

Mastering the art of cost-saving in customer service

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As lockdown continues to ease, it pays to keep an eye on the pennies. Thomas Rødseth at Puzzel outlines 5 ways to achieve all-round efficiencies in customer service.

It's taken years for contact centres to shake off their negative cost centre image, and now, life with COVID-19 has thrown a spanner in the works. The challenges of managing a cost-efficient customer service operation which meets increased customer demand while also dealing with home working are greater than ever before.

Now is the time for contact centres to prove their worth as valuable profit centres and become the drivers of enhanced customer experience (CX) and business success in today's complex, post-lockdown world.

So, how do contact centres reduce costs while continuing to deliver exceptional experiences for their customers and their virtually-dispersed agents?

A 5-step guide to all-round efficiencies in customer service

Here are five ideas to get you started:

- On-premise versus the cloud? – COVID-19 has brought to a head the debate over issues such as whether to stay on-premise or move to the cloud. Numerous reports tell us the pandemic has revealed how organisations that rely on legacy systems and resist transitioning to the cloud have struggled to adapt to increased customer demand and a new environment where the majority of agents work remotely.

It really is time to take that final leap into the cloud. Highly flexible, cloud-based solutions serve customers and agents effectively while offering tangible cost-saving opportunities. You only pay for the services you use without the burden of up-front capital expenditure or annual maintenance payments. In Puzzel's own experience, organisations can save on average 20% simply by adopting a cloud approach versus retaining a traditional on-premise solution.

- Choose the right agents and keep them – to avoid the unnecessary expense of recruitment and training associated with high attrition rates. Start by choosing your candidates carefully. As more agents work from home, the focus is shifting towards a completely different set of skills. Look for agents who demonstrate a deep capacity for self-management, problem-solving, independent technology set-up and greater cyber security awareness. These are all essential requisites for thriving in a remote environment.

Once you've found the right agents, build home-working confidence by giving them the best tools to do their job. The latest agent applications for example, link directly to CRM systems, mobile apps, social media networking sites and even the latest consumer review websites like Trustpilot.com to give agents all the information they need in one place. The right technology enables agents to respond swiftly to customers without switching applications or resorting to pop-ups. Make life easier for employees and

they'll reward you with loyalty, lower churn and therefore lower costs.

- Go digital – digital channels are an effective way to reduce costs while boosting contact centre performance and enhancing customer satisfaction. Certainly, the most widely deployed multimedia channels – email, web chat and social media are all cheaper than traditional voice calls in 'cost per contact' terms. With the average live telephony call at £4.53, emails typically cost £3.89, web-chat at £3.39 and social media contacts cost £3.18.*
- Be creative with tech – combining work with domestic duties when working from home can be daunting for agents so introduce clever technology behind the scenes to minimise stress levels and generate efficiencies all round. Consider introducing the latest automated Workforce Management (WFM) capabilities to build flexible, employee friendly schedules that maximise agent time, skills and availability while ensuring they have plenty of time to learn something new and connect with colleagues via online chat or video conferencing facilities.

Next, integrate modern ticketing solutions into the contact centre for effective email and case management at minimal effort and cost. Offering a simple, single sign-on for all contact centre activities, these enable organisations to handle large volumes of inquiries and they offer unlimited opportunities to provide customised, efficient responses to the most common requests while accelerating agent wrap-up and follow-up times.

- Get it right first time – invest in truly listening to your customers and acting on their feedback to improve CX and maximise ROI first time around. Take a closer look at Artificial Intelligence (AI). The beauty of AI-powered tools like chatbots is the more they are used, the better they get - without having to spend an extra penny. Use them for virtual agents and to develop dedicated 'bot buddies' that allow agents to communicate with AI through speech or text to find answers to customer queries and suggested responses - rather like a whisper in the ear. The best AI solutions are embedded with 'sentiment analysis' technology. These capture the mood of the customer based on current and past conversations and then relay this vital intelligence to agents to achieve all-round efficiencies.

For more ideas and inspiration on how to flourish in today's complex, post-lockdown world, visit www.puzzel.com

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About Puzzel

Puzzel is a leading cloud-based contact center software provider and was a pioneer in offering integrated customer engagement as an easily-deployed service. Today, the company combines omni-channel technology with artificial intelligence capabilities to provide comprehensive, end-to-end customer interaction solutions in an age of digitization. Puzzel was recognized as a Challenger in the 2019 Gartner Magic Quadrant report for Contact Center as a Service in Western Europe for the fifth consecutive year, reflecting its rapid growth, functional breadth, standards compliance, and commitment to customer service and support. Headquartered in Oslo, Norway, with offices in six European markets including the U.K., Puzzel serves more than 900 customers across 40 countries. For more information, please visit www.puzzel.com.

References:

* "The UK Contact Centre Decision-Maker's Guide 2019-2020" 17th edition published by ContactBabel and DMG (page 256)

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