



Ten Trends Impacting Your Contact Center

and How to Profit From Them



One Customer, One Experience

Good customer service is all about catering to a market of one. It's about creating a singular positive experience that will make your customer believe that you care about his or her business.

That's the reality of doing business in today's hyper-connected, mobile world where every customer has your competitor a simple tap away on a smartphone. Engaged consumers buy 90% more frequently, spend 60% more per transaction, and are five times more likely to pledge loyalty to a single brand. All of which translates into engaged customers delivering three times the value to your brand over the course of a year.¹

Your ability to create that optimal customer experience at every touch point will determine how your customers view your business. If you're successful, you will retain that customer's loyalty. If you're not, that customer is gone.

How Did We Get to This Point?

The technology that has put the world at our fingertips on smartphones, tablets, and desktop computers has changed the way consumers shop, buy, and interact with all businesses. Expectations of what good customer service is are higher. How customers want to engage with your business has evolved to support those expectations. And the business model needed to meet expectations must adapt to these changes.

The good news is that the businesses that get customer experience RIGHT position themselves to reap the opportunities lost by those who fail. Here are today's top ten trends impacting your customer experience, and how you can turn them into loyalty-building, profitable opportunities.



1 Customer Mobility

Half of the world's population uses mobile phones and usage is expected to grow at 5% per year.²

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Expectations of what customer service should be are higher than they have ever been.

In today's mobile world, your customers expect 24/7 engagement any time and from anywhere. They are no longer content to work within your set business hours. They expect to connect at any time of day or night. They expect the freedom to choose how they interact from a variety of communication channels. And they expect to receive instant answers to their queries through seamless digital interactions.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Be hyper-aware of your customers' response time expectations. Adapt your entire organization and contact center to always be available to customers with 24/7 service options.

To evolve your traditional communication channels from a basic toll-free connection, move to a single, uniform, service experience that includes an enhanced web-based, self-service portal and alternative communication methods, such as chat and SMS. And allow customers to choose how they connect, interact, and ultimately buy using any channel at any time and anywhere.

2 Access to Information

One-third of all web pages are now being served to mobile devices.³

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Today's customers are more informed and have direct access to a world of information at their fingertips. So, when they do engage, they have difficult questions and expect immediate answers and results. To meet these expectations, your customer touchpoints must offer something more than the information your customers can get online.

Personalized service is the new norm, rather than the exception. Businesses that have wisely deployed technologies that are able to deliver a consistent, uniform, and personalized experience tend to be the most successful at maintaining their relationships with customers and, therefore, a sustainable competitive advantage.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

To truly deliver a personalized experience, capture important customer information during all stages of an interaction and make the entire customer history available to anyone who may communicate with the customer in the future. By constantly building and maintaining a relevant picture of the customer and all the data that surrounds him or her, your employees can provide more informed answers to customer queries and resolve problems faster.

To enhance the experience even further, connect your entire organization with unified communications. This gives all employees immediate access to knowledge workers, supervisors, and subject matter experts so they can quickly find the answers they need during a customer interaction. Internal instant messaging (IM) capabilities and presence information make it easy to see which employees are available to extend a more informed level of support with minimal disruption and frustration to the customer.

3 Social Connections

One-quarter of the world's population has active social accounts.⁴

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

First impressions of the service experience you provide are now more important than ever. Your customers are empowered by the freedom social accounts offer to publish their opinions and they are comfortable posting their observations about their experiences on social media websites and forums. They can communicate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the blink of an eye. And a negative customer service story can go viral with the click of a mouse.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Gartner notes that failure to respond to social channels will lead to a 15% increase in churn rate for existing customers.⁵

Monitor social media channels, treat comments on social media as questions or comments sent directly to your business, and manage them like any other form of customer engagement. Route comments, questions, and posts to the right person with the skills to respond. Track and report the engagement process based on SLAs just like you would for any other communications channel. And ensure that the customer experience delivered through social channels is personalized, consistent, and informed to build loyalty and turn happy customers into positive word-of-mouth marketers.

Take nothing for granted. Analyze frequently asked questions, simple agent transactions and customer survey responses to decide which processes are the most suitable for automation.

4 Digital Interactions

Customer communications are increasingly digital.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

While voice-based customer communication is still important, Forrester states use of web self-service options increased to 76% in 2014, while 58% of consumers opted for online chat options, 38% used SMS messaging, and 37% opted for Twitter interactions⁶

Your customers now rely more heavily on digital methods, such as email, SMS, web chat, and social media. They expect the flexibility to interact through the medium of their choice, wherever they are. They expect to be able to switch between one medium and another while they are on the move. And they expect to receive a consistent experience, regardless of which channel they are using. This is even more important to Millennials who grew up with multiple communications options at their fingertips.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

A 1-800 support line is no longer going to cut it. Understand your customers and their communications expectations, then cater to their expectations and be consistent across all touch points. Add digital options to your customer service offerings and expand service beyond the traditional contact center to include all departments that handle your communications channels.

5 Self-Service

Use of web self-service options increased to 76% in 2014.⁷

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Today's customers are independent. They really don't want to interact with a live agent unless they have to. They want quick answers at their own convenience without interaction. They use these self-service options for routine transactions, to check product availability or account status, make financial transfers, or place an order online.

If customers are seeking answers on their own, and either have no option for self-service or if your self-service offering fails them, you can expect a negative reaction or an angry interaction. You'll have to work even harder to turn it into a positive customer experience.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Take nothing for granted. Analyze frequently asked questions, simple agent transactions (whether through voice, web chat, SMS, etc.), and customer survey responses to decide which processes are the most suitable for automation. Use digital workflow routing capabilities to provide self-service to customers through email auto-acknowledgements, automated web chat responses, and even inbound and outbound SMS inquiries.

6 Flexible Communications Models

Seventy-four percent of consumers use three or more channels for customer interactions.⁸

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Today's consumers are no longer content to work within a company's set business hours and restrictive voice-based interactions. They expect to connect at any time of day or night. They expect to receive instant answers to their queries through seamless digital interactions. And they expect to have the flexibility to switch between different methods of communication as needed to use the one that makes the most sense for them.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Your customers don't care about the technology or operations behind their interaction with your business. It's up to you to get it right. Carefully evaluate your target demographic and the channels your customers wish to use, and ensure your customer engagement framework is equipped to handle all relevant channels in parallel.

7 Technology Evolution

There were 3.9 million mobile applications available as of July 2015⁹ and there will be 50 billion internet-connected devices by 2020.¹⁰

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Technology advancements — from mobile applications and devices to the Internet of Things (IoT) — create new customer touchpoints. Each touchpoint provides new customer interaction options that may eliminate the need for your customers to connect with a live agent.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Leverage new advances in technology to expand your customer touchpoints. Convert new touchpoints into data collection tools that capture key customer information that you can carry through all stages of an interaction. Take action on the data you collect by automatically placing it in the hands of the people in your organization who can deliver proactive customer service.

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8 Big Data Analytics

Business analytics is revealing details about customers that were never learned before.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Customer data uncovers opportunities to identify pain points, upsell, and cross-sell. Every dollar invested in business analytics returns a \$13 ROI.¹¹ In fact, extensive users of customer analytics are more likely to outperform the market by 49% in profits and 50% in sales.¹²

Since customers expect to be treated as individuals, big data is offering the information you need to enhance service processes and provide personal proactive service. It allows you to switch from targeting a market segmentation of many to a segmentation of one. It gives you the information to make customers feel special and interactions more personal.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Make big data analytics an integral part of your customer experience strategy. Enable every department in your organization to access and analyze customer data in real time. Put key data in the hands of employees who interact with your customers so they can make better, smarter decisions and deliver superior customer experience.



9 Ever-Changing Business Model

Mergers and acquisitions had an estimated value of \$4.31 trillion worldwide in 2015.¹³

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Changing business structures can disrupt customer service processes. New products, new channels, and new approaches to your customers are introduced with every change.

Mergers and acquisitions create fear, uncertainty, and doubt in customers, making them open to considering alternatives. If your business is part of a merger or acquisition, you can lose customer loyalty if it takes too long to adapt the new structure to meet customer service expectations. Additionally, the longer the turmoil in the organizational structure lasts, the longer you provide your competitors with prime opportunities to absorb your customer base.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Ensure your business is agile enough to respond to changes quickly and without disruptions to the customer experience. Integrate changes into your customer service process as quickly as possible. Inform customers of changes before, during, and after implementation. Adapt your communications channels to meet customer expectations at all levels; from self-service options to digital multimedia options.

10 The Cloud

Public clouds are becoming more and more capable of supporting mission critical applications.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Fifty percent of the applications running in public cloud environments by 2018 will be mission critical to the organizations that use them.¹⁴

Moving to the Cloud can provide a cost-effective, easily scalable alternative to on-premises servers and applications. New functions, features, and channels can be added easily and more cost-effectively by the service provider when needed. And the risk of running out of storage space on a server or reaching the limits of software capabilities is eliminated.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Work with a reputable vendor with both premises- and cloud-based offerings to determine the best option for your specific business goals. To take a closer look at the pros and cons of moving to the Cloud, [check out our on-demand webinar.](#)



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