Customer Engagement

The Rules Are Changing, But Customers Are Still In Charge
INTRODUCTION

Goodbye customer touch-points.
Hello ongoing, meaningful contact.

Business people know instinctively that engaged customers translate into higher revenues and profits. Still, when it comes to demonstrating the positive economic impact of customer engagement activities, they often come up empty handed.

Simply defined, engagement is the emotional affinity a customer forms during his or her interactions with an organization or brand – and it can spark a host of desirable actions. From speaking favorably about a company, product or brand to others, purchasing more products or even overlooking a poor customer experience or product issue.

Historically elusive and difficult to measure, engagement has been the focus of many recent research initiatives which have demonstrated that not only can it be measured, but that even a one percent improvement in customer engagement can yield significant benefits.

Today’s digitally savvy customers expect fast, painless and accurate responses delivered via their communication channel and device of choice. In return, companies and brands that succeed in satisfying these demands can expect to gain:

- **Increased Share of Wallet** – engaged customers buy more, more often
- **Positive Referrals** – engaged customers persuade others to buy
- **Less Customer Churn** – engaged customers remain loyal, longer
- **Meaningful Feedback** – engaged customers offer feedback and are more willing to give companies a second chances to make good

"By 2015, organizations that have not embraced the concept of the customer engagement center will lose customers to competitors that have."

Gartner’s Magic Quadrant for CRM Customer Engagement Centers, 2013
PROBLEM
DEFINITION

The Great Divide: 
Customer Expectations vs. Service Delivery

Customer service interactions account for 75% of ALL customer interactions according to Gartner, Inc. That means the impression customers form about a product, brand or company are heavily influenced by the customer service experience. Unfortunately, the majority of customers report dissatisfaction with those experiences.

Among one of the biggest issues companies face is the fact that customers want service on their schedules which are not necessarily compatible with traditional business hours. In our always on 24/7 culture, customers expect — no, demand — that service be available whenever and however they need it to be…and why not?

Compounding that demand is the customer’s use of multiple channels to extract service from companies: company websites, social media, text, chat and phone options are all being utilized, sometimes simultaneously, with the expectation that responses will be instantaneous and seamless.

So what’s a company committed to customer engagement to do? It’s a lot more involved than just the semantics of transitioning from “customer contact center” to “customer engagement center” might suggest. While many contact centers now serve customers via phone, email, support ticket and a few other channels, very few have mastered the ability to centralize all channels — along with all the data silos they have amassed — to transform customer service into a truly homogenized customer experience.

Let Customers Steer the Boat

The old adage, “the customer is always right” rings louder and truer than ever in 2015. When it comes to customer service, companies and customer engagement centers must be ready, willing and able to deliver service when, where and how customers want it.

Whether through social media, co-browsing, self-diagnostics or chat, customers are counting on responsive and knowledgeable guidance. When delivered seamlessly, customer loyalty and appreciation are cemented. When it’s not... customers move on. Customer engagement centers that understand these fundamental concepts and connect all the touchpoints are in a position to personalize every interaction and deliver significant gains to their clients.
Agent Empowerment Leads to More Relevant Responses, Better Resolution

Companies that view their customer engagement centers as the gateway to customer loyalty are on the right track. Although 75% of companies view customer service as a differential advantage, customer satisfaction levels have declined for the fourth year in a row according to Dimension Data’s 2015 Global Contact Center Benchmarking Report. That leaves many people wondering where the disconnect lies.

Engagement centers that empower agents with the context they need to resolve a customer issue intelligently and on a one-to-one basis are the ones who are succeeding. This goes beyond providing customer order history and other traditional customer profiling methods. Context provides agents with insight into the customer without information overload, allowing agents to focus on accurate, single contact resolution thus satisfying both the customer’s needs and their own performance goals.
**Turning Data into Business-Actionable Insights**

One of the biggest obstacles to single call resolution has been that the people, channels and systems required to resolve customer issues often operate in isolated silos. Whether intentional or not, this impedes customer engagement and results in lost opportunities.

Engagement centers work to break down the barriers in organizations and systems and present a unified front to the customer. It isn’t easy, but uniting channels, interactions, systems and departments will ultimately lead to first contact resolution of most customer inquiries – thereby reducing customer frustration and attrition and, ultimately resulting in higher revenues via more efficient interactions and increased customer loyalty.

While resolving a customer issue on the first contact is a desirable goal, it should never be the only goal. Engagement centers of the future need to go one step further – making each customer interaction an opportunity to advise customers, based on their usage and preferences, as to how they can get more value from existing products, services or complementary products. Through the thoughtful use of predictive analytics and business rules, engagement centers can anticipate customer needs and better align them with products and services that will add to the foundation of a long-term relationship.

“Our customer engagement center has always provided good reporting and it just keeps getting better. My team loves it. The relevance, value and timeliness of the information that is now available enables them to do their jobs more effectively – and it’s being used to strengthen and improve our business.”

Nancy Barbee
Assistant Marketing Manager
Domino Foods, Inc.
BENEFITS

More Revenue

Satisfied customers are loyal customers. They will buy again and again...and they will advocate products, services, brands and companies to their friends and families. According to numerous studies, customers are almost always willing to pay more when they believe they will receive a better customer experience.

Higher First Resolution Rates

This is a two-pronged benefit. Not only will customers be happier, but agents will be happier too since they won’t be wasting their time and energies on handling repeat calls. Agents WANT to engage with customers in positive ways and are more productive when given the opportunity to do so.

Meaningful Feedback

Engaged customers are open and willing to provide companies with valuable insights into what drives their purchasing decisions and why they are or aren’t satisfied with them. This in turn fuels product refinements and new product developments to meet new demands, channels and business objectives.
Marketing Alternatives, Inc. (MAI) is a marketing support services company that was established in 1981.

MAI serves a wide range of clients as an outsourced partner to create and deliver integrated customer engagement center, fulfillment, branded environment and other support services that can be combined to provide single-source solutions or utilized as a la carte offerings.

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