

Customer Interaction – Keep it simple: 8 Ways to re-energise customer service

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Turning customer interactions into opportunities is easier than you think says Colin Hay at Puzzel. The trick is to keep it simple and to give contact centres the “wow” factor with some quick and easy wins.

Improving customer satisfaction and turning every interaction into an opportunity to create a good impression is every contact centre’s dream. However, far too many organisations make it a complicated business or spend too much time on internal dynamics that bear no relevance to customers’ needs. Essentially, the magic ingredients to achieve this dream are simple enough – a blend of people, process and technology. Get the mix right and you have the perfect recipe for success.

The trick is to keep it simple. Here are eight easy ways to re-energise your approach to customer service.

Get yourself organised from the inside out.

1. Keep agents happy – happy agents = happy customers. Listen to what the frontline has to say. Agents are the ones who usually suffer the wrath of the customer, time and time again over the same thing. Hold regular listening sessions and internal focus groups to raise any issues and give management an opportunity to change processes. Then, give agents the right training and tools to do their job.

Make life easier for staff. Could you introduce flexible ways of working that allow agents to strike an effective work/life balance? Is the office warm enough and the chairs comfortable? Give agents noise-cancellation headsets so that they can really concentrate on the customer, with minimal disruption, to deliver cleaner, crisper calls and find the information they want quickly.

Finally, motivate, acknowledge and reward outstanding performance using the latest gamification techniques.

2. Refocus the metrics – why focus on Average Handling Times (AHTs)? Traditional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) like these don’t always make a lot of sense and make it hard for agents to concentrate on delivering excellent customer service. Consider moving from time-based to service quality metrics such as first response times and first contact resolution rates.

3. Remember the customer journey – from beginning to end and check your process, perhaps through mystery shopping. Why do customers contact you in the first place? It is surprising how few organisations actually do this exercise.

Understanding what motivates customers to call, for example by looking out for repeat-contact reasons, will give you the information you need to re-align your customer service strategy and introduce a set of relevant, effective tactics.

4. Be proactive – change contact centre culture by empowering agents to take decisions and actions that have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Stand out from the crowd. Start by contacting customers before they have a chance to complain, or even better, before they are aware they have a problem. Earn

loyalty and customer satisfaction in one fell swoop.

5. Integrate systems – avoiding the need to switch between applications and having a customer's account history visible on just one screen, immediately makes life easier for the agent and improves customer satisfaction. Reduced agent effort leads to faster query resolution and satisfied customers.

6. Make life easy for customers – helping customers to help themselves is the smart way forward, for example provide a Web chat facility for straightforward enquiries? Studies indicate that people today, especially the Millennial Generation, want to self-serve. Make self-service a priority in the contact centre to boost customer service in more ways than one. The latest IVR and automated payment solutions allow customers to order products, book holidays, provide utility readings and obtain bank balances without speaking to an agent. This means more time for agents to dedicate to complex or sensitive enquiries that require a different approach and the human touch.

7. Make the customer feel special – all customers like to feel valued. Encourage agents to follow up interactions with personalised calls or emails to make customers feel special. Why not take advantage of routing technology, based on CRM data, to prioritise VIP customers? Both tactics will guarantee increased satisfaction ratings and promote longer-term loyalty and profitability.

8. Review your social customer service – there's no getting away from it, social media is here to stay. Increasing numbers of people are relying on the world's largest social media networking sites to source information, find out what others have to say about products and services and even air grievances.

Turn this to your advantage by engaging proactively via social media. Create a platform for customers to exchange ideas, feedback and knowledge. This type of social forum will foster a spirit of inclusivity and encourage learning across your client base. Take it one step further by rewarding 'super users' who share valuable intelligence to help the broader community.

You don't need to start from scratch. None of these practical techniques necessarily need new technology but they do require a long hard look at processes and procedures and potentially a tweak to existing systems. So the moral of the tale is don't over-complicate matters and keep it simple. Adopt these eight quick wins to put the wow factor back into your contact centre.

What are you waiting for?

Colin Hay is VP Sales at Puzzel

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About Puzzel

Puzzel builds on 20 years' heritage. It was one of the first pioneers to develop a cloud-based contact centre. Puzzel also encompasses leading mobile messaging and mobile payments to deliver a flexible and customisable customer interaction platform to meet the needs of today's omni-channel and mobile environments. Puzzel can be adapted to accommodate from one to several thousand agents using any device, in any location and integrates with multiple applications seamlessly.

Headquartered in Oslo, Norway, Puzzel employs over 130 people who are all passionate about delivering

innovative customer interaction solutions for contact centres and mobile environments.

For more information please visit Puzzel (<http://www.puzzel.com>)

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