditional Surveys	Real-Time Monitoring
Engagement impact	Moderate	High
Speed of intervention	Slow	Immediate
Turnover reduction	Limited	Significant
Productivity gains	Incremental	Substantial
Financial impact	Indirect	Direct and measurable

MoodInsights™: Enabling Real-Time Emotional Intelligence at Scale

SalesChoice MoodInsights represents a next-generation solution designed to address the limitations of traditional engagement approaches. By leveraging AI and advanced analytics, MoodInsights captures continuous employee sentiment and translates it into actionable insights for leaders.

In telecommunications environments, where workforces are distributed and operational complexity is high, MoodInsights provides a unified view of employee sentiment across functions and geographies. It enables leaders to move beyond intuition and anecdotal feedback, adopting a data-driven approach to managing culture and performance.

The platform's predictive capabilities allow organizations to anticipate issues such as burnout, disengagement, and attrition, enabling proactive intervention. This aligns directly with the principles of "permission to feel," operationalizing emotional intelligence at scale.

Table 5: MoodInsights Value in Telecommunications

Capability	Telecom Application	Business Benefit
Real-time sentiment analysis	Monitoring the call center and the field workforce	Improved engagement
Predictive analytics	Identifying attrition risk	Reduced turnover
Manager dashboards	Enhancing leadership effectiveness	Better team performance
Continuous feedback	Replacing surveys	Higher trust and responsiveness

Conclusion: A Call to Action for Telecom Leaders

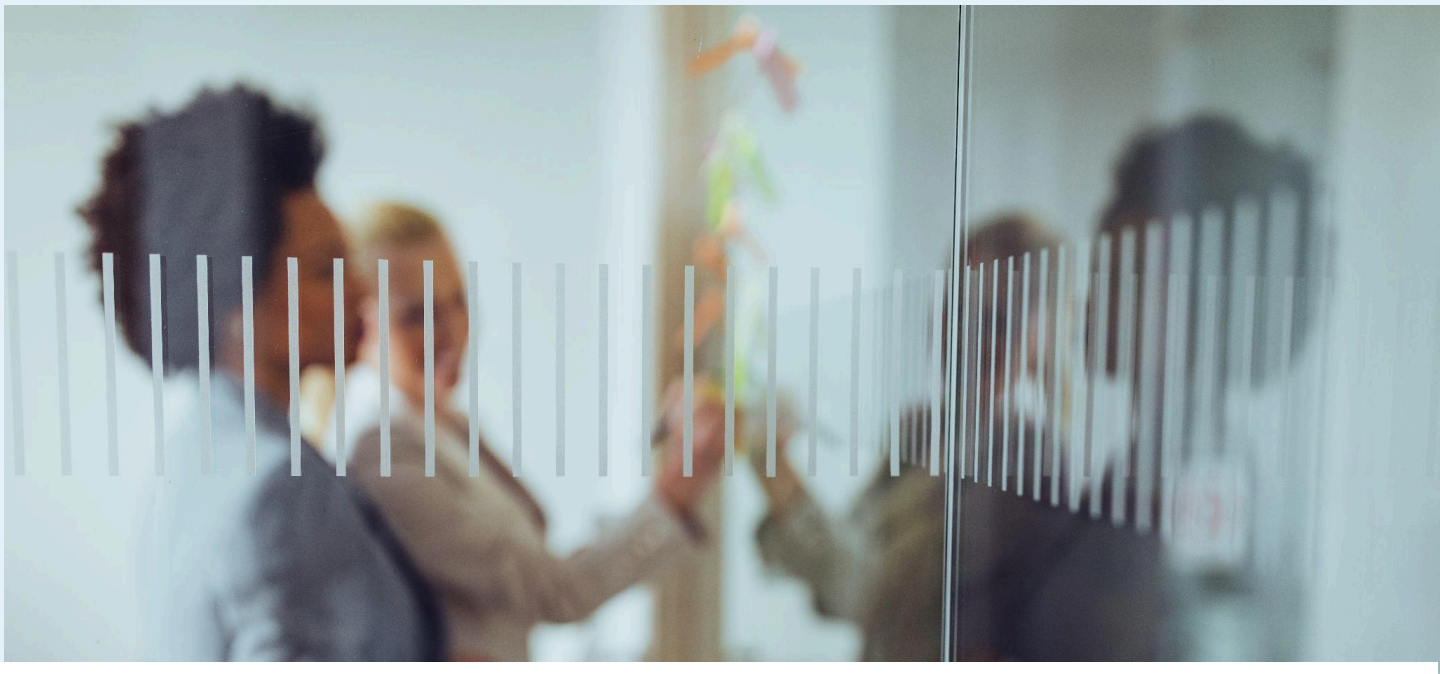
The telecommunications industry is at a pivotal moment. While AI offers significant opportunities for cost reduction and productivity improvement, the ability to capture these benefits depends on workforce engagement and organizational adoption.

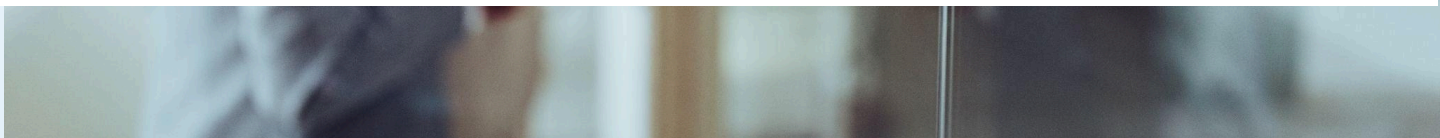
The integration of emotional intelligence, real-time monitoring, and AI-driven analytics represents a new operating model for telecom organizations. Leaders who embrace this model will be better positioned to:

- Unlock workforce productivity
- Enhance customer experience
- Reduce operational risk
- Drive sustainable financial performance

Those who continue to rely on traditional survey-based approaches risk falling behind in an increasingly competitive and data-driven industry.

The message is clear: the future of telecommunications performance will not be determined solely by networks or technology, but by the ability to understand and act on how employees feel—in real time.





Appendix: Features and Functions of MoodInsights™

MoodInsights™ is a **sentiment reflection and analytics toolkit**—a continuous emotional insight system designed to embed self-reflection into daily workflows. Its core function is to provide organizations with real-time visibility into the emotional dynamics, well-being, and engagement of their workforce, enabling proactive, data-driven management of human performance.

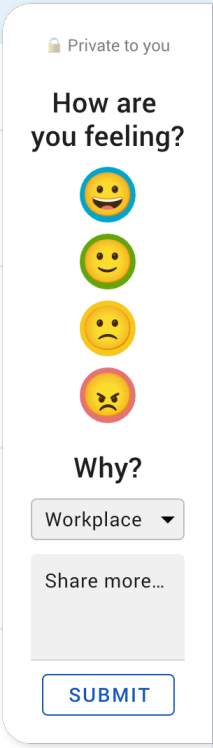
Employee-Facing Features

Daily 4-Emoji Pulse Check
A fast, frictionless way for employees to log their daily sentiment with one click.

Anonymous Qualitative Feedback
A private space for employees to explain the "why" behind their mood, ensuring their voice is heard without fear of retribution.

Private Self-Reflection Log
A personal dashboard where employees can track their own emotional trends over time to help with self-correction and mindfulness.

Privacy-First Design
Complete anonymity for all submissions, fostering trust and honest communication.



Leadership & Organizational Features

Real-Time Sentiment Dashboard
Aggregated and averaged views of the organization's "heartbeat," allowing for immediate visibility into team morale.

Key Driver Categorization
Feedback is automatically mapped to specific organizational categories (e.g., Workload, Management, Tools, Culture) to pinpoint exactly where issues are stemming from.

Feedback Intelligence
Uses Generative AI to cluster and synthesize raw data input into a balanced scorecard format, sorted by business impact. Guarantees 100% user anonymity and turns chaotic text into succinct, actionable summaries.

Predictive Retention Tools
Correlate utilization or work volume with the early warning signs of burnout and turnover before they impact productivity.

Benchmarking & ROI Tracking
Compare sentiment data against key performance indicators like absenteeism, turnover rates, and productivity gains.

Deployment & Integration

Standalone SaaS Platform
A lightweight, dedicated web and mobile-friendly application.

Salesforce Integration
Fully embedded within SalesChoice's SalesInsights app, allowing revenue teams to track sentiment directly inside their CRM workflow.

Cross-Functional Accessibility
Designed for use across any department, from sales and marketing to HR and operations.

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Authors

Dr. Cindy Gordon, CEO & Founder

Dr. Gordon is the CEO and Founder of SalesChoice. Author of 16 books, the most recent being *The AI Precipice: An Executive Guide to Innovation and Safety*, and hundreds of articles and research reports. She is the recipient of more than twenty AI awards. She is a former senior partner or executive with scaling experience from Accenture, Citicorp, and Xerox. She has worked with major global Telcos, including: Bell Canada, British Telecom, SaskTel, Telus, Telstra, etc. She has also been a Venture Capitalist and is an active board advisor of diverse AI companies. Dr. Gordon has been advancing AI digital transformation strategies, governance, and building innovative AI solutions to ensure AI Value Realization is sustained for over 20+ years. She has a doctorate in Applied AI and teaches AI at the United States AI Institute (USAII) and other academic institutions.

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Malay Upadhyay, COO

Malay is the COO of SalesChoice, and he is also the SaskTel Account Executive overseeing SalesChoice Telecom solutioning. He oversees AI value realization of SalesChoice customers and brings a strong AI practical foundation of what's required to design and deploy sustainable AI solutions. He is also the author of 4 books on AI and enjoys teaching at the United States AI Institute (USAII) and other academic institutions.

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Let’s Talk AI

THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Get in touch to learn how SalesChoice can help you:

- ✔ Plan your AI journey to future-proof your investments
- ✔ Forecast sales with increased confidence
- ✔ Clean and modernize your Salesforce
- ✔ Capture the opportunity of AI with real-time coaching
- ✔ Unleash the latent power of your workforce
- ✔ Make data-driven decisions you trust
- ✔ Build agentic AI routines for smarter workflows
- ✔ Ensure explainable and responsible AI