

Customer Service in the Next 5 Years – It's all about Value and Experience

Submitted by: PR Artistry Limited

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Customer experience to be a key differentiator: Five ways to ensure exceptional customer service from Ben Willmott at Teleopti

In the next five years exceptional customer service will outpace products and price when it comes to corporate success. Shep Hyken, in a Forbes article, quotes, (i) “value and experience continue to trump price” as a trend during 2017 and recent research by global analyst firm Forrester (ii) goes one step further claiming that 72% of businesses name improving customer experience as their top priority. This should come as no real surprise. Just look at the shift in contact centers, from traditional measurement metrics such as average handling times (AHT) to first contact resolution and the emphasis placed on listening to what customers really want to drive meaningful service improvements.

The truth is that consumers are looking for the whole package. Good products and competitive prices are a given, it's the way they are delivered and after-sales service that can make or break customer loyalty.

It's time to take a closer look at the customer experience your organization is delivering. Focus on the following five areas to ensure exceptional customer service:

1. Be powered by service – today's super-connected world has created a sense of urgency that has revolutionized consumer behavior. Customers demand and expect round-the-clock service and immediate answers to their queries. This is particularly true of the younger generation. Those in the 18-34 age bracket are more likely to quit a brand due to a poor service experience. It is this same millennial generation which turns to social media when they are not happy, with 47% of 18-34 year-olds admitting to using social media to complain compared with 12% in the 55+ age group! (iii)

These are statistics that have not been lost on online shoe and fashion retailer Zappos.com which has built a whole corporate culture around doing whatever it takes to make customers happy. There are no limits on the number of customer service calls and no KPIs around call handling times. Every sales and contact center representative focuses 100% on creating an amazing customer experience

2. Omnichannel is the new multichannel - email, Chat, social media, Skype, mobile? Most organizations now operate a multichannel contact center but the modern consumer wants a consistent, satisfying and effortless experience, every time, whatever the device or communications channel. This is where omnichannel comes into its own – providing a seamless, integrated customer experience from beginning to end.

What is more, consumers want their favorite brands to recognize their buying history and previous interactions, across multiple platforms. Some of the world's most successful companies, such as Amazon, are masters of omnichannel and their business depends on picking up on every touch point of a customer's journey. For example by personalizing sales offers on the website or directly into the customer's inbox, suggesting relevant additional products at checkout and implementing effective

automated complaints handling

3. Self-service is the way to go - customers don't want to spend time with your agents. They want a simple, convenient and low effort resolution to their issue. The latest online solutions include self-service capabilities that customers can use to find out information, ask questions, look up their bank balance, pay their utility bill, book a holiday, buy that must-have pair of shoes or return a faulty kettle at a time that suits them, without having to speak to a single human being.

However, when they do need to speak to an agent, make telephone conversations a pleasure in themselves by targeted training and coaching to ensure agents have high competence levels and are there to manage complex enquiries.

4. Automate routine tasks - IVR, self-service, Artificial Intelligence and Chatbots automate routine tasks leaving agents and customer service representatives free to devote time to more complex tasks or sensitive enquiries requiring the human touch. Automation tangibly enhances the customer experience.

Take Web Chat, the latest technology solutions automatically flag up how customers want to interact, and the beauty of Web Chat is that well trained and skilled agents can handle multiple conversations at once leading to faster response times and enhanced customer satisfaction levels. Similarly, Chatbots, especially when combined with applications such as Facebook Messenger, can provide anything from automated subscription content such as weather and traffic updates, to customized communications including receipts, shipping notifications and live automated messages - fast. Consider maximizing workforce management (WFM) functionality to schedule the right-skilled agent to answer the right channel and achieve near-perfect contact resolution.

5. Humanize the workplace - research from consulting firm ISM Inc (iv) found that 90% of consumers confirmed an agent's perceived happiness directly affected their overall customer experience. Therefore it pays to keep staff happy and engaged. Outline their goals clearly and give them the tools and autonomy to do their job. Why not introduce some gamification techniques to acknowledge good performance publicly? Combine this with good training and meaningful career paths to make a difference. This is where the latest WFM solutions can help by providing one unified, central repository for training plans and record management.

Take a step back, put yourself in your customers' shoes and see what their experience is really like. You might need to overhaul your approach to customer service completely or perhaps a few simple tweaks will suffice. Either way, make the customer experience your top priority to retain your most valued customers and best talent.

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About Teleopti

Teleopti, a top, global provider of workforce management software, offers a world-class WFM solution that is sophisticated, localized and easy to use. As the largest "best-of-breed" vendor, Teleopti focuses on helping contact centers, back offices and retail stores improve customer service, employee

satisfaction and profitability – through optimized, automated forecasting and scheduling with cutting-edge features to empower and engage employees.

Founded in 1992, Swedish-established Teleopti has customers in over 85 countries, offices in Sweden, United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Russia, United Arab Emirates, China, Germany, Brazil, South Africa, the Philippines, Finland and Norway – and a comprehensive global network of partners. With a record of continuous net profitability for 25 years and with high customer satisfaction ratings, Teleopti serves as a reliable partner.

For more information, visit TELEOPTI (<http://www.teleopti.com>)

Press contact: Mary Phillips/Andreina West:

PR Artistry Limited

T: +44 (0)1491 845553

E: mary@pra-ltd.co.uk

(i) FORBES

(<http://https://www.forbes.com/sites/shephyken/2017/01/07/10-customer-service-and-customer-experience-cx-trends-for-2017>)

(ii)FORRESTER

(<http://https://www.forrester.com/72+Of+Businesses+Name+Improving+Customer+Experience+Their+Top+Priority/-/E-PRE91>)

(ii)Microsoft's 2016 'Global State of Customer Service'

(iv) CUSTOMER THINK.COM (<http://customerthink.com/the-war-of-attrition-keeping-your-star-agents-happy/>)