

The Industrialist

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“Schneider Electric drives AI at scale, and is enhancing digital capabilities and empowering people to deliver exceptional customer experiences as a winning recipe for the future.”

Audrey Hazak
SVP Digital Customer Relationship,
Schneider Electric

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Schneider Electric's B2B customer excellence in the GenAI era

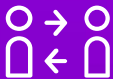
Each month, we speak to a different industry leader about their approach to innovation and the emerging trends impacting the industrial sector. For this edition, we spoke with Schneider Electric's SVP Digital Customer Relationship, Audrey Hazak, about how she is contributing to the company's mission "to be the trusted partner in Sustainability and Efficiency" with her dedication to innovation and by creating seamless, personalized digital customer experiences. Audrey shared her vision of how technology, data, AI and GenAI are reshaping the entire customer journey and the company's own operations, and provided practical advice for industrial leaders looking to enhance their B2B customer experience.



[Putting innovation, sustainability and efficiency in action](#)



[Key learnings and advice for industrial clients to enhance B2B customer experience and realize value](#)



[Excelling in digital customer relationship management across various B2B customer segments: similarities, differences, and meeting new expectations](#)



[Driving impact at scale from data, AI and GenAI](#)

In conversation with Audrey Hazak, SVP Digital Customer Relationship, Schneider Electric

What one word describes you best?



Audrey Hazak
SVP Digital Customer Relationship,
Schneider Electric

I think it could be "**innovative.**" I consider myself an innovative person who constantly strives to push the boundaries of what can be achieved, whether through solutions that address a problem or create a difference in a given environment. This has characterized my 25 years at Schneider Electric, and I'm committed to transforming operating- and business models, integrating the latest technologies and pioneering new approaches to enhance our business operations.

To me, innovation means more than just passively embracing change; it also involves actively driving it to deliver seamless, efficient and personalized experiences for both our customers and frontline employees. This innovation mindset helps us stay ahead in the market and motivates us to learn and experiment daily to capture the maximum possible value.

Schneider Electric has over 180+ years of history in delivering innovation. The company's mission is "to be the trusted partner in Sustainability and Efficiency." Can you give a brief overview of Schneider Electric's business, and how you are putting innovation and this mission in practice for your customers?

We are a global industrial technology leader bringing world-leading expertise in electrification, automation and digitization to smart industries, resilient infrastructure, future-proof data centers, intelligent buildings, and intuitive homes. Anchored by our deep domain expertise, we provide integrated end-to-end lifecycle AI enabled Industrial IoT solutions with connected products, automation, software and services, delivering digital twins to enable profitable growth for our customers.

We are a people company with an ecosystem of 168,000 colleagues and more than a million partners operating in over 100 countries to ensure proximity to our customers and stakeholders. We embrace diversity and inclusion in everything we do, guided by our meaningful purpose of a sustainable future for all. To put our mission as "trusted partner in Sustainability and Efficiency" into perspective, we use cutting-edge technologies and innovative approaches across all aspects of our business.

Among our key initiatives, **digital transformation** is certainly at the forefront. We are advancing digital transformation across the markets we serve by integrating advanced technologies like IoT, AI and big data analytics into our solutions.

This enables our customers to optimize their energy usage, improve operational efficiency and reduce their carbon footprint.

Another significant initiative is our [EcoStruxure platform](#), an open and interoperable IoT-enabled system architecture. EcoStruxure exemplifies our commitment to innovation using data-driven insights. It allows connectivity, remote monitoring and real-time data analysis, helping customers achieve greater efficiency and sustainability. We are also dedicated to continuously developing and promoting sustainable solutions. This includes smart, energy-efficient products and comprehensive energy and process solutions for buildings, plants, data centers and smart grid technologies, helping our customers in transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

Lastly, our **customer-centric approach** is central to our operations at Schneider Electric. We focus on creating seamless, personalized end-to-end digital experiences for our customers. By integrating innovative tools and processes, we ensure that our customers can easily access and benefit from our solutions, enhancing their overall satisfaction and loyalty, which is paramount to us.



Schneider Electric serves various sectors with a diverse customer base, involving multiple roles in the customer journey. What similarities and differences do you see across these diverse customer segments and various personas when it comes to digital customer relationship management? What new expectations do you see among these B2B customers?

We are witnessing **several trends across all segments**, notably the shift towards digital offerings, such as advanced self-service options, real-time visibility on orders and deliveries, predictive maintenance and hyper-personalized experiences throughout the end-to-end customer journey, from engagement to order fulfillment.

When examining the similarities across our diverse customer segments, one clear expectation is the desire for a **seamless experience**. Regardless of the sector, we have many different customer types ranging from

electricians and system integrators to OEMs and distributors, each with distinct needs. However, all our customers increasingly expect seamless and personalized digital experiences throughout their customer journey with Schneider Electric. This expectation is also influenced by the B2C sector, where individual experiences outside the company shape their expectations inside the company.

Another similarity is the demand for **self-service**, which has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This underscores the need for operations that can be performed at any

time, from anywhere in the world; customers now expect to access information, configure projects, place orders, manage accounts online, schedule technician visits and receive support at their convenience.

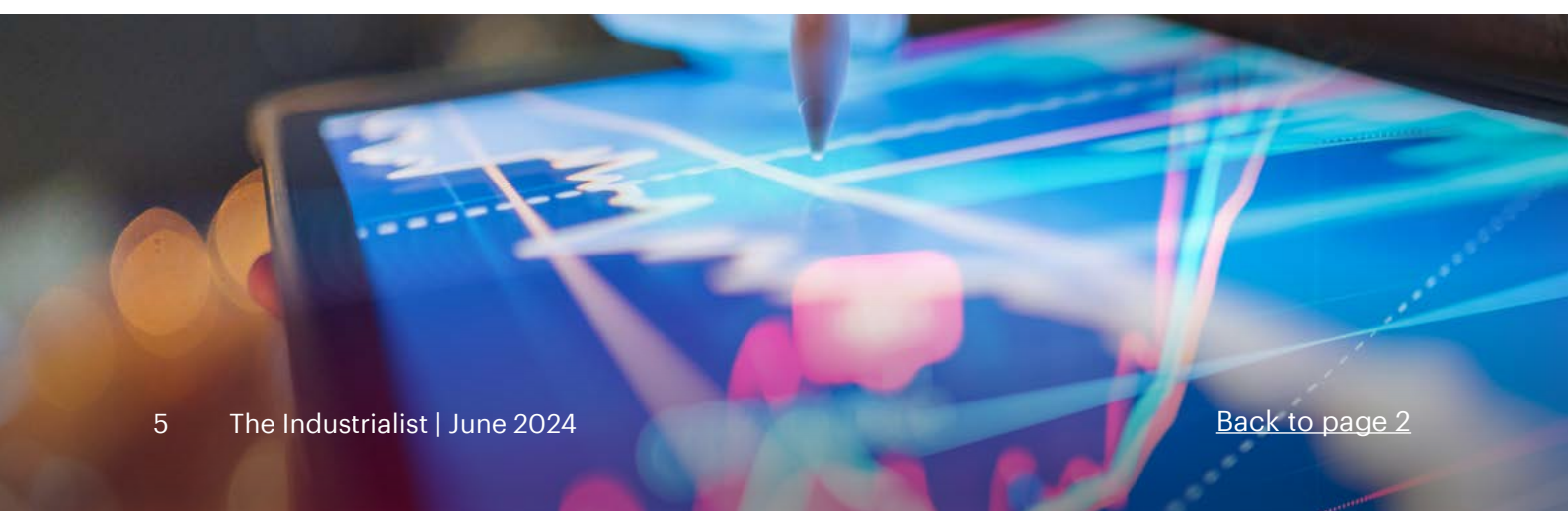
Real-time data is also crucial. We live in a connected world where customers expect to have the power to control their environments by receiving and processing data quickly enough to influence outcomes in real time. For example, when customers return a product, they want immediate updates on when they will receive their refund or where their order is after shipment.

And then **hyper-personalization**; moving from traditional B2B to a more B2C-like approach— mirroring the experiences with best-in-class companies that are using AI, analytics and real-time data to present highly curated products and content to consumers. Hyper-personalization is one of the most advanced digital marketing tactics and essential for scaling digital marketing efforts to tailor products, services and individualized experiences according to customers' aspirations and needs.

Returning to the question on **differences across customer segments and key personas**: While the overarching expectations for digital experiences are similar, the specific needs and preferences can vary significantly across different sectors and key roles within organizations. For example, CFOs, plant managers, facility managers and

engineers may have distinct requirements and preferences regarding the digital tools, capabilities and access to information needed to perform their roles effectively. Therefore, it is essential to tailor the digital journey— determining which digital channels need to be implemented to provide the optimal experience. For instance, for industrial players, we offer predictive maintenance solutions powered by IoT sensors and AI analytics. This enables proactive equipment monitoring and maintenance scheduling to minimize downtime and improve efficiency. In contrast, for commercial real estate customers, we provide energy management software that allows facility managers to optimize energy usage and reduce costs and emissions using data-based insights. Depending on the client, we can offer a variety of self-service options with hyper-personalization and real-time data capabilities. Conversely, we can also provide highly specialized services, such as advanced predictive maintenance capabilities, which gather information from installations to provide real-time visibility and control over operations. Naturally, the needs in sectors like oil and gas and data centers are different and the methods to optimize energy usage, improve productivity and enhance safety vary significantly across these industries.

In essence, we are applying the simplicity of the B2C world to the sophistication of the industrial world, ensuring that we bring the best of B2C to B2B without losing the expertise or capability to handle significant projects and solutions in critical areas.



According to our recent study, many industrial companies struggle “to get the basics right” to realize value out of their investments in customer experience. What are your observations and key learnings from your work with industrial clients? What’s your advice for industrial clients seeking to improve their B2B customer experience?

In my experience, working with various industrial clients, a common issue is indeed failing to get the basics right before moving to more advanced stages. This often stems from a lack of alignment between various digital initiatives and the core business objectives, as well as challenges in effectively implementing and integrating digital solutions. An additional observation is that despite a focus on data, there’s often a lack of sufficient data quality. This poses significant obstacles for industrial clients, hindering their ability to gain actionable insights and deliver personalized customer experiences.

So, what’s the advice for industrial clients? To enhance the digital customer experience and drive growth and loyalty, industrial clients should **align digital initiatives with business objectives** to ensure their efforts are focused on delivering value and achieving strategic goals. **Investing in a scalable and modern platform** is also vital in today’s dynamic market. Agility and having the right level of seamless integration and interoperability across all digital systems and processes are essential.

Implementing a robust data governance framework is another critical step that ensures consistency in data accuracy and compliance, while creating value from data-driven insights. With quality data, companies can leverage **advanced analytics and machine learning** technologies to uncover actionable insights. **Cybersecurity** is another area that cannot be overlooked: we need to ensure cybersecurity measures are in place to protect digital platforms and customer data, safeguarding against cyber threats and ensuring the security and privacy of customer interactions.

Often, there’s a misconception that digital transformation is obvious to everyone due to widespread technology use in our daily lives. However, providing **training and support to employees** is imperative for enhancing digital capabilities and empowering people to deliver exceptional customer experiences. This process requires change management in how we operate the business and engage with our customers and partners. All these elements together create a winning recipe for the future.



Transformation is deeply intertwined with data, AI and GenAI. What role does leveraging data play in delivering a leading digital customer experience at Schneider Electric? How do you ensure you get the required data on customer expectations?

You're absolutely right. Data guides all our decisions, and we ensure we have the right standards in place, including robust data governance. This involves mastering what is transacted within the company. We are constantly listening, learning and adapting based on the insights we gather. Acquiring the right data from various sources, such as online interactions, purchase history and social media, helps us understand customer behaviors, preferences and needs. Once we have the data, we need to analyze the insights. We need to have strong business intelligence to understand what the data tells us—look for patterns and trends that tell us

what our customers really care about—and to translate this into actionable activities. This is one of the most important aspects. We also regularly survey our customers to obtain their feedback through Net Satisfaction Score and other channels such as sentiment analysis. Understanding trends is crucial for driving future changes. Moreover, I cannot discuss data without addressing data privacy and security. It's a priority to ensure our customers feel safe doing business and interacting with us. We continuously strive to secure every transaction and interaction, protecting their data.

How is Schneider Electric harnessing the power of AI and generative AI for customer support and delivering hyper-personalized customer journeys for your clients, as well as for your own operations?

Schneider Electric drives AI at scale. Since 2020, we have implemented various initiatives that have significantly transformed both our internal operations and our offerings to customers and partners to enable greater overall efficiency and sustainability. GenAI, in particular, has catalyzed a major transformation not only within Schneider Electric but also across the market. In my focus areas—sales, marketing, customer support and services—we are seeing significant transformation and substantial benefits. We concentrate on frontline interactions with our customers and partners, where our efforts are most impactful. Here, we are generating considerable value for the organization, allowing us to focus on what truly matters.

In sales, the integration of AI capabilities into our CRM platform has proven extremely beneficial. Our sales team can now concentrate their efforts on the most promising opportunities, closing more deals and expanding account coverage, which in turn help to grow our business. **In customer support**, our advancements have significantly accelerated with remarkable outcomes through the use of chatbots, knowledge management bots and case categorization. We handle a high volume of customer interactions and are committed to using the

best technology. GenAI is definitely helping us to effectively address customer inquiries and provide optimal recommendations for their specific needs.

In the services domain, we leverage CRM analytics to create what we call a “digital opportunity factory.” This strategic initiative plays a critical role in proactively addressing client requirements and driving business growth. Based on the knowledge on the customer, it ensures that we are well-positioned to propose solutions that enhance energy efficiency or optimize operational expenses in customer plants and factories.

In marketing, we are currently testing GenAI conversational search, a feature that utilizes AI-driven analytics to examine customer data and generate digital product recommendations. This not only assists users in saving time by delivering precise and reliable responses, but also enhances click-through rates and elevates user satisfaction, consequently leading to a substantial increase in the website’s Net Satisfaction Score (NSS).

These initiatives are just a few areas where we are intensely focused, as they clearly demonstrate the transformative power of AI.





What shift in mindset, culture, operating models and processes is required from your organization to fully leverage the potential of AI and GenAI?

Like in any significant change, this requires intense focus and investment. We are actively building the competencies and AI-culture within the company. It must be adequately supported. We are integrating AI into Schneider Electric's core activities, focusing on value creation from the start, not just the technology. This is crucial because we believe that 80% of the impact comes from business and use cases.

What's more, we provide our teams with the necessary training to upskill and reskill to match their roles with new needs and competencies, which are markedly different. We need people with specialized skill sets to complement our existing expertise. We also need to invest in data governance and technologies to use those at a world-

class level, both for private and public cloud solutions. For instance, we have established an [AI Hub](#), which is a global center of excellence in innovation, combining technology, processes and people to bring value to our customers and to ensure that as a company we work in the most efficient ways.

This is truly a transformation journey: supporting the change, promoting a new "AI culture"—as we call it at Schneider Electric—, upskilling and training new talent are essential components of it. This transformation is about fundamentally redefining the core of our operations to build a robust foundation for the future.



What inspires you the most?

I am most inspired by the opportunity to make a meaningful impact and drive positive change, particularly within my team. The ability to bring out the best performance for Schneider Electric motivates both me and my team. It fosters resilience, creativity, innovation and certainly a deep passion for everything that we are doing. This, in turn, helps us make a difference.

In closing

We no longer live in a time of stable economic growth. Instead, growth is hard to achieve, especially in the competitive industrial B2B market. By focusing on the buyer experience and the continued integration of technology to improve it, industrial companies can not only improve buyer satisfaction and loyalty but also achieve operational efficiencies and gain a competitive edge in the market.

How can industrials enhance their buyer experience and seize value in this era of technological change?

While industrials recognize the importance of digitizing sales and marketing, few have embarked on extensive efforts in this area, and those that do often struggle with execution. After all, B2B buyers, accustomed to the refined online B2C sales channels perfected over the years, expect industrials to deliver a similarly seamless experience across platforms. In most cases, however, they still fall short. Even digital self-service solutions—which have worked well for other B2C-focused industries—have not reaped significant dividends, due to factors such as complexity, technical requirements, and the number of decision makers involved in the B2B buying process. So, the need to stand out in an increasingly competitive battle for mindshare in the industrial sector is likely to continue driving the case for reinvention.

According to a [recent Accenture study](#), technology is the top lever for reinvention for 98% of organizations, and AI/generative AI is now seen as one of the main levers for 82% of those organizations. This technology has the power to impact every facet of an organization and represents a clear opportunity to accelerate reinvention and a path to business value. In fact, our research found that applying generative AI to customer-related initiatives can help achieve 25% higher revenue after five years compared to those companies focusing solely on productivity. On the other hand, the only way to realize AI's/generative AI's full potential is to embrace the need to reinvent processes and talent, while managing the technology through a new capability commonly referred to as responsible AI—and with a digital core that has a data, AI and generative AI backbone.

The insights shared by Schneider Electric's senior executive Audrey Hazak in this edition of the Industrialist clearly demonstrate how technology, data, AI and GenAI are reshaping the entire customer journey as well as the company's own operations. With Audrey's relentless commitment to innovation using data-driven insights and based on her rich experience working across various customer segments, she not only provides strategic advice to industrial leaders on how to enhance their customer experience. What's more, she stresses the importance of a cultural shift within the organization, focusing on value creation, upskilling employees, and investing in advanced data governance and new technologies—encapsulating Schneider Electric's approach to embracing digital transformation and driving AI and GenAI at scale.

While industrial companies continuously reinvent their future and enhance their performance through technology, data and AI, the persistent challenge of enhancing the B2B buyer experience remains. Industrials need to “get the basics right” before moving to more advanced stages in order to successfully meet rising market demands and to stay relevant. On top, we see [five imperatives](#) for the age of generative AI including, critically, develop new ways of working and reskill and upskill people.

Contact me if you want to discuss more.

Best regards,



Jean Cabanes

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Global Industrial Lead, Accenture



About The Industrialist

The Industrialist is our monthly digital publication that puts game-changing perspectives in the spotlight. It combines thought-provoking content and insights, to keep you on top of what's new in the industrial industry.

Featuring different CXOs and diverse views, you can be inspired by leading innovators, explore the latest trends, tools, technologies, and innovations, and ignite your industry interest with transformational thought leadership.

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