

Five Ways to Make the Omnichannel Customer Support Experience Sizzle

Providing each customer with a frictionless experience across all of the channels they use strengthens loyalty and amplifies business performance

Just the Facts: Customers have high expectations for receiving great experiences across all of the channels they use. Providing customers with problematic or even run-of-the-mill experiences isn't an option – if customers are unsatisfied or frustrated with their omnichannel experiences, they'll jump ship.

According to Forrester Research, 75 percent of customers will move to another channel when they're unsatisfied with the results from the channel they're in. This can translate to millions of dollars in extra costs, not to mention the potential for lost revenue if dissatisfied customers take their business elsewhere.

One of the greatest obstacles to providing customers with seamless omnichannel experiences is the organizational and channel silos that make it difficult for them to have fluid interactions. In many companies, once support for a new channel such as SMS or social media has been added, the channel becomes managed and operated by an individual group. Even if this isn't by design, each channel is run separately and rarely integrated with other channels, thus creating artificial barriers in the omnichannel customer journey.

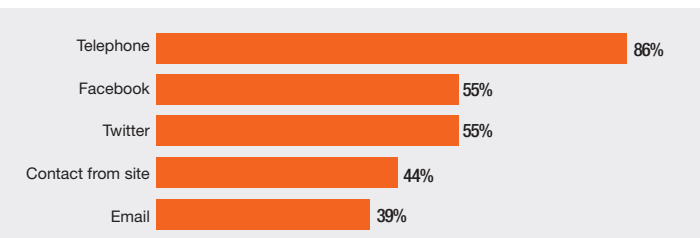
Enhancing the omnichannel customer experience

Because customers often use multiple channels to interact with companies and to reach out for assistance when needed, it's critical for enterprises to provide customers with a holistic omnichannel customer experience. An effective approach for delivering a harmonious omnichannel customer experience is to adopt a cloud contact center platform. Cloud contact centers can offer companies multiple benefits. For starters, a cloud contact center can provide a universal framework for connecting the various channel support systems companies use to interact with their customers using a hub-and-spoke approach. Instead of having to toggle between numerous screens and deliver fragmented experiences to customers, associates are able to view the full history of each customer's omnichannel interactions and provide every customer with fluent support.

Also, because contact center channel and support systems such as CRM platforms are fully integrated using a cloud platform, associates are also able to obtain a comprehensive view of each customer. This includes a complete history of their prior transactions, the nature of their most recent interactions with the company, along with the channels they used. Companies can draw on the intelligent routing capabilities

Delivering on Customer Support Expectations

Customers expect fluid, rapid, and intelligent responses to their inquiries regardless of the channel where the interaction was initiated. Research conducted by digital marketing advisor Steven Van Bellenghem, in association with SSI and No Problem, reveals that customer expectations for rapid response across digital channels often far exceeds a company's current capabilities.



Source: Steven Van Bellenghem/SSI/No Problem, "The Real Self-Service Economy."
Base: 2,750 global consumers.

contained in sophisticated cloud contact center tools to connect customers to an associate with the right skills to assist them based on everything that's known about that customer.

"Companies that are able to provide customers with knowledgeable and graceful support across the different channels they use stand to differentiate themselves while improving customer satisfaction, loyalty, and customer lifetime value," says Steve Pollema, president of eLoyalty, a TeleTech company.

In order to retain and attract customers in today's uber-competitive business environment, companies need to provide customers with highly-engaging and meaningful experiences. That doesn't mean replicating similar experiences for customers across channels. Because customers exhibit unique behaviors in each channel, it's important for companies to ensure that they are providing customers with the types of support experiences they expect in order to satisfy their needs.

The digital footprints that customers leave behind regarding their behaviors, preferences, and needs can be used in concert with analytics to provide more relevant and personalized support. "If I'm a platinum flyer, an airline can see that I prefer to receive email nine times out of 10," says Andy Bird, executive director of product management and development at eLoyalty. "Companies can apply different logic on a per customer basis to truly personalize the support experience and make the brand stand out in a customer's mind," Bird adds.

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Enabling a flawless omnichannel customer experience begins with competence. This includes equipping associates with rich profiles about each customer that can be used to provide knowledgeable and relevant assistance. But competence doesn't stop there. Of course, this requires companies to have the wherewithal to provide customers with seamless cross-channel experiences through state-of-the-art technologies and processes.

We offer five recommendations for delivering memorable omnichannel customer support experiences.

1. Enable a frictionless omnichannel experience. Approach the customer experience by putting yourself in the customers' shoes. Evaluate what it's like to be a customer of your company to navigate from a company web page to SMS chat to a live voice discussion with an associate. Does this feel like one smooth, continuous experience? Or three separate and unconnected experiences?

A cloud contact center can provide the glue needed to help make the omnichannel experience effortless for customers by integrating all of the touchpoints used by customers and associates. In addition, analytics can be used to evaluate the omnichannel customer experience and identify any obstacles that are preventing customers from moving freely from one channel to the next.

2. Gain a 360-degree view of each customer. Each customer is unique. They each have different needs and interests, and they exhibit different behaviors from one another in the channels they use. Fortunately, much of this information is captured in a company's CRM system and through the various channel support systems they use. However, many companies struggle to access and make use of this information effectively. More than half (54 percent) of retail executives surveyed say that the greatest inhibitor to delivering a consistent omnichannel customer experience is an inability to gain a single view of customers across channels, according to Retail Systems Research Institute.

A cloud contact center can provide agents with high visibility into each customer, including his transaction history, most recent channel interactions, and the type of information he sought (e.g., frequently using the IVR to check an account balance). These and other insights can be used to ensure that omnichannel experiences are tailored to provide customers what they're looking for, says Pollema.

3. Arm associates with relevant information. In many cases, the interaction that a customer has with an associate in their omnichannel journey can represent a moment of truth in that customer's long-term relationship with a brand. If an associate is equipped with relevant and timely information about that customer, chances are this will lead to a highly satisfying experience that will strengthen loyalty and customer value.

Using siloed premise-based contact center systems, associates often have to start and stop between multiple screens during their interactions with customers. This leads to a fragmented customer experience that can make an associate appear unknowledgeable and lead the customer to question the company's competence. “A cloud contact center can provide associates with a more consistent experience, which translates into a better experience for the customer,” says Bird.

4. Enable intelligent routing. Providing customers with consistent omnichannel customer experiences can fortify the customer-company relationship. One effective approach to enabling a positive outcome is by connecting a customer to the right agent with the right skills based on everything that's known about that customer's interests, preferences, and needs. For instance, a retail banking customer who speaks French as a first language can be identified and automatically routed to an associate who is fluent in French.

Meanwhile, a cloud model harmonizes the associate experience, enabling all agents to have the same tools and functionality, regardless of whether a company relies on associates who work out of a dedicated contact center, an outsourced contact center, at-home, or are set up as a hybrid approach. “Having a virtualized contact center in the cloud allows organizations to drive much better associate utilization and to measure performance consistently,” says Pollema.

5. Provide customers with proactive outreach. Companies can use customer data to identify the services and information that matter most to them. Contact centers can use these insights to provide customers with helpful alerts (e.g., an email notification by a utility about a localized power outage or an SMS message from a rental car company about the location of a reserved vehicle). Companies that provide proactive service to high-value customers can strengthen loyalty and increase revenue, says Bird.

Using the Same Lens to Monitor Multi-Center Channel Performance



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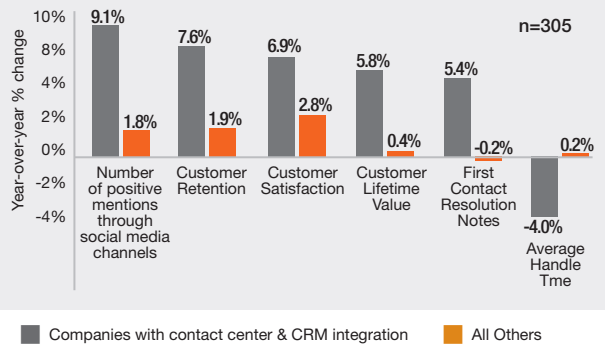
— Andy Bird, Executive Director, Product Management and Development, eLoyalty

One of the key operational benefits to managing omnichannel customer support via the cloud is the simplicity gained in monitoring channel performance across multiple company-operated and outsourced contact centers. Because a cloud contact center model unifies the reporting and management of each facility (company-owned or outsourced), business leaders don't have to struggle to synchronize the results from multiple locations. This results in more efficient performance measurement while providing executives with a universal approach for gauging and comparing results across individual activities.

"Average handle time, first contact resolution, and other contact center performance metrics are harmonized, enabling senior management to measure and compare operations using the same playbook," says Pollema.

The Business and Operational Value of Contact Center and CRM Integration

Gaining a 360-degree view of each customer requires more than unifying the siloed channels used to support them. As this chart from Aberdeen Group reveals, companies can achieve impressive business and operational gains from integrating contact center and CRM systems.



Source: "Contact Center and CRM Integration," Aberdeen Group, December 2013.

Case Study:

Bookseller Opens New Chapter in Omnichannel Customer Support

Challenge: A major bookseller wanted to provide its customers with online technical support for a wide range of products across various platforms. As a leader in digital content, e-commerce, and technology, the company's top goal was to deliver an online service channel that would offer customers an easy and convenient way to access live, omnichannel technical support.

Solution: TeleTech helped the bookseller deploy an online click-to-chat solution that provides technical support to customers through its website. Through its services, TeleTech was able to help the bookseller reduce customer support costs while strengthening the customer experience. As part of the project, TeleTech worked closely with the bookseller to understand customer needs and design an online chat program that provided personalized technical support services.

In order to handle technical support interactions effectively, TeleTech worked with the bookseller to identify associates with strong technical and communications skills. Specific job profiles were developed to target the required attributes, and a cutting-edge candidate assessment tool was used to ensure that the most qualified candidates were selected.

Results: Within months of implementation, tens of thousands of technical support requests were successfully handled. With the new chat service in place, the bookseller was able to field more customer inquiries cost-effectively. After the first 10 months, productivity savings lowered the cost of the program by 70 percent, allowing the bookseller to deliver technical support for less than \$4 per interaction. In addition, the TeleTech team immediately met customer satisfaction targets and exceeded those goals by 16 percent after the first six months.



By the Numbers:

The top 20 percent of omnichannel contact center leaders polled by Aberdeen Group produced the following aggregate performance metrics as of June 2013:

- Average 89 percent customer retention rate, compared with 33 percent for all other respondents
- Average 9.5 percent year-over-year increase in annual revenue, compared with 3.4 percent for all other companies
- Average 7.5 percent year-over-year decrease in cost per customer contact, compared with 0.2 percent for the bottom 80 percent

Getting Started

Before business leaders begin expanding their companies' omnichannel presence, it's best to evaluate the current state of the organization's technical architecture. How easy or difficult is it to add new channel support? Does the current architecture provide for seamless integration between support channels? Having the right architecture and underlying technologies in place to provide customers with effortless support is paramount to delivering a successful omnichannel experience.

Once a company has an agile architecture in place to add new support channels, business leaders can use analytics and other tools to evaluate which channels their customers are using or are most apt to use. Verifying this information can help executives determine whether the company has sufficiently skilled associate resources to support the volumes of customer interactions the company expects to handle and whether additional recruitment or training may be needed, says Bird.

As Millennials and other digitally-savvy consumers grow older and increase their purchasing power, companies will need to be able to support them fluidly across all of the channels they use. That's one of the reasons why it's

imperative to get the foundational elements of omnichannel customer support in place. "Even if your company doesn't plan to offer multiple channel options to customers today, you're going to need to at some point," says Pollema.

When evaluating different contact center vendors, it's also important for decision makers to find a good match between the company's needs and a partner that can meet those requirements. It's not enough for a technology provider to offer email, SMS, mobile, or other channel support. Because customers are omnichannel, contact center platforms must also be adept at guiding omnichannel interactions and routing the right customer to the right agent to ensure that customer inquiries are being satisfied.

Also, don't forget the associate experience. It's invaluable to partner with a vendor that has extensive experience setting up omnichannel contact center platforms that are designed for associates to navigate easily.

Companies that carefully assess the cross-channel behaviors of their customers, and deploy a flexible support environment that can address their needs and preferences, position themselves to distinguish their brands and succeed in the digital economy.

TeleTech, founded in 1982, is a leading global provider of data-driven, technology-enabled services that puts customer engagement at the core of business success. The Company offers an integrated platform that combines analytics, strategy, process, systems integration, technology and operations to simplify the delivery of the customer experience for Global 1000 clients and their customers. This holistic multichannel approach improves customer satisfaction, increases customer loyalty and drives long-term profitability and growth. From strategic consulting to operational execution, TeleTech's more than 39,000 employees deliver results for clients in the automotive, communications and media, financial services, government, healthcare, technology, transportation and retail industries. Through the TeleTech Community Foundation, the Company leverages its innovative leadership to ensure that students in underserved communities around the globe have access to the tools and support they need to maximize their educational outcomes.

For more information, please visit: www.teletech.com



eLoyalty, a TeleTech company, provides technology solutions that make it easy for companies to deliver faster, smarter, and more agile customer interactions. Benefit from more satisfied customers, more intelligent processes, and a more engaged and productive workforce with solutions that span enterprise mobility, customer self-service, and customer management environments

Since 1990, eLoyalty has been designing and implementing customer experience technology solutions that bring together contact centers, websites, and speech self-service. Companies that partner with eLoyalty deliver a differentiated customer experience and have the technology they need to make customer service easier, more responsive, and more flexible than ever before.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.teletech.com/eloyalty/overview/>



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