Hot Topic

Five Tools You Need to Help Create a World-Class Customer Experience

Customer service has always been important for the long-term health and growth of the business, but recent innovations and trends have accelerated the need to respond to customers in new ways.

Where customer service used to be handled face-to-face or via telephone, today's environment requires businesses to connect with consumers across multiple channels and through a wide variety of media. And as consumer expectations grow and resources for reviewing and rating company interactions increase, creating a world-class customer experience from beginning to end is a new business imperative.

In fact, 73% of consumers point to customer experience as an important factor in purchasing decisions, and among US consumers, 65% say a positive experience with a brand is more important than great advertising.

Of course, hiring and training the right people is of utmost importance; there is no substitute for the kind of personal interaction that a well-trained company representative can provide. But top-notch representatives can only go so far if they do not have the right tools at their disposal. Companies that want to remain competitive need to implement the kind of tools that enable their representatives to create an experience that will "wow" the customer every time.

Below are five tools that a robust contact center solution will include that will help companies create a world-class customer experience.

1. **Tools for the Remote Agent:** Contact center agents increasingly work from remote locations, and they need the same tools at their remote locations that they need in the office. Those tools include the obvious physical needs—phone, headset, computer, etc.—but also tools that keep the agent connected with the company and enable them to resolve customer issues. Remote agents need to have the same access to software and apps that they would in the office.

2. **Workforce Management:** Contact center managers need innovative tools to manage the workforce and ensure that customers still get the experience they expect. A high-quality solution will provide workforce management tools that help managers ensure appropriate staffing levels—enough agents to handle peak hours, but not too many agents during quiet hours.

   State-of-the-art workforce management tools also put some control in the hands of employees. When agents are empowered to set their own schedules and swap shifts with other agents, engagement rises.

3. **Communication Across Channels:** While marketing professionals assume that consumers prefer automated responses to human interaction, the opposite is true. Across age groups, 63% of consumers prefer to speak to an employee over automation or self-service. However, an average of 20% of consumers prefer automation or self-service options, while 13% have no preference.

   The reality is that consumers may interact with different companies in different ways at different times. A robust contact center solution will give customers the ability to connect in whatever way they prefer—whether that's webchat, text, e-mail, phone, video, or some other communication option. Companies that provide multiple channels will have a competitive edge over those still tied to just one or two channels.

4 **Social Media Integration:** With customers increasingly leaving reviews and ratings online or interacting with companies via social media platforms, companies need to have a way to address these interactions—both positive and negative. Many large brands have made headlines by interacting with both customers and competition on social media platforms. Wendy's is a great example; the company won the top spot on Fast Company's 2019 Social Media Innovator list.

A good contact center solution will provide the social media integration that allows agents to respond in real time to interactions. Eighty percent of customers expect companies to respond to their social media within 24 hours. "The average response time for companies on Twitter is one day, seven hours, and 12 minutes. Yet, 64% of customers on Twitter expect a response from companies within one hour." The best way to ensure that kind of response time is to implement the tools that allow agents to meet customers where they are—and more and more often, those customers are on social media.

5 **Robust Reporting Tools:** Without reporting tools, any assessment of customer experience is going to be anecdotal at best. A good contact center solution will include a variety of reports and reporting tools that can give decision makers and leaders within the company a more accurate view of metrics such as queue performance by agent or period, agent group performance, and first call resolution. In addition, the right solution will give managers and decision makers access to the raw data behind the reports, allowing them to pull data into their own reporting tools.

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