



Five Tips For Improving Customer Experience – Starting With The Support Desk

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Within today's competitive environment, where customers are more empowered than ever, organizations are looking to differentiate themselves from the competition and reduce customer churn through improvements in customer satisfaction. A recent Forrester survey found that 86 percent of decision-makers rank their customers' experience as one of the top strategic priorities, and that 68 percent want to be customer service leaders in their industry.¹

However, improving customer experience is no easy task. Companies must truly understand their customers, take into consideration the full spectrum of support they demand, as well as span the different channels their clients prefer for support.¹ Adding to this challenge, budgets allocated to improve the customer experience are low, or non-existent, as companies remain focused on reducing costs.

How does today's customer support organization manage to respond? The answer lies in building a better support desk that will let you do more with less without sacrificing on support quality or end-user satisfaction.² Wondering where to start? You may want to begin with these five tips:

1. Increase Efficiency and Customer Care At the Same Time:

It is essential for the modern day service desk to keep costs down and maintain efficiency, while creating the perception of a one-to-one experience for the customer. This means equipping agents with tools that will enable them to get more things done, in less time, without compromising customer care.

As those who rely primarily on phone support know, getting an end user to accurately describe exactly what's happening on their computer, tablet or smartphone can be time consuming and error-prone. The service desk can save tremendous time troubleshooting when they can view the end-user's device, and run diagnostics that provide essential technical data. And with the right support solution, once a problem is diagnosed the service desk will be able to automate fixes to routine issues, eliminating the need to reinvent the wheel each time a repeat problem comes up.

Efficiency is still essential for the service desk, but the importance of empowering agents to create one-to-one customer experience while supporting multiple clients is at an all-time high.

Leading Remote Support Solutions can assist with on the spot training to eliminate multiple calls for the same problem, allow agents to pull in third party experts to help solve complex issues, and facilitate handling multiple sessions simultaneously through powerful chat features.

2. Keep All The Information Agents Need In One Place

Jumping between tools to gather information needed to solve a problem is counter-productive and frustrating to agents and end-users. Support agents and customers both lose valuable time waiting for answers that should be readily available, and feel hassled when they have to repeat the same information to different people. Everything the information agents need to support your customer should be at their fingertips, enabling them to provide the right type of support and engagement to the customer. Leading customer service solutions have the capabilities to integrate with both on-premise and SaaS-based service desk software (e.g., ticketing systems), as well as CRM systems. It is also essential to provide agents with easy access to assistive content for their support sessions. Whether it's a knowledge base or FAQs, the essential info should always be at hand.

3. Expand The Channels Of Communication

Today's end-users and clients – especially the rising generations of digital natives – expect to interact with organizations through various methods of communication. As far back as 2009, Forrester Research found that 20% of the Gen-X and Millennial cohorts (those aged 18-40) locate and engage in online chat when they visit a website.³ More recently, PWC conducted a study of Millennials entering the workplace and found that 41% prefer electronic communication to face-to-face and telephone encounters.⁴ And it's not just the younger generation of end-users. A recent Customer Contact Council survey showed that 52% of customers surveyed preferred web-based service and support.⁵ All customers and companies alike expect that communications that take place through one channel will be leveraged through other channels. For example, if a customer initially seeks support through an online chat, they may receive more detailed and tailored information via email.

The support desk must be able to offer multiple channels that include not just traditional phone and e-mail contact, but Web-based chat, Web links, SMS, and social media as well. In fact, leading customer care organizations are removing the silos in which these channels currently operate to create a more holistic customer experience.

4. Deliver A “Wow” Experience, No Matter What The Question

Now, more than ever, the lines between where support services start and end are fuzzy. With device, software, app, and content proliferation, customers may not understand who to contact to resolve their questions. Leading support desks recognize that resolving customer questions or issues whether it is ‘in-bounds’ or not, leads to greater satisfaction and loyalty. This approach may involve supporting a non-core device or platform or engaging a third-party support resource from the partner or vendor, instead of directing the customer to hang up and call someone else. Service desk technology can assist in facilitating these types of engagements that result in a “wow” experience for the customer, and for the agent.

Leading remote support technologies enable agents to invite specialists into their remote session and gain access to libraries of information within one tool in an effort to help resolve the full spectrum of challenges a customer may be facing.

5. Adopt A “Support-Free” Support Solution

Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions have been growing since it first became a factor in the early stages of the Internet era. Gartner estimates that 10 percent of overall IT spending worldwide is allocated to SaaS solutions, and predicts that SaaS will account for 15 percent by 2015.⁶

There are a number of key drivers behind the growth in SaaS adoption. In late 2010, Forrester polled over one thousand IT decision makers on the benefits derived from using SaaS solutions.⁸ The top benefits cited were:

- Lower implementation costs (53% of respondents)
- Lower ongoing costs (48%)
- Faster delivery of new features and functions from SaaS or “as-a-service” providers (46%)
- Faster time-to-market from the ease of implementation (45%)
- Better support for large numbers of mobile and remote users, suppliers, and partners (34%)

With a SaaS based solution, organizations no longer need to devote time to managing, upgrading, and supporting an application or the on-premise equipment that it runs on. There's no hardware or software to buy and maintain, no software patches or technological incompatibilities. And there's built-in redundancy and on-demand scalability. When the SaaS offering is a support solution, it means that support organizations no longer need to “support the support tool.”

Conclusion

The pressure to increase customer satisfaction metrics with less funding will increase as companies look for new ways to differentiate their services and reduce customer churn. To get ahead customer support organizations must maintain a focus on using the right measures of success, they need to empower agents to support more customers better, providing them with multiple, integrated communications channels, and be dedicated to delivering the best customer experience regardless of the support request.

Footnotes

¹ “The State Of Customer Experience,” February 17, 2011, Forrester Research, Inc.

² “Five Steps to Improving the Customer Service Experience: Metrics, Tips, and Tools for Utilizing Customer Feedback,” January, 2012, Ovum

³ “Best Practices: Implementing Online Chat,” March 9, 2009, Forrester Research, Inc.

⁴ “Millennials at Work: Reshaping the Workplace,” January 5, 2012, PWC

⁵ “The Better Investment: E-mail or Chat?” July 11, 2011, Corporate Executive Board, <http://cccbuzz.exbdblogs.com/2011/07/19/the-better-investment-e-mail-or-chat/>

⁶ Gartner Says North America to Account for 64 Percent of SaaS Revenue in 2011, September 14, 2011, Gartner, Inc., <http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=1791514>

⁷ “The SaaS Market Hits Mainstream: Adoption Highlights.” May 3, 2011, Forrester Research