

Overcoming barriers to five-star service

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Many contact centres are held back by poor image, a reactive mindset and disjointed technology. Colin Hay outlines 5 strategies to elevate the status of your frontline operation and transform customer interactions at the same time.

According to Call Centre Helper's (CCH) latest survey(i), customer satisfaction remains the 'king of contact centre metrics' with 93.2% of respondents stating it is the number one priority for their operations. However, it appears that contact centres are being held back for a variety of reasons, some of them alarmingly basic. When CCH asked UK contact centre respondents the major barriers that are stopping them from running their 'dream' contact centre, the top three focused on finances and technology – 'budget' at 80.6%, 'IT issues' (59.1%) and the 'need for new technology' (53.8%). Following closely behind came a completely different set of obstacles, namely 'conflicting business priorities' (47.9%) and 'broken processes' (40.9%).

Interestingly, contact centres still have a long way to go in terms of their own PR. The perception of the contact centre by the rest of the business is, on the whole, negative. The survey indicated definite increases in the number of contact centre organisations being viewed as a 'cost centre' or simply as a 'nuisance.'

Puzzel's latest white paper outlines five positive strategies to drive efficient and effective customer service in contact centres.

5 Strategies for efficient and effective customer service in contact centres

1. One-time integration in the cloud - the words 'cloud' and 'integration' are nothing new but together, they create a powerful catalyst for change, the critical first step towards excellent customer service. By making cloud-based integration a top priority, contact centres realise benefits that deliver faster, safer and more engaging customer experiences with the added bonus of tangible time/cost savings and easier processes for agents.

2. Cracking the self-service puzzle - new statistics from CCH indicate that average handling times (AHT) are increasing while Virtual Assistant Take-Up is on the rise(ii), a trend that suggests the growing effectiveness and acceptance of self-service because live agent conversations are now used to tackle more complex or emotional enquiries. Is it time for contact centres to review their self-service offering?

The trick is to blend self-service with the human touch by piecing together the three essential elements of the self-service puzzle - first releasing the potential of a multi-channel environment by introducing the channels that matter to customers, two boosting security levels and three bridging the digital and human worlds with the use of bots.

3. Change the culture to elevate the status of the contact centre – the CCH survey showed that the number of organisations who consider their contact centre to be nothing more than a 'cost centre' has grown from 39.5% to 41.6% or a 'nuisance' has increased from 7.4%-9.4% in the last 12 months(iii). Turn these perceptions around by demonstrating the strategic value of the contact centre as a valuable

source of customer insight.

Listen to agents. Their knowledge of customers is vital to delivering a gold-star service. What is more, it helps support sound decisions when investing in new technology. Communicate regularly with customers then combine all this valuable intelligence with speech analytics and silent monitoring solutions to capture the voice of the customer (VOC). Use VOC intelligence to develop relevant future product roadmaps and meaningful customer service improvements.

4. New ways of working - with the right mindset and technology, today's contact centres are well-placed to become the trailblazers of five-star customer service.

Eradicate a siloed mentality, promote consistent ways of working and encourage contact centre staff to collaborate with the rest of the organisation. By sharing knowledge, tips and learning the whole organisation will be inspired to deliver first-class customer experiences and boost business success. Transform service by using intelligent data to add context to contact conversations.

5. Always aim for frictionless customer journeys - loyal customers quickly become disloyal if their favourite brands make simple processes complicated. Always on the front-line, contact centres have the power to give customers quick and satisfying answers to their queries with very little effort on the customer's part. The aim should be to create frictionless customer journeys - understanding what customers need and then working backwards to the right technology.

Overcoming the key barriers to five-star customer service begins with contact centre leaders who are determined to elevate the status of their operation by empowering their team to come up with creative ways of thinking that turn traditional customer conversations on their head. It ends with business leaders who recognise the strategic role of the contact centre and make time to invest in the right technology to drive effortless customer interactions. Be a successful organisation by adopting these five strategies for efficient and effective customer service in contact centres. To download Puzzel's latest white paper entitled "How to overcome the barriers to five-star service, 5 strategies for efficient and effective customer service in contact centres", visit Puzzel (<https://www.puzzel.com/uk/white-papers/barriers-to-five-star-service/>).

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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 is 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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(i) Call Centre Helper – “What contact centres are doing right now (2018 edition)”

(ii) Call Centre Helper – “What contact centres are doing right now (2018 edition)”

(iii) Call Centre Helper – “What contact centres are doing right now (2018 edition)”