CALL CENTER IQ

The Voice of the Customer Care Professional

Executive Report on the
Customer Experience

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Customer Experience:
Eliminating Ambiguity, Driving Action

There is no denying the business world's emphasis on customer experience improvement. There is also no denying the fact that efforts to achieve that improvement have consistently been bottlenecked, if not outright thwarted.

Ambiguity and inactivity represent two of the most notable culprits.

While businesses and thought leaders have made clear their interest in improving the abstract notion of the customer experience, they have not settled on a crystallized definition. Customer experience possesses universal recognition as a buzz word, but it does not possess universal meaning as a specific concept. Absent that specificity, the challenge of mobilizing an organization and driving truly significant improvement will remain incredibly daunting.

The combination of that ambiguity and inherent business inertia results in inactivity. The shift from conception to action is a notorious rarity in the business world; making that transition without a firm sense of what customer experience change – and, specifically, customer experience improvement – should entail is especially unlikely.

Call Center IQ's 2016 Executive Report On The Customer Experience aims to mitigate these factors. By doing so, it will help spur the customer experience action – and results – organizations have long been craving.

It begins by investigating the meaning of the customer experience. What is the customer experience? Which business functions does it entail? Which business departments are involved?

It then shifts focus to interactions, which represent a core tenet of the customer experience. How are businesses interacting with customers? Where are they interacting? What should those interactions entail?

With context established, the report can segue into a discussion about a good customer experience. It is not enough to know what the customer experience is; success comes from defining the parameters of an optimal customer experience.

Upon painting a picture of the optimal customer experience, the report investigates tactics for making that idealized vision a reality.

It begins by providing a benchmarking opportunity: what are businesses planning to do? Thanks to the **Practicality Guide,** it subsequently provides recommendations on those businesses could – and should – be doing.

Featuring commentary from experts, detailed investigations into actual solutions, and analyses of actual case studies, the guides provide a blueprint for taking action.

On the whole, this report enables you to transition from talking about an ambiguous concept of the customer experience to enacting a clear, well-designed, results-driven plan for achieving actual improvement.

Brian Cantor
Managing Director
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Key Findings:

Customer support/service is the function most commonly associated with the customer experience. It is not, however, the only function to be universally regarded as a customer experience tenet. Customer feedback and customer relationship management also fit the *universal* bill, while company social media and customer retention are customer experience functions in roughly three-quarters of businesses.

The customer support/contact center team predictably places the greatest level of importance on the customer experience. The C-suite does not care quite as much, but it still cares. More importantly, it is a key customer experience decision maker in the greatest percentage of organizations.

Interactions are the heart of the customer experience. Businesses most commonly interact with customers in regard to general support and information, feedback, billing, and technical support.

Interactions most commonly occur in e-mail, live agent telephony, company websites, IVR, and major social networks.

Accuracy, quality of resolution, consistency across agents, ability to reach a live agent, and friendliness represent the most important elements of an interaction between brand and customer.

Businesses believe a "good" customer experience comes in many forms. At its core, however, such an experience provides value for customers.

Customer-oriented metrics like CSAT and Net Promoter Score will become pivotal performance indicators over the next year, but insofar as emphasis on the customer experience is growing, all forms of metrics – accessibility, quality, efficiency, resolution – will take on increased importance by year's end.

Improving customer feedback is the most important strategic initiative for contact centers. Other priorities include offering proactive engagement, improving knowledge management, enhancing self-service, and expanding omni-channel capabilities.

Customer feedback will also join company social media and call recordings as a top source of voice of the customer insights.

To improve agent performance, organizations will focus on one-on-one coaching, improving knowledge management, offering additional group training, enhancing agent dashboards and optimizing call recording.

In practice, success will come from focusing on the "customer journey." The focus should drive businesses to make interactions more efficient, optimize and personalize individual experience moments, reduce customer effort and, ultimately, provide customers with more value.

Methodology and Demographics

To collect data for the Executive Report on the Future of the Contact Center, Call Center IQ surveyed customer experience, contact center, marketing, customer care, IT, and operations professionals during January and February 2016.

Example respondent job titles include CEO, executive vice president, director of global support, director of customer care, team leader, national customer and dealer experience manager, quality supervisor, senior vice president of service operations, head of customer care, manager of customer service, vice president of customer experience, vice president of marketing, director of customer success, eServices manager, support center manager, director of customer experience, co-founder, and head of business development.

Invitations to participate were issued irrespective of company size, but the respondent pool skews in favor of larger organizations. 46% of respondent organizations employ over 1,000, while 57% have at least 500 employees on their payrolls. Only 19% of respondent organizations staff fewer than 100.

Contact center size is more evenly distributed. 32% of respondent organizations seat at least 250 agents in their contact centers, while 35% possess fewer than 50 agent seats.

Understanding the Customer Experience

Survey after survey, mission statement after mission statement, and think piece after think piece identify the customer experience as a paramount business priority.

But what exactly does the customer experience entail?

The answer depends greatly on the professional and organization being asked; no two entities possess the exact same definition of the customer experience.

Within those varying definitions, however, are overlapping ideas, functions, initiatives, and objectives. A big picture inquiry into the state of the customer experience – and into the fundamental steps business must take to improve their customer experiences – begins with an investigation into that common ground.

What is the customer experience? Which business functions are part of the customer experience? Which business units influence and determine customer experience strategy?

What Is The Customer Experience?

The customer experience, at its core, concerns the interactions between brand and customer.

That is the central theme consistently identified by respondents, who defined the customer experience in an open-ended format. The absence of preset answer choices provided no assurance of commonality, but commonality emerged – in a big way – regarding the fact that interactions represent a fundamental tenet of the customer experience.

Differences, however, exist on the matter of how businesses approach those interactions.

Some organizations, for instance, simply believe the customer experience refers to the sum of interactions between brand and customer. They adhere to no further qualifiers.

Others focus on the customer's perception of the interactions – and his overarching relationship with the brand. How does he feel about how the brand communicates and what it provides within those communications?

Others still are concerned with the customer's physical experience when interacting with the business. Through which processes and systems will a

customer travel en route to his desired destination – be it a resolution to a problem, an answer to a question, or a confirmed purchase?

The term may be customer experience, but a handful of respondents reverse the aforementioned perspectives. They define the customer experience as the value the business provides to the customer. They consider the start-to-finish processes and systems the business employs to track and engage customers.

Which functions are part of the customer experience?

Function	Percentage
Sales	69.9%
Marketing	69.9%
Customer service/support	96.4%
Customer relationship/journey management	85.5%
Company information/announcements	65.1%
Pricing	53.0%
Product development	57.8%
Customer feedback	90.4%
Company social media presence	73.5%
Billing/invoicing	61.4%
Customer retention	71.1%
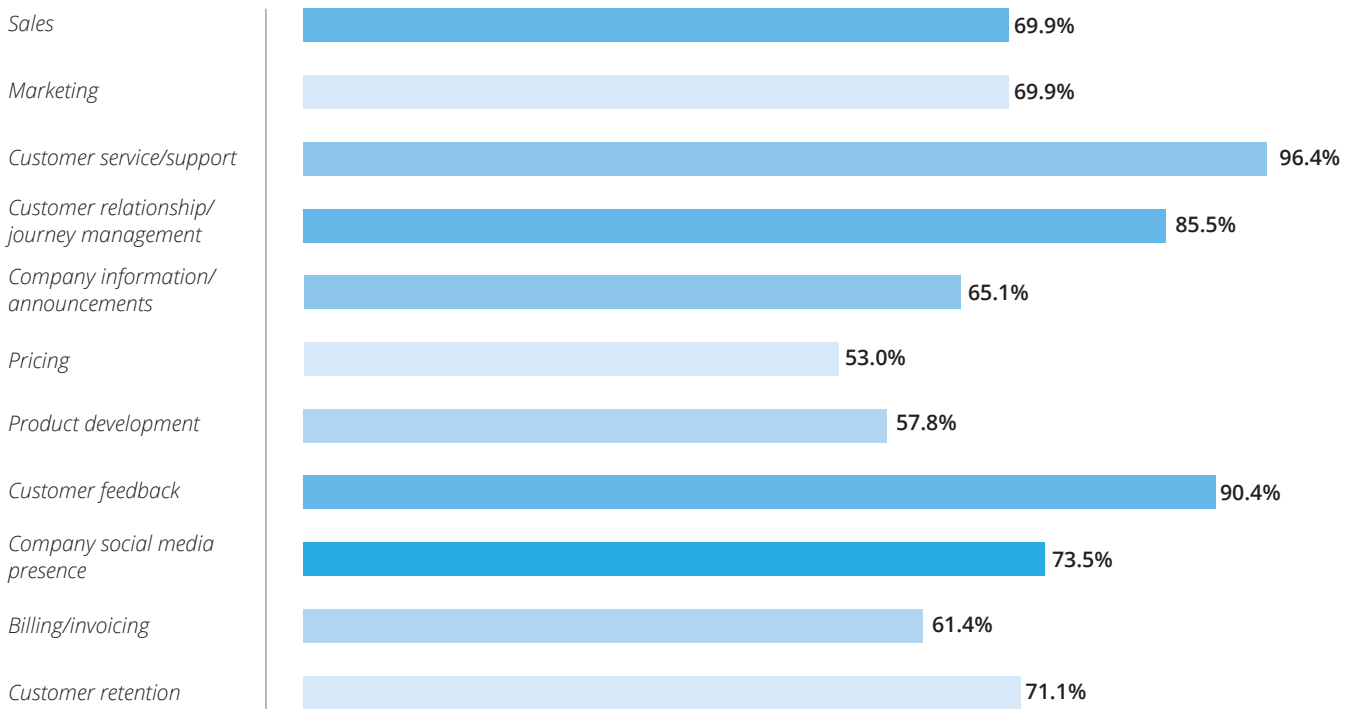
What Is The Customer Experience Function?

In addition to understanding how today's businesses define the customer experience, it is important to identify the functions organizations situate under the customer experience umbrella.

Which functions are most commonly considered part of the customer experience? Which are more likely to represent separate or auxiliary functions?

In response to the former question, today's organizations almost unanimously answer "customer service and support." 96% of organizations place service under the customer experience umbrella.

Other functions most frequently considered elements of the customer experience include customer feedback (90%), customer relationship management (86%), company social media (73%), and customer retention (71%).

While pricing (53%), product development (58%) and billing (61%) do not as commonly receive such a label, they still fall under the customer experience in a majority of organizations.

The data reflects an all-encompassing, multi-faceted approach to the customer experience.

Yes, virtually all organizations view customer service as part of the customer experience, which means virtually all organizations believe improvements

in customer service strategy can contribute to a stronger overall customer experience. When assessing marketplace trends and making customer experience recommendations, this report accordingly places a particularly notable emphasis on customer service and engagement.

On the other hand, the majority of businesses do not treat customer service as precisely synonymous with customer experience. The customer experience is about more than what happens within the actual support interactions – it is about the myriad of factors that impact interfacing between the brand and customer.

How important is the customer experience to the following business units?

Business Unit	Score
Overall business	4.36
C-Level/Executive Team	4.22
Contact Center/Customer Service	4.64
Marketing/Demand Generation	3.95
Sales/Business Development	3.88
Operations	3.82
IT	3.42
Product Development	3.73
Accounting/Finance	2.93
Human Resources	3.16

0 Not At All — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 Paramount
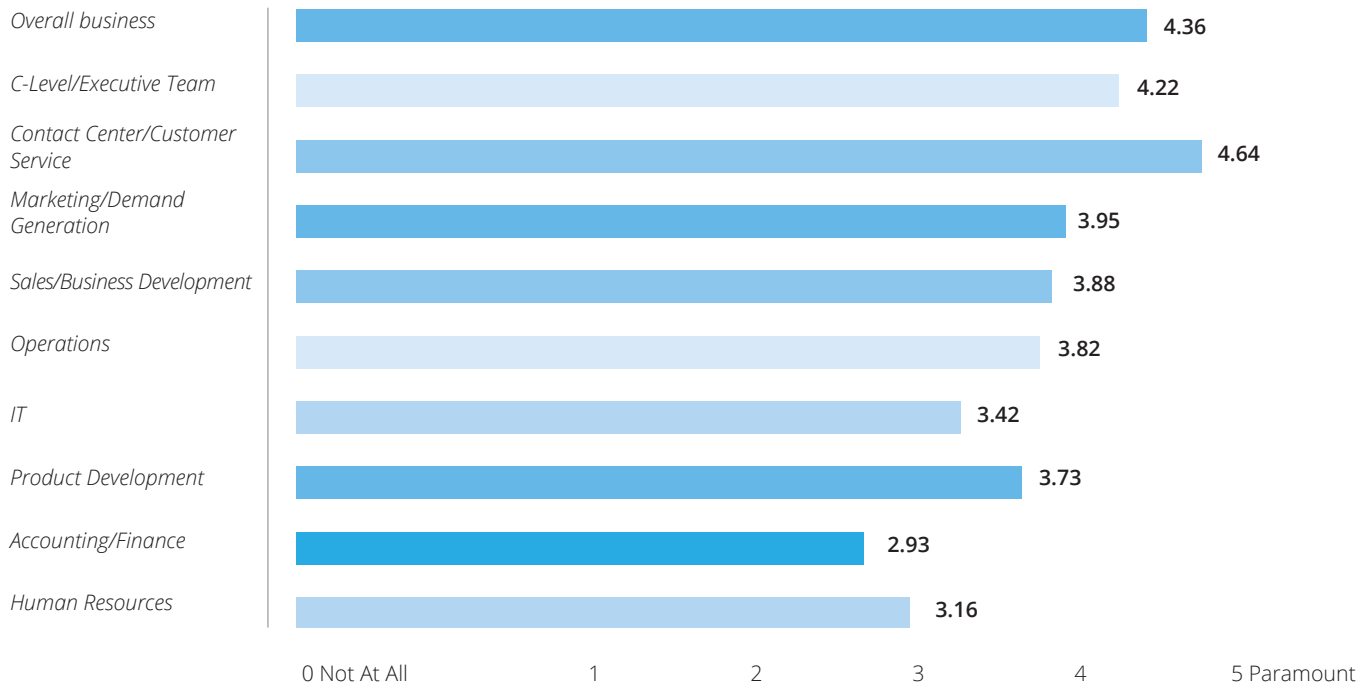
Who Cares About The Customer Experience?

Since customer experience encompasses more than simply customer support, departments other than the contact center/customer support team should care about strategy.

On the other hand, the fact that customer support is the function most commonly – and almost universally – associated with customer experience suggests that the related department should be most concerned with strategy.

Indeed, on a scale of 0-5, with 0 representing no involvement and 5 representing a paramount involvement, the customer service/support/ contact center department cares most about customer experience strategy. Respondents score the level of interest at a 4.64/5.

That level of concern, notably, trumps that of the business at large. Respondents rate the greater business' concern at a 4.36.

Concern from the C-suite registers at a 4.22, while marketing (3.95) and sales (3.88) respectively represent the fourth- and fifth-most interested parties.

Departments comparatively disinterested in the customer experience include accounting (2.93), human resources (3.16), and information technology (3.42).

The hierarchy is generally intuitive. The customer experience is a major concern for the greater business (overall business, C-suite), but it matters most specifically to the contact center/customer support team. As they also interface with customers, the marketing and sales teams naturally ascribe a degree of importance to customer experience strategy.

Because the departments are not as directly involved with customers, it is similarly unsurprising that the accounting, human resources, and IT functions care comparatively less

That comparative lack of concern is not, however, tantamount to an absolute disinterest. Rated 2.93 or higher, their interest in the customer experience is notable. The customer experience is a business-wide concern that spans a variety of business functions; no individual department can turn a blind eye.

Looking ahead, the relevant question will be whether departments like human resources and IT care enough. It is good that they are showing a solid degree of interest, but insofar as they play a pivotal role in customer experience execution – HR in the form of recruiting, onboarding, and retaining the talent that drives the customer experience, IT in the form of sourcing and operating the systems that facilitate the customer experience – is it acceptable that their interest level is anything short of significant?

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Are the following ultimate customer experience decision-makers in your organization?

Department	Percentage
C-Level/Executive Team	48.2%
Contact Center/Customer Service	42.2%
Marketing/Demand Generation	21.0%
Sales/Business Development	20.7%
Operations	15.7%
IT	15.7%
Product Development	23.2%
Accounting/Finance	9.6%
Human Resources	8.4%
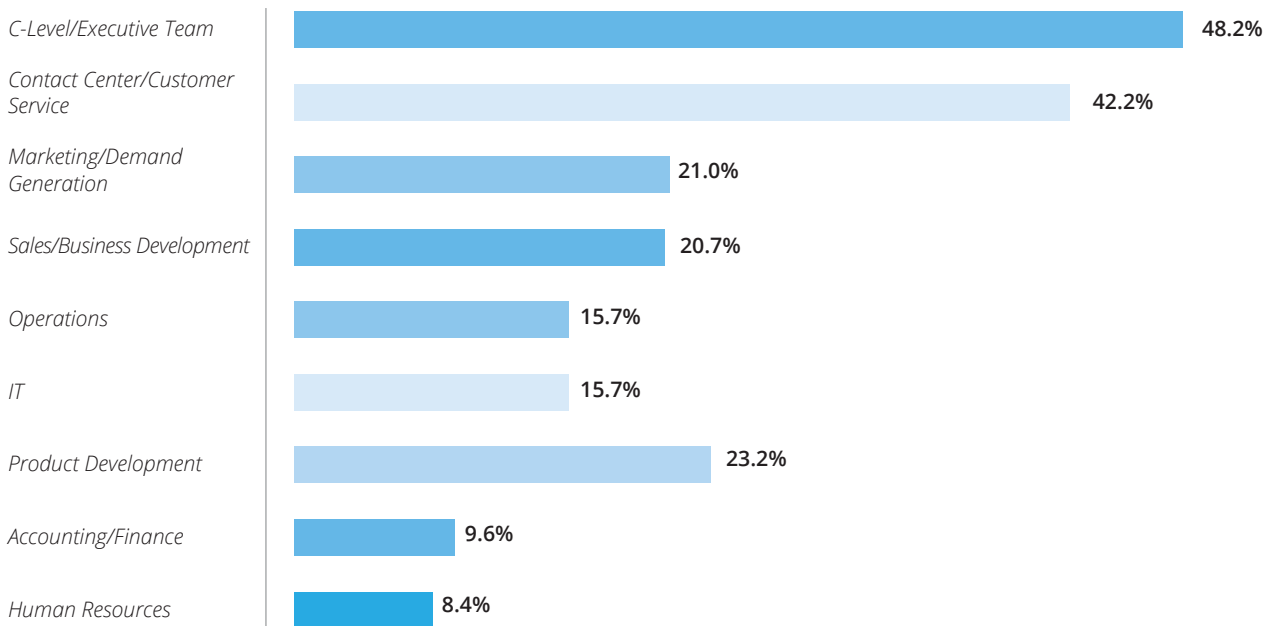
Who Determines Customer Experience Strategy?

In all walks of life – and particularly in the business world – those who care most about something are not necessarily the same as those who make the decisions.

To an extent, that is true of customer experience strategy.

While the contact center/customer support team places the greatest level of importance on the customer experience, the C-level is more commonly involved in driving decisions. 48% say the C-level actively makes customer experience decisions; the contact center/customer support team has decision-making power in 42% of organizations.

On the one hand, the decision-making data does not perfectly align with the data on importance. Customer support, the department that cares most about the customer experience, is not most commonly involved in decisions about that customer experience.

On the other hand, the fact that the team's involvement is nearly as commonplace as the C-suite's involvement reflects the department's perceived importance. Many businesses give their contact center and customer support teams the ability to make major decisions about the customer experience.

These businesses, therefore, are granting authority to the team that cares the most about – and has the most exposure to – the customer experience. These businesses are helping to create a more customer-centric marketplace.

Other units often involved in final decision-making include the product team (23%), the marketing team (21%), and the sales team (21%).

Units comparatively less likely to be involved are HR (8%), accounting (10%), and IT (16%).

The hierarchy generally aligns with how the respective departments feel about the

customer experience as well as the extent to which their core functions fall under the customer experience umbrella.

The notable exception is the high comparative placement of the product development team. The fact that they represent one of the key decision-making bodies belies the fact that they do not place comparatively high importance on the customer experience and the fact that product development is not as frequently considered part of the customer experience.

While surprising from a statistical standpoint, the involvement is not necessarily a bad thing. Product development has enormous ramifications for other customer experience tenets like customer support, customer feedback, sales, and marketing. Giving the team a seat at the table can help provide valuable alignment between those who develop the products and those who interface with customers regarding those products.

Understanding Interactions

Common to the five functions most commonly associated with the customer experience – support, feedback, relationship management, social media, and retention – is the notion of customer interfacing. Engagement is clearly the centerpiece of the customer experience.

Efforts to improve engagement, naturally, are a centerpiece of the campaign to improve the customer experience.

The journey to that improved customer experience thus requires an understanding of why customers interaction, how they interact, and what determines the success of an interaction.

How frequently does your organization directly interact with customers for the following purposes?

Category	Value
Sales - Outbound	3.22
Sales - Inbound transaction	3.47
Sales - Existing customer upgrade/renewal/etc	3.43
Billing/Invoice/Account Inquiry	3.63
Feedback/complaint - general	4.05
Feedback/complaint - specific incident	4.08
Support - Technical/product issue	3.63
Support - Issue with overall service experience	3.88
Support - General question/information	4.16
Support - Legal/compliance/privacy issue	2.93

Scale: 0 Never — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 Constantly

Reasons to Directly Interact With Customers

Customer engagement is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. Each individual interaction is unique, and the best organizations will aim to consistently accommodate those nuances and intricacies.

Big picture strategy must, however, start somewhere. In the case of customer engagement, that starting point is an assessment of the types of interactions in which a business most frequently partakes.

A business will absolutely engage in certain types of conversations more frequently than others. Those commonplace interactions come with core expectations and required skillsets, and it is in accordance with those central requirements that an organization is wise to begin developing its big picture customer engagement strategy.

For today's businesses, the most frequent form of direct customer engagement involves providing general support and information.

Respondents rate the frequency of such conversations a 4.16/5.

Other comparatively commonplace interactions involve feedback regarding a specific product issue (4.08), feedback regarding the overall experience (4.05), support related to the overall service experience (3.88), billing (3.63), and technical support for a specific product issue (3.63).

Comparatively uncommon conversation topics are support for legal and compliance matters (2.93), outbound sales (3.22), and up-sell initiative (3.43).

The responses once again reveal the multi-faceted nature of the customer experience. Customer feedback and support engagements may represent the most common forms of interaction between brand and customer, but many forms of interaction are fairly common. Businesses do, on a fairly frequent basis, engage customers in regard to legal matters. They do, an on even more frequent basis, communicate up-sell opportunities.

Does your company engage customers in the following channels?

Legend: ■ No ■ Yes, for complete service ■ Yes, for simple transactions only

Channels (top to bottom):
- Telephone - live agent
- Telephone - IVR
- E-Mail
- Social Media - Major Networks (FB, Twitter, etc)
- Social Media - Niche/Specialty Networks
- Chat
- Website/FAQ
- Mobile - SMS
- Mobile - App
- Mobile - Web
- Video - Web
- Video/Messaging (Skype, ICQ, etc)
- Virtual Agents
- In-Person
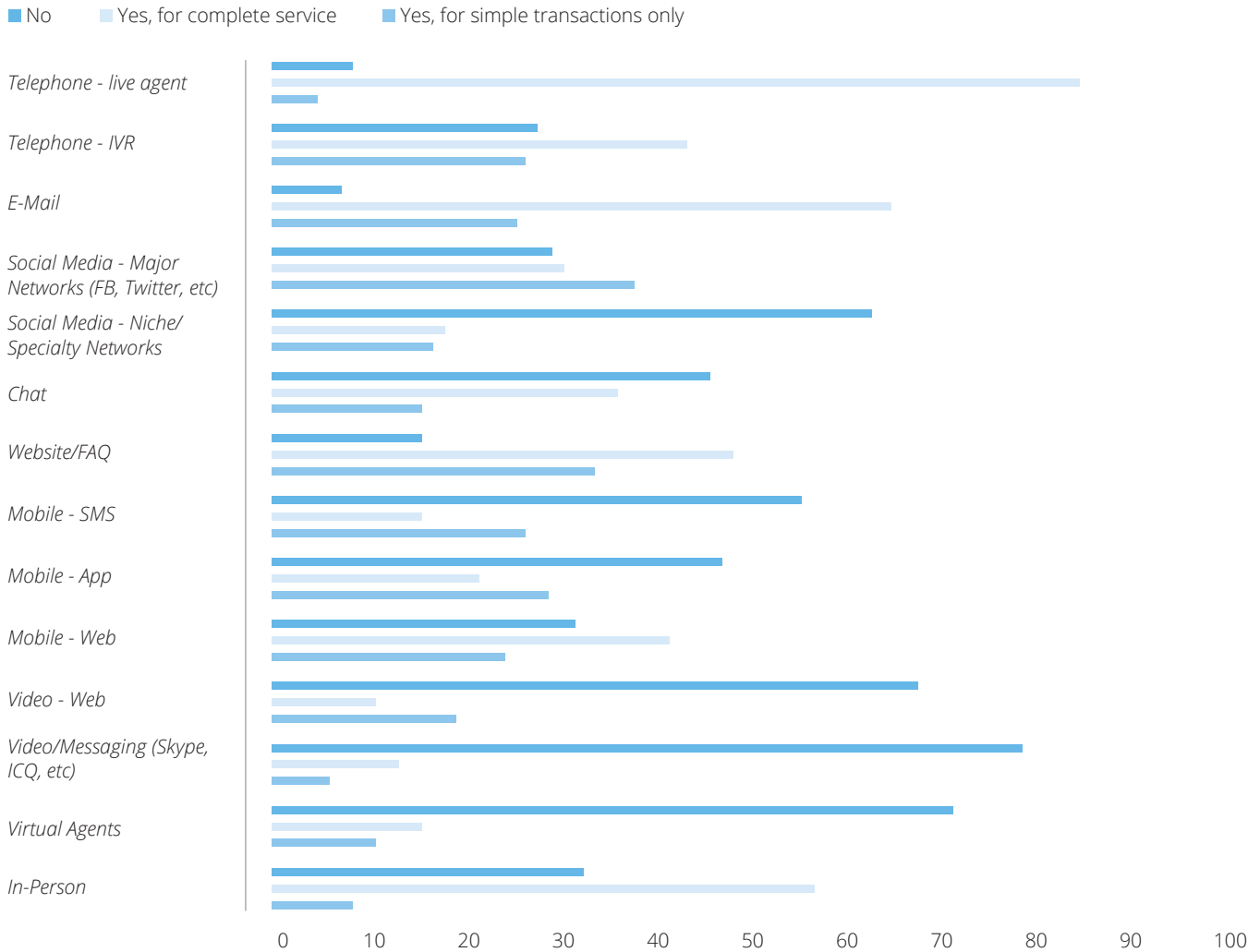
Where Interactions Happen

They may not be trendy, but e-mail and telephony remain absolute staples of the customer interaction process.

Per respondents, e-mail is the most commonly offered interaction channel. 92% of businesses engage customers via e-mail; 66% offer a complete service experience within the channel.

While offered by a slightly fewer percentage of organizations – 91% – live agent telephony plays a more widespread role as a full service channel. A whopping 86% of businesses offer a complete service experience over the phone.

The company website – another more "traditional" channel – is an interaction medium for 84% of businesses. The channel's limitations arguably make it better suited for simple, transactional matters, but 49% of businesses say they use it to provide a complete service experience.

Neither is leveraged as a full service channel by the majority, but telephone IVR and social media play at least a transactional role in a great deal of organizations. IVR, the fourth-most commonly offered option, serves

customers in 72% of organizations (and plays a full service role in 44%). The major social networks like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter accommodate interactions in 70% of businesses. They serve as full service channels in 31%.

Comparatively – and absolutely – rarer channel offerings include video messaging (20%), virtual agents (27%) and web-based video (31%).

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Rate the importance of the following when interacting with customers

Element	Score
Accuracy	4.83
Channel options	3.96
Friendliness	4.48
Personalization	4.39
Personal relationship between agent and customer	3.86
Speed/efficiency	4.25
Number of calls/transfers required for resolution	4.10
Memorability/creativity	3.65
Ability to reach a live agent	4.51
Ability to reach a supervisor	4.07
Consistency across channels	4.37
Consistency across agents	4.65
Quality of resolution	4.76
Agent/platform's experience & familiarity with issue	4.40
Agent/platform's familiarity with customer and customer's past interactions	4.18
Agent empowered to offer solution without additional approval	4.33

Scale: 0 Not At All — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 Top Priority

Anatomy of a Great Interaction

For today's businesses, accuracy represents the most important element of an interaction.

It is not the only extremely important element.

Asked to rate the importance of a variety of customer interaction elements on a scale of 0-5, respondents rated four – accuracy (4.83), quality of resolution (4.76), consistency across agents (4.65), and ability to reach a live agent (4.51) – above a 4.5. With a score of 4.48, friendliness just narrowly misses the 4.5 threshold.

For each of the five elements (friendliness included), at least 60% of respondents provided a 5/5 score.

Equally telling is the fact that the comparatively least important elements – memorability/creativity (3.65), the formation of a personal relationship between agent and customer (3.86), and channel options (3.96) – possess solid scores in absolute terms. Not one garnered a score of 2 or lower from more than 5% of respondents.

Because businesses operate in an impractical world governed by practicality, they will naturally need to prioritize certain components. Those priorities, based on the aforementioned performance rubric, should include accuracy, resolution quality, and consistency across agents.

The data, however, reveals that they should not be ignoring any elements. Memorability and creativity will rarely be the first priority for an interaction, but they are absolutely factors that matter to customers. They, consequently, must absolutely be on the radar for customer experience strategists.

There may be hierarchies when it comes to constructing customer interactions, but there are no shortcuts. Great interactions fire on the full spectrum of cylinders.

Assessing the Experience

Uncertainty is the enemy of progress. Defining the customer experience – what it entails and whom it involves – is therefore an important first step on the road to improvement.

The next step involves identifying the qualities of a good customer experience.

To successfully weigh investments, construct strategies, and train employees, businesses require a firm understanding of what they are trying to achieve.

What are the central components of an optimized customer experience? Which elements of the experience produce the greatest impact on key performance indicators? How does a great experience look to customers? What does it mean for the business?

What is a good customer experience?

In addition to providing an open-ended definition of the customer experience, respondents were asked to articulate their vision of a good customer experience. The first question reveals which units, functions, and stakeholders are involved in the customer experience. The second question provides guidance on what those entities must do to succeed.

The open-ended nature of the question predictably produced a myriad of different responses. No two answers precisely mirrored each other.

As was the case with definitions about the customer experience, the pool of open-ended responses does, however, features some recurring themes.

The most notable such theme is value. While not articulated in a uniform fashion, the core message is common to the majority of answers: good customer experiences provide value for customers.

That value may be defined by a customer smiling at the end of the interaction. It may manifest as an alignment between the customer's expectations and the service he receives. It may be illustrated through increases in Net Promoter Score and CSAT.
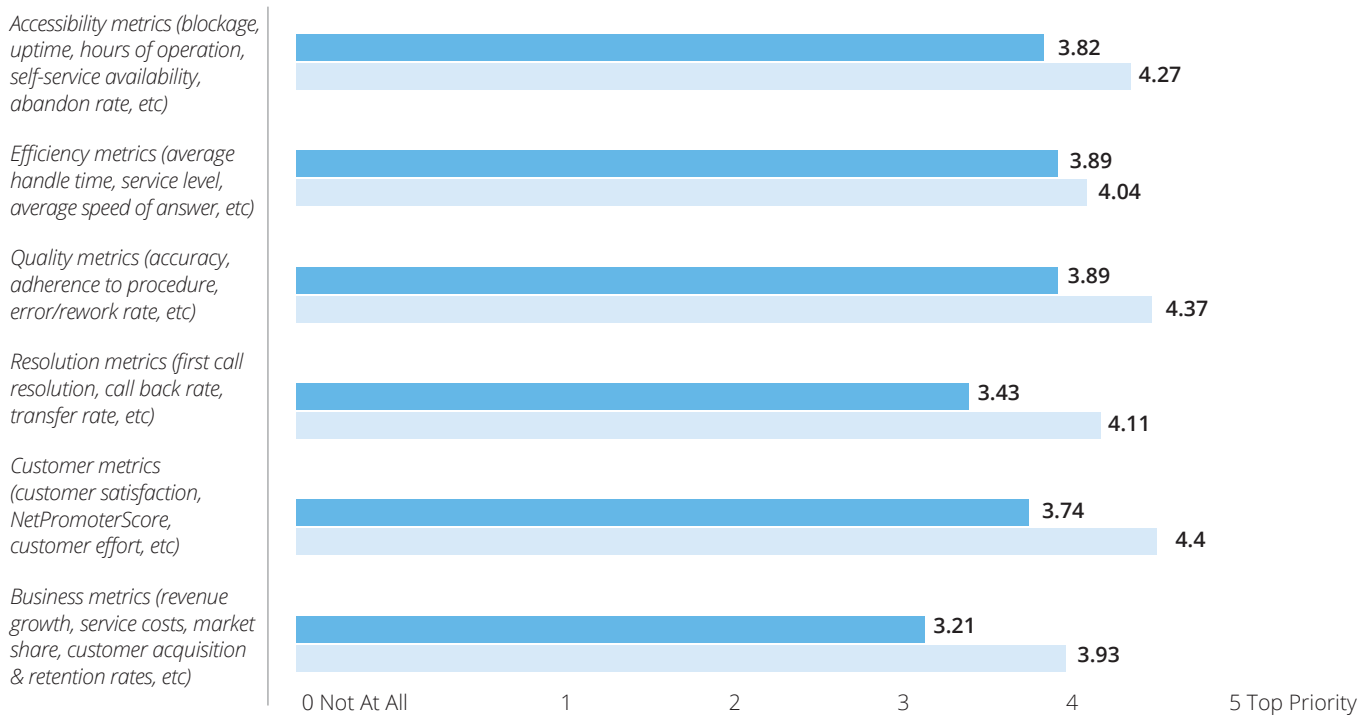
Indeed, the perspective on what constitutes value will differ across contact centers, organizations, and customers. The fundamental need to create value is not, however, a topic of debate. A good customer experience is one that creates value for customers.

Other common responses all seem to dovetail from that value conception. A handful of respondents, for instance, declare good customer experiences that quickly, consistently, and effortlessly provide high quality information or resolutions to customers. Clearly, those tenets matter because they provide value for customers.

Others talk about projecting respect, professionalism, and humanity throughout the interaction. Value – in this case, making the customer feel valued – is again the central motif.

Additional respondents focus on elements like personalization, channel accommodation, and proactivity. All are predicated on the notion that a good customer experience provides value to the customer.

How important are the following types of metrics now (0-5)? How important will they be in 12 months?

■ Now   ■ In 12 Months

Metric	Now	In 12 Months
Accessibility metrics (blockage, uptime, hours of operation, self-service availability, abandon rate, etc)	3.82	4.27
Efficiency metrics (average handle time, service level, average speed of answer, etc)	3.89	4.04
Quality metrics (accuracy, adherence to procedure, error/rework rate, etc)	3.89	4.37
Resolution metrics (first call resolution, call back rate, transfer rate, etc)	3.43	4.11
Customer metrics (customer satisfaction, NetPromoterScore, customer effort, etc)	3.74	4.4
Business metrics (revenue growth, service costs, market share, customer acquisition & retention rates, etc)	3.21	3.93

0 Not At All   1   2   3   4   5 Top Priority

Measuring the customer experience

Conceptually, a good customer experience is one that provides value for the customer.

In practice, businesses need a way of measuring that value.

Insofar as they reflect customer sentiment, metrics like CSAT and Net Promoter Score represent intuitive options.

Businesses concur. While they are not the most important form of measurement in the status quo (they rank above resolution and business-oriented metrics but below measures for efficiency, quality, and accessibility), customer-oriented metrics will become the Holy Grail by the end of 2016. They will be the most important determinant of a customer experience's success or failure.

The limitation of customer-oriented metrics, however, is the fact that they assess an end result. They assess how well people, processes, and technology ultimately came together to produce value for customers.

They do not illuminate the role individual elements of the experience are playing in increasing or reducing value for customers. As a result, they are not as useful in a day-to-day management context. A contact center can tell its agents that their ultimate big picture objective is to boost Net Promoter Score, but it cannot necessarily access Net Promoter Score within the confines of a specific interaction, let alone the specific behaviors within that interaction.

Businesses, consequently, will need to rely on a variety of other metrics – including those related to efficiency, accessibility, quality, and resolution.

In the status quo, businesses are most reliant on "efficiency metrics" like average handle time. Given the high value placed on accuracy and consistency, "quality metrics" like accuracy rate and adherence to procedure narrowly follow as second-most important. "Accessibility metrics"

related to blockage and uptime rank as third-most important.

While customer-oriented metrics will become the paramount focus moving forward, businesses plan to place a greater emphasis on all forms of metrics.

Rejecting the clash between "efficiency metrics" and "customer metrics," organizations argue that both warrant increased attention over the next year. Customer-oriented metrics may be the greatest determinant of a successful customer experience, but strong performance against efficiency, quality, accessibility, and resolution metrics will help – not hinder – that success.

As long as the motivation is to create more value for the customer, an organization that emphasizes average handle time or first contact resolution will often be an organization that drives increased customer satisfaction.

Improving the Experience

Businesses declare customer experience improvement a top organizational priority, which means they are seeking a great customer experience.

According to today's businesses, a great customer experience is one that provides enough value to drive customer satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy. It consists of accurate, consistent, high-quality, resolution-oriented interactions that are efficient and accessible.

Achieving all those tenets requires a comprehensive, determined, multi-faceted action plan involving overarching strategic initiatives, customer retention and acquisition strategy, voice of the customer acquisition, and agent engagement.

Strategic Initiatives

When it comes to driving change, customer experience leaders have a plethora of initiatives from which to choose. Some represent the introduction of new, exciting technologies. Others involve the adoption of industry best practices into the contact center operation. Others still involve doubling down on the most fundamental customer experience tenets.

All – though some more than others – represent pathways to improved customer experiences. All, however, require a combination of financial investment, training, and shifts in process.

Bound by practicality, businesses will naturally prioritize the most valuable initiatives.

Per the survey, those – the ones that received the best scores on a scale of 0-5 – include improving the customer feedback process (3.80), proactively engaging customers (3.48), optimizing knowledge management (3.47), enhancing self-service (3.26), and increasing omni-channel capabilities (3.16).

Clear alignment exists between the initiatives businesses most seriously plan to undertake and the customer experience concepts businesses most deeply value.

Improved customer feedback helps a business more clearly understand what its customers want and how its customers feel. That information enables businesses to more compellingly provide value, which is the fundamental tenet of a good customer experience.

Proactive customer engagement, enhanced self-service and a more robust approach to omni-channel provide additional value for customers. They may have an auxiliary benefit for the operation, but their purpose – first and foremost – is to create a more worthwhile experience for customers.

The omni-channel initiative also promises stronger consistency, which represents one of the most important elements of interactions.
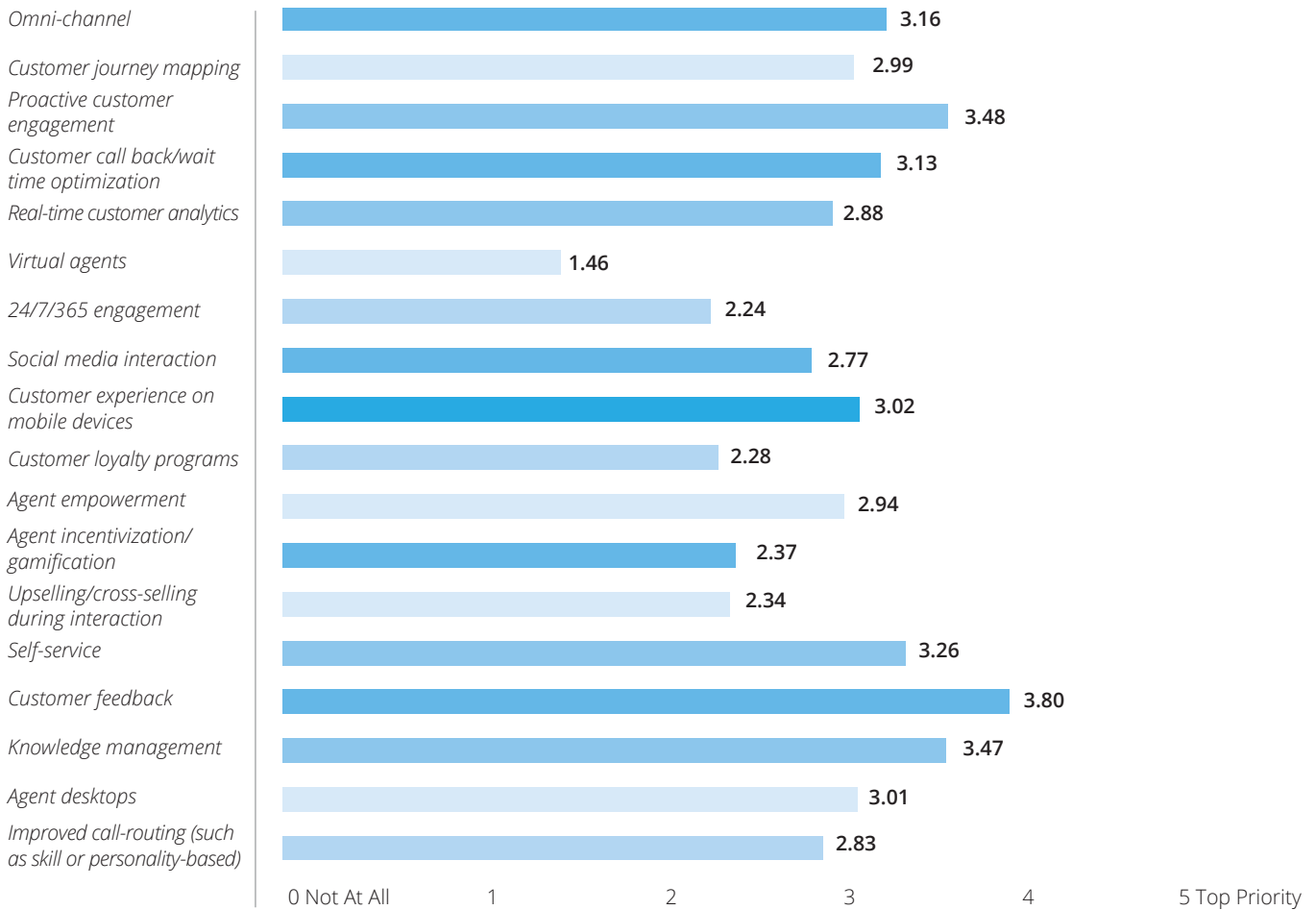
By granting agents better access to information, improved knowledge management also contributes to that consistency. More importantly, it drives accuracy, and no element of the customer engagement interaction is more important.

Every initiative listed in the survey will be enacted by some organizations, but several are off the radars for the majority.

Examples include virtual agents (1.46), 24/7/365 engagement (2.24), customer loyalty programs (2.28), up-selling/cross-selling (2.34), and agent incentivization and gamification (2.37). In addition to receiving low average ratings, the initiatives were deemed "not at all important" by at least 16% of respondents (agent incentivization) and as many as 31% (virtual agents).

In treating proactive care, self-service and omni-channel as comparative priorities, businesses have confirmed their interest in providing an enhanced, more valuable

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To what extent is your business committed to improving the following?

Initiative	Rating
Omni-channel	3.16
Customer journey mapping	2.99
Proactive customer engagement	3.48
Customer call back/wait time optimization	3.13
Real-time customer analytics	2.88
Virtual agents	1.46
24/7/365 engagement	2.24
Social media interaction	2.77
Customer experience on mobile devices	3.02
Customer loyalty programs	2.28
Agent empowerment	2.94
Agent incentivization/gamification	2.37
Upselling/cross-selling during interaction	2.34
Self-service	3.26
Customer feedback	3.80
Knowledge management	3.47
Agent desktops	3.01
Improved call-routing (such as skill or personality-based)	2.83

0 Not At All — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 Top Priority

experience for customers. That effort to enhance evidently has limits, however, as initiatives like virtual agents and 24/7/365 care are not widespread priorities.

Customer retention represents a conceptual objective for businesses, but they evidently do not see customer loyalty programs as particularly valuable, let alone essential, means of driving that retention.

Up-selling and cross-selling have historically been positioned as ways for a contact center to create positive business value (and escape the cost center stigma), but it is clear today's organizations – with a firmer sense of appreciation for the value of satisfaction and loyalty – believe interactions do not need to drive

additional sales revenue to create value.

The comparative disinterest in introducing agent incentivization and gamification seems unintuitive in a world that recognizes the link between happy agents and happy customers, but the rating scenario could mirror that of customer loyalty programs. It is not that businesses do not value agent satisfaction; they simply do not believe gamification or specific incentive programs are the most productive way of driving that satisfaction.

It may also be a statement of budgetary pragmatism. Wanting to improve agent happiness does not cause extra money to suddenly grow on trees.

Beyond revealing the initiatives that rank as comparatively high and low priorities, the survey data also provides another compelling finding: businesses believe

the full spectrum of initiatives could benefit from improvement.

Respondents were given the chance to note that a specific initiative was "already perfect" within their organization. Nearly none provided such an answer.

Agent incentivization and gamification, the initiative most commonly identified as "perfect," earned that label from only 5%. The majority of initiatives were declared perfect by fewer than 2% of respondents.

The conclusion is simple: today's businesses recognize the need for customer experience improvement. They have no delusions or fantasies about the status quo: it is imperfect, and forward-looking business strategy must be predicated on changing that reality.

How does your organization currently feel about retention and acquisition?

Customer Retention — **4.07**
Customer Acquisition — **3.90**

0 Not At All 1 2 3 4 5 Top Priority
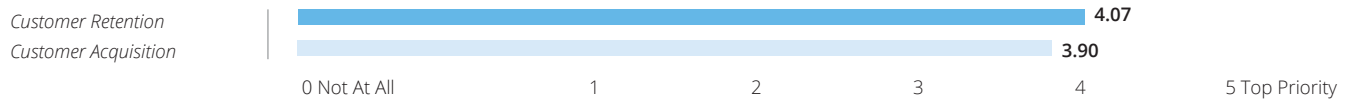
Rate the effort your organization is currently devoting to retention and acqusition

Customer Retention — **3.51**
Customer Acquisition — **3.50**

0 Not At All 1 2 3 4 5 Top Priority

Rate your plans to improve retention and acquisition

Customer Retention — **3.65**
Customer Acquisition — **3.67**

0 Not At All 1 2 3 4 5 Top Priority

Customer Retention and Acquisition

In explaining the comparatively low value ascribed to "customer loyalty programs," the previous section argued that the disinterest concerned the programs themselves rather than the fundamental notions of customer loyalty and retention.

Survey data supports that assertion.

Customer retention already represents an important business focus, and businesses are very committed to achieving improvement over the next year.

Asked to rate the importance of retention on a scale of 0-5, respondents provided an average score of 4.07. 77% answered either 4 or 5. Collectively, the data paints a very clear picture: retention matters.

That is not to say effort to retain cannot be improved. Businesses rate existing effort at a 3.52, but their desire to improve is scored at a 3.65. 66% rate their desire to improve at a 4 or 5, with 43% calling it a top priority.

While not quite as important (3.90), customer acquisition is a near-equally rated priority in the status quo and for the future. Businesses score existing effort a 3.51 and the desire to improve at a 3.68.

Voice of the Customer

Businesses believe the best experiences are the ones that drive value for customers. They identify improving customer feedback as their most important strategic initiative.

Clearly, the voice of the customer matters to businesses. But how do they acquire that voice?

Call recordings represent the most commonly used well for voice of the customer insights. 84% of businesses use recordings to understand the voice of the customer, with 64% of businesses using it as a "key source" of such information.

Businesses are not, however, constrained in their effort to acquire the voice of the customer. Of the various answers provided in the survey, only real-time interaction analytics (55%) and buying patterns (44%) are used by fewer than 70% of organizations.

Changes in call volume (80%), comments on the web and social media (80%), general customer feedback (79%), and agent feedback (78%) trail call recordings as the next-most popular sources of voice of the customer insights, but it is not as if comparatively low-ranking sources like intra-call (72%) and post-call feedback (71%) are unpopular in absolute terms.
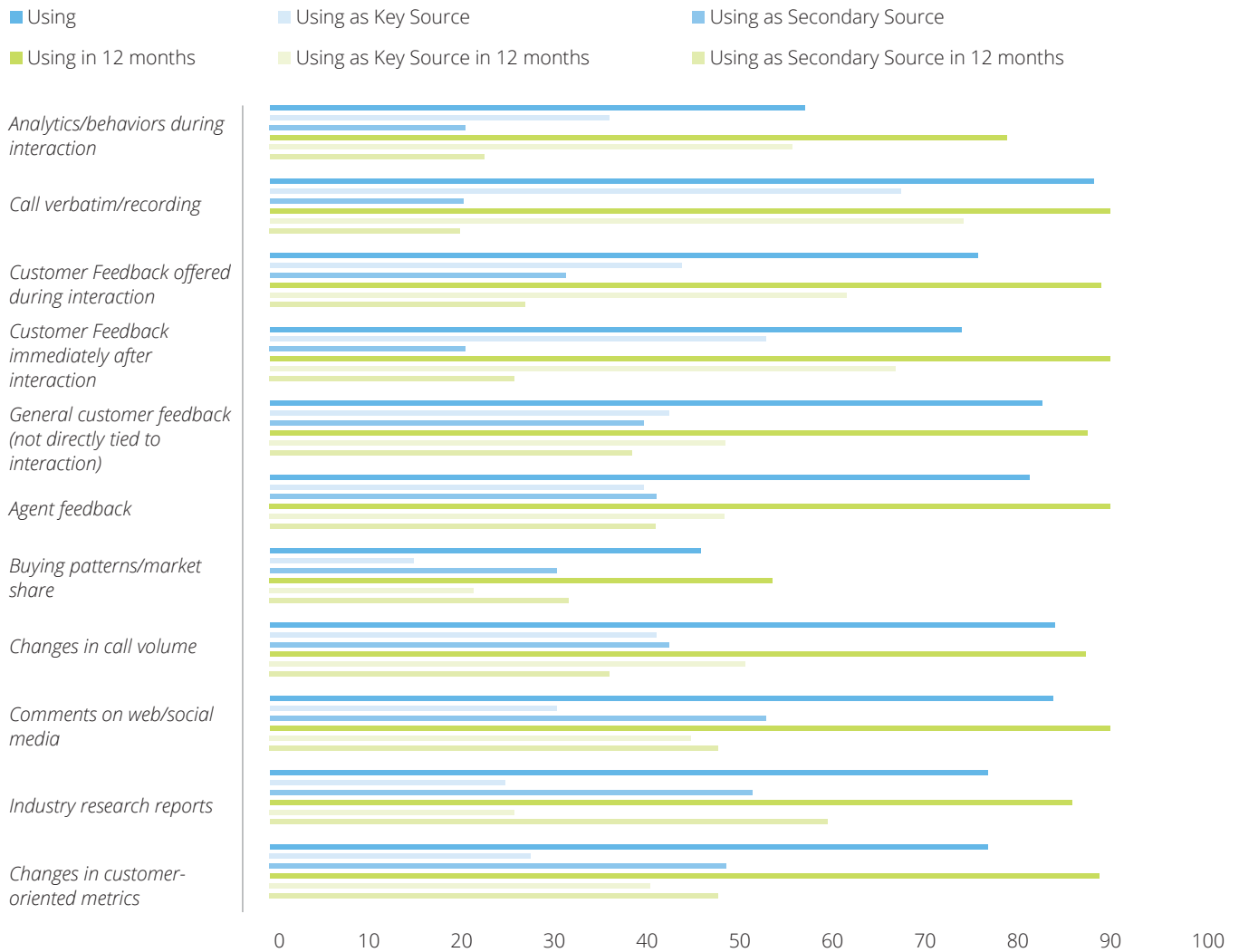
They, moreover, represent two of the most popular key data sources. 42% and 51% of businesses, respectively, use the two feedback forms as a key source of insights.

Post-call feedback, meanwhile, will become the second-most popular overall source in the next twelve months. 89% of businesses say they will be using post-call feedback to extract voice of the customer data in 12 months. The figure ties that of comments on web and social media and narrowly trails that of call recordings (90%), which will remain the centerpiece of VoC strategy moving forward.

Agent feedback (86%), intra-call customer feedback (85%) and changes in customer-oriented metrics (85%) will also be top voice of the customer data mines moving forward.

Real-time interaction analytics (75%) and changes in buying patterns (52%) will again rank near the bottom of the list, but their usage levels will markedly increase.

Do you use the following to acquire the "voice of the customer?" Will you in 12 months?

Legend:
- ■ Using
- ■ Using as Key Source
- ■ Using as Secondary Source
- ■ Using in 12 months
- ■ Using as Key Source in 12 months
- ■ Using as Secondary Source in 12 months

Categories (top to bottom):
- Analytics/behaviors during interaction
- Call verbatim/recording
- Customer Feedback offered during interaction
- Customer Feedback immediately after interaction
- General customer feedback (not directly tied to interaction)
- Agent feedback
- Buying patterns/market share
- Changes in call volume
- Comments on web/social media
- Industry research reports
- Changes in customer-oriented metrics

X-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100

Agent Engagement and Performance

The "happy agents = happy customers" claim may represent a cliché, but there is no denying the reality of the connection between agents and customers. Agents are the ones directly engaging customers, and their own levels of happiness – as well as performance competencies – will markedly impact the value of the customer experience.

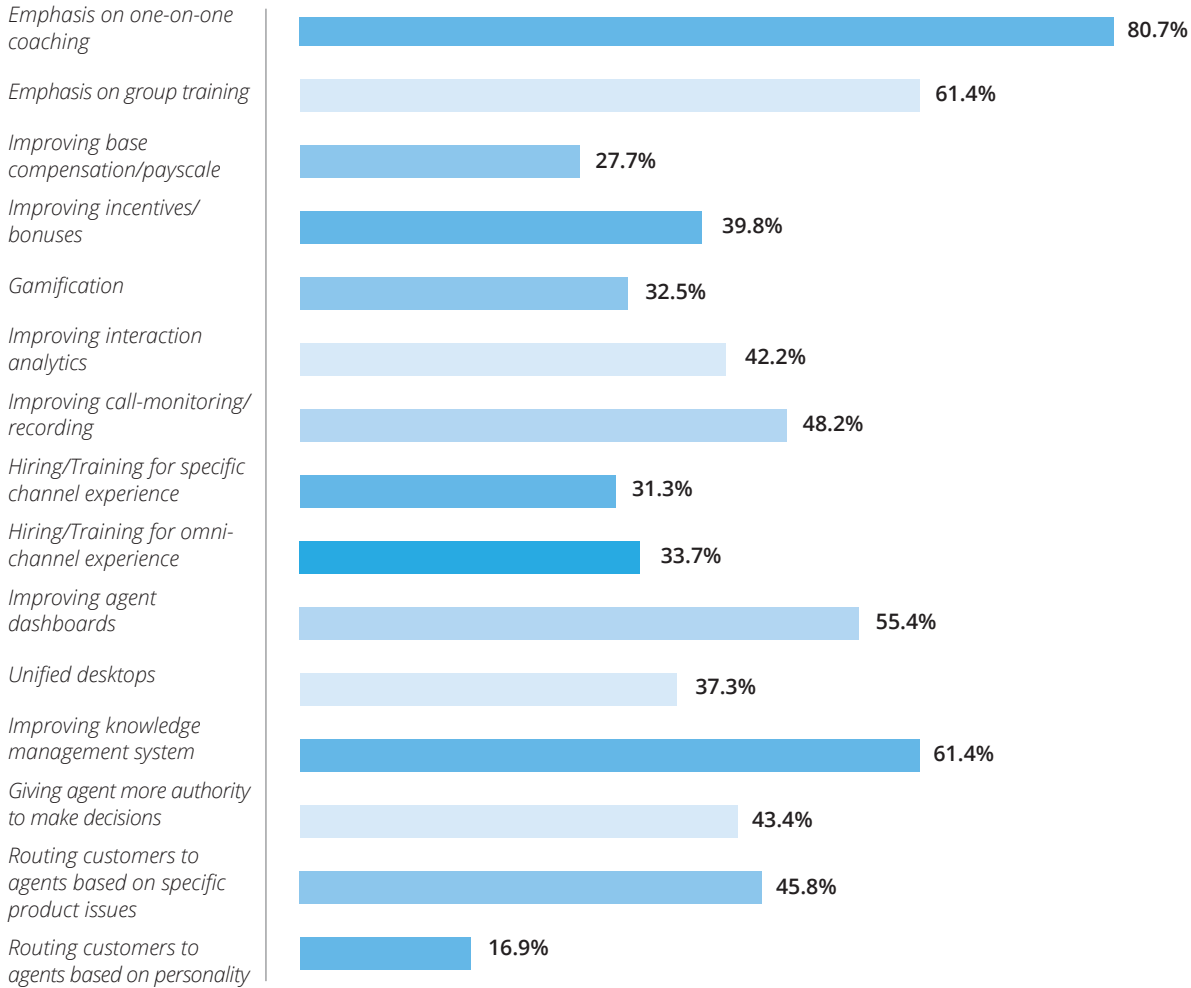Customer experience strategy, consequently, must include a focus on agent engagement and performance.

For the overwhelming majority of businesses, that strategy will include an emphasis on one-on-one coaching. 81% of businesses, in fact, say they will leverage personalized coaching to improve agent performance.

One-on-one coaching is not, however, the only form of learning on the radar. In the cards for 61% of businesses, increasing the emphasis on group coaching ties as the #2 agent engagement and performance priority.

Knowledge management is a top strategic initiative. Given the direct impact it has on agents, it also represents a popular cornerstone of agent performance strategy. Just like group coaching, improving the knowledge management system is an agent engagement priority for 61% of businesses.

Improving agent dashboards, an approach that bears some fundamental connection to improved knowledge management (as well as the omni-channel initiative), is the

What steps are you taking to improve agent engagement and performance?

Category	Percentage
Emphasis on one-on-one coaching	80.7%
Emphasis on group training	61.4%
Improving base compensation/payscale	27.7%
Improving incentives/bonuses	39.8%
Gamification	32.5%
Improving interaction analytics	42.2%
Improving call-monitoring/recording	48.2%
Hiring/Training for specific channel experience	31.3%
Hiring/Training for omni-channel experience	33.7%
Improving agent dashboards	55.4%
Unified desktops	37.3%
Improving knowledge management system	61.4%
Giving agent more authority to make decisions	43.4%
Routing customers to agents based on specific product issues	45.8%
Routing customers to agents based on personality	16.9%

fourth-most popular agent strategy. 55% will improve dashboards as a means of improving performance.

Improving call recording – the number one source of voice of the customer data – is the fifth-biggest agent engagement priority. It is a focus for 48% of businesses.

Comparatively unpopular options include personality-based routing (17%), improving base compensation and payscale (28%), hiring and training for specific channel experience (31%), and gamification (33%), and hiring and training for omni-channel experience (34%).

In largely overlooking personality-based routing and channel-specific staffing, businesses are dismissing the urgency of specialization. It may carry some additional value, but it is not a gamechanger when it comes to improving agent performance – and by extension improving the customer experience.

Businesses, interestingly, are also comparatively disinterested in developing omni-channel skillsets. On the channel front, the aversion thus goes beyond the concept of specializing. It is a wholesale rejection of the notion that channel competency is a pivotal driver of success.

Organizations would rather focus on honing broader skillsets and providing broader knowledge.

Agent incentivization and gamification represent comparatively low-ranking strategic initiatives. Improving payscale and optimizing gamification, accordingly, represents low-ranking agent initiatives. Businesses surely value the role agents play in driving the customer experience, but that value is not manifesting as an urge to increase compensation.

Practicality Guide

vht Virtual Hold Technology

Customer-Centric Efficiency

For many customer experience thought leaders, "efficiency" represents a dirty word – and an even dirtier concept.

It is a concept imposed by detached C-level executives onto contact centers and customer service teams. Those employees must then impose the concept onto customers.

It is positioned as the antithesis of customer centricity; instead of thinking about what matters to the customer, it involves thinking exclusively about the internal operation. Is the contact center exerting as little effort and spending as little money as possible?

Customer management advisors scoff at the notion of antiquated efficiency metrics like average handle time. Customer-centric organizations, they explain, are guided by customer-oriented metrics like CSAT score and Net Promoter Score.

Efficiency is not, however, a fundamentally problematic notion. It is not inherently oppositional to the concept of customer centricity. It is not a rejection of "customer-oriented" performance metrics in favor of operational ones.

It is, in fact, a necessary ingredient of a successful customer experience.

Customers are indeed seeking courteous, personalized, wholly resolute experiences, but they still expect – and, in fact, demand – those experiences to come quickly, pointedly, and with minimal effort. Customers certainly appreciate a "strategic call" in which the agent tailors his service to the customer's unique issue and unique personality, but they are absolutely not seeking lengthy calls.

A business that understands and appreciates its customers, in fact, understands and appreciates the cost of

their time and effort. It recognizes that an efficient experience is not simply a win for the business – it is a necessity for the customer.

Efficiency metrics do not exclusively clash with customer-oriented ones; they actually help to inform them. As long as they do not come at the expense of quality, quicker calls with reduced wait times will typically increase – not decrease – customer satisfaction.

With the aim of creating stronger experiences (and, yes, more successful businesses), this section addresses the notion of customer-centric efficiency. It reveals what customers expect throughout the entire engagement process, how businesses can deliver those elements, and the benefits that emerge when they do.

Efficacy Meets Efficiency

Upon initiating contact with a business, customers have a set destination in mind. There is information they want to acquire. There is a resolution they want to receive. There is feedback they wish to share.

They place pivotal value on reaching that destination, and nothing can distract from that goal. The friendliest agent in the world becomes an enemy if he cannot fix the customer's problem.

An experience that brings an agent to that destination is not, however, an inherently satisfying experience. Customers care about the route travelled, and one that involves roadblocks, detours, and traffic jams is one that yields dissatisfaction.

They seek an experience that supplements efficacy with efficiency. Their satisfaction hinges on the following factors:

It is Easy: Customer experiences work for the customer; they do not impose work upon them. A customer's path to resolution should require as little effort as possible. Interfaces should be intuitive, readily accessible, and created with the customer's convenience in mind.

It Respects the Customer's Time: Time is money. Time wasted is dissatisfaction. Customer-centric organizations recognize the value of time; they similarly recognize the harm of slow agents, lengthy hold times, and unwanted transfers. To maximize satisfaction, they minimize the time burden.

It is on the Customer's Terms: Aiming to create the most comfortable, low-hassle interactions possible, they honor customer preferences related to timing and channel. Customer-centric businesses do not ask customers to make sacrifices.

It is Personal – and Personalized: A friendly, courteous experience is important. Customers also expect friendliness to be personalized. They expect the business – and its agents and systems – to always know who they are, how they have previously interacted, and what they want moving forward. It is not the customer's job to communicate this information at the start of every call; it is the business' responsibility to know – and value – its individual customers.

It is connected: When customers engage with a single business, they anticipate a singular, unified experience. Fracture points should not emerge as customers shift from agent-to-agent or channel-to-channel; the business should maintain a seamless view of the customer and his issue throughout the interaction – and throughout all future interactions.

Sources of Inefficiency, Causes of Dissatisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the driving force behind the best service experiences. Efficient experiences – ones that are consistently quick, convenient and effortless – are a prerequisite for achieving that satisfaction.

By virtue of internal limitations, many of today's businesses find themselves unable to deliver this "customer-centric efficiency." Some of the bottlenecks are psychological; businesses do not fully appreciate and embrace the factors that create optimal experiences. Others are strategic and practical; businesses may understand what customers want, but the contact center they have designed and developed is incapable of providing it.

They often succumb to the following worst practices:

They are not omni-channel: "The omni-channel world is challenging for most businesses today," explains Wes Hayden of Virtual Hold. "Organizationally, many organizations align by interaction channel and design stovepipes; their approach is not cohesive." Without that cohesion, businesses are unable to meet fundamental customer demands. They cannot optimally serve the customer on his terms; certain channels function more effectively and efficiently than others. They cannot optimally communicate across channels; customers thus find themselves needing to repeat themselves – exerting undue effort and wasting undue time – as they move throughout the experience.

They impose waiting: While virtually all organizations can agree that wait times are suboptimal, few do anything about it. They accept hold times as a given and expect customers to do the same. The aforementioned lack of connectivity, which results in customers needing to repeat information and establish or re-establish context upon finally reaching an agent compounds the harm.

They drive abandonment: A source of dissatisfaction in its own right, waiting also dovetails into another problem: abandonment. When asked to endure undue wait times or excessive transfers, customers abandon calls. A signal and driver of frustration and dissatisfaction, this abandonment also prevents the business from speaking to the customer. Those lost conversations represent lost opportunities to improve relationships and introduce upsells.

They do not empower agents: Few organizations truly entrust their agents to veer from the script and make autonomous decisions regarding resolutions, but that only represents part of the agent empowerment problem. In today's customer management environment, the problem manifests at the onset of the call. Agents have limited real-time context about the customers. Once they begin engaging with one of those customers, they have limited insight into who the customer is, what he has been doing prior to the call and what he wants from the call. The agent's ability to personalize the interaction and deliver quick outcomes is greatly bottlenecked.

Enabling the Effortless Experience

Customer-centricity is a strategic, philosophical concept. It involves uniting the business in pursuit of objectives like customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and customer advocacy. It involves thinking beyond the products created and on factors like how those products are offered and supported. It involves managing – and incentivizing – agents based on their success in attracting, delighting, and retaining customers.

It also involves establishing an operation that can drive efficient, effortless experiences. It aims to foster the quickest, most seamless, most reliable pathway from issue to resolution.

The following solutions create this customer-centric form of efficiency. They will ultimately reduce costs and improve workflow and capacity, but they do so as a byproduct of creating better experiences for customers – not because, as misguided "efficiency" opponents suggest, they sacrifice quality.

Satisfaction remains the name of the game; these solutions provide the forms of efficiency and effortlessness that drive that satisfaction.

Virtual Queuing and Callbacks: By virtue of requiring the customer to call – whether due to a malfunctioning product, a billing issue, or unclear communication – the business has already imposed a burden on the customer. Subjecting him to a lengthy call queue exacerbates that

burden. While completely eliminating wait times may be impossible for an organization constrained by practical resource limitations, creating a more customer-centric hold process is absolutely possible. Through virtual queuing, the center can hold the customer's place in line and then call him back when an agent – preferably one already matched to the specifics of his profile and issue – becomes available. Callback technology can also be used to return the customer's call at a time and channel of his choosing.

Bridging Self And Assisted Service: "We don't think that every call has to have a human interaction," explains Wes Hayden of Virtual Hold, "but when you have a self-service issue that doesn't resolve the issue, you have to make a human available." Customer-centric callback technology does not exclusively serve telephony/agent-assisted customers; it also aids customers who began their interaction in a self-service environment but decide they need or want to switch to an assisted one. Rather than penalizing customers who reach a dead-end or run out of time while engaging with a self-service platform, the organization captures the customer's effort and information – and then enables them to either immediately transfer to the telephone channel or request a convenient callback from a specialized, qualified agent. In either case, the agent will be able to pick up where the customer left off.

Improved Agent Visibility: The interaction process need not begin as a mystery. Unified desktops and improved knowledge management solutions can ensure agents have the information they need the second they commence their interaction with the customer; instead of wasting time gathering information, they can focus exclusively on solving problems. Agent visibility should also extend to the queue; they should know who is waiting, how long they have been waiting, why they are waiting, and which agent and/or group of agents is best suited to answer the call and manage the issue.

Customer Outcome Management: Easy, effective and efficient experiences require context. To establish that context, businesses must have the ability to know in the moment who a customer is, what they are trying to accomplish and what interactions have already taken place. This captured activity that can span time and touchpoints enables businesses to understand intent and proactively trigger the next, personalized action so customers quickly gain the resolutions and outcomes they seek.

Good for the Customer and Business

Sequence matters greatly when it comes to the customer experience.

The thirst for profit – particularly when quenched through cost reduction – is problematic when sought at the expense of customer satisfaction. That type of profit-seeking is what has made "efficiency" a dirty word within customer management circles.

An organization that prioritizes customer satisfaction will, however, need to streamline its operations in order to achieve its objectives. By doing so, it will reduce operational costs and, ultimately, increase profit.

The business still gets the profit that it really wants, but it does so as a byproduct of satisfying customers rather than as a substitute for that satisfaction. It has not simply created efficiency; it has created customer-centric efficiency.

Technology that fosters virtual queuing, omni-channel callbacks, agent empowerment, and customer outcome management yields this ideal form of centricity and the accompanying rewards.

VHT Callback, values customers' time by eliminating hold time for while enabling the business to manage the peaks and valleys of call volume. It produces marked reductions in average speed of answer, abandon rate, repeat rate, talk time, average handle time, and service levels.

Those who choose to receive a callback are not required to wait on hold, and those who opt to stay in the queue face lesser wait times. Both sets of customers receive the experience they want when they want it, which results in increased CSAT and NPS as well as holistic improvements to the brand and bottom line.

VHT Conversation Bridge, enables customers who start on the web or mobile channel the ability to request a callback providing connectivity between self- and assisted-service channels. Customers are not wasting time or effort repeating information they have already provided, and agents can quickly assist callers. Agents handle interactions more efficiently, while customers gain more satisfaction.

VHT Agent Assist, gives agents currently engaged with callers the ability to offer and set up callbacks for follow up calls and transfers. Agents have visibility into queues and can communicate estimated wait times and offer callers the option of a callback rather than blindly transferring them, where they will have to wait for a second agent. Alternatively, they can offer to continue engagement with customers who require follow ups by proactively offering to set up a callback. Agents' ability to assist with follows ups and transfers renders contact center employees more empowered and productive. Granting agents a real-time window into current wait times for queues improves the transfer experience and optimizes call routing and provides context for the next agent, resulting in continuity of service for the customer. Agents perform better, and customers are less inclined to abandon calls due to waiting, experience disconnects on transfers or routing to the wrong agent group.

VHT Navigator, contributes to an easy, effortless experience across channels. By capturing – and making sense of – a customer's history of interactions and behaviors with the business, Navigator dynamically identifies opportunities for the next right action regarding the service to provide each customer. Customers are in the driver's seat, deciding when and where to interact, with the business navigating customers towards the outcomes they seek.

Here are some recent examples of how VHT solutions have driven customer-centric efficiency:

QSuper, an Australian financial firm

Challenge: Difficulty anticipating and staffing for call volume led to undesirable hold times. Those high hold times resulted in an abandon rate that exceeded what is recommended for customer satisfaction.

Solution: Through Conversation Bridge, QSuper was able to offer callbacks to customers regardless of the channel in which they initiated contact. 28% of customers opt for the callback.

These customers benefit from an experience on their terms. Average speed of answer has fallen by 38%, while abandon rate is down to just 3.4%.

FirstEnergy, a utilities company

Challenge: FirstEnergy faced difficulty decreasing queue time, especially during peak periods. Increasing customer satisfaction was the primary goal.

Solution: Thanks to its strategic use of VHT Callback, FirstEnergy managed to improve customer service, while lowering operational costs and elevating agent morale in its contact centers.

On average, just over 50% of FirstEnergy callers who were offered the option, would rather be called back than wait on hold.

Cutting down on customer complaints also helped to reduce call handle times, which when combined with lower costs, makes for a highly effective solution.

Soon after implementing Callback, FirstEnergy followed up with customers to gauge their opinion of the improved customer service option. Here is what they found:

· 75% of customers who used it had a more favorable opinion of FirstEnergy because of Callback.
· The median wait time VHT Callback users found "unacceptable" was 20 minutes, compared to just 10 minutes for those staying on hold.

Global technology company

Challenge: Due to the technical nature of customer support requests, the process was cumbersome. Agents needed to authenticate callers, verify warrantees, and go through initial troubleshooting before deeply diving into the matter. The lengthy interactions were themselves unsatisfying; they also resulted in lengthy hold times since agents could not quickly move from call to call.

Solution: Through VHT Callback, the organization was able to integrate the support process into its electronic devices. A button on the controller would request a callback and instantly send account information, serial numbers, and warranty information to the support team. The agent tasked with calling the customer back, therefore, would have all the information he needed to begin productively solving the problem.

The shorter verification reduced call times by 2-3 minutes. It also reduced the need for outsourced staff by 8% and drove measurable increases in first call resolution and customer satisfaction.

Those increases, in turn, have led to reductions in customer churn and increases in opportunities for cross-sells as well as up-sells.

POWER OBJECTS
An *HCL* Company

Bridging Customer Experience Gaps

"Customer care has been living in a fragmented world."

Delivered by PowerObjects' Greg Moser, the statement speaks to the heart of the customer experience challenge. Today's consumers are seeking unified, consistent, omni-channel journeys, but today's businesses are often too fractured to comply.

The issue exists on both sides of the phone – or chat window, mobile device, or Twitter conversation.

The interface customers encounter when they initiate contact is a broken one.

Their profiles, histories, and sentiments are not consistently recognized by every agent or system across every interaction. They cannot seamlessly move between agents and/or channels during a single interaction. They may technically be contacting a single business, but they are forced to endure a multitude of disjointed "experiences."

The backend experience is also crippled by siloes. Agents do not receive consistent – and instant – access to the information they need. Different systems and databases, let alone different corporate departments, cannot or do not actively and productively communicate.

They, consequently, have no prayer of delivering the unified, value-driven journey desired by customers. They also have no prayer of becoming truly immersed in the company culture.

Businesses aiming to meaningfully improve the customer experience must tear down these walls. They must eliminate these fracture points. They must bridge these gaps.

With the right tools and mindset, doing so is not a particularly burdensome task. It does, meanwhile, provide particularly valuable rewards.

What Customers Want

Uttered so often by thought leaders, the notion of a "unified customer experience" may register as hollow rhetoric.

To begin paving the road to improvement, it is important to understand what that abstract notion truly entails. What do we mean when we say customers want a unified experience?

Speed: While "efficiency metrics" like average handle time and average speed of answer are falling out of favor, the notion of efficiency is as important as ever. Time is money, and today's customers object to the cost of undue delays or complications when pursuing support.

High Quality Interactions: Speed is a valuable part of the customer experience, but it cannot compensate for the other components, specifically, cannot come at the expense of service quality. Great customer experiences must also be reliably accurate, personalized, and resolute.

Channel of Choice: "Being where your customers are" is a requirement of the modern customer experience landscape. It is not the only requirement when it comes to channel preference. Businesses must be wholly effective where the customer is – a customer cannot be asked to trade between channel preference and service quality. They must also be seamlessly accommodating of where the customer wants to go – as he moves to a new channel, the data and performance mechanics needed to provide a satisfying experience should already be waiting at the next destination.

An Integrated Journey: Integration is not a concept exclusive to channel strategy; it applies to the totality of the customer experience. Every element of the experience – those within the same channels and business units and those within different ones – should align with the overall customer experience journey. At every turn, the business, systems, and agents must be mindful of what the customer wants to achieve and how to most efficiently, effectively and cohesively provide that demand.

Proactive: In accordance with the journey concept, elite customer experiences proactively anticipate – and meet – customer needs. They anticipate potential problems and propose potential solutions before the customer endured any harm or devoted any effort to support.

Costly Gaps

While they speak to different aspects of the customer relationship, the aforementioned five tenets share a common requirement: an organization aiming to meet those customer demands must foster complete integration inside and outside the contact center. It must center its people, processes, and technologies on one unified customer experience mission.

Customer experience fragments, therefore, undermine the experience. Not simply signs of operational inefficiency, these gaps directly inhibit the business' ability to meet the demands of the contemporary customer.

"Very few organizations we interact with have the right information in the right centralized agent desktop to provide that superior level of service," articulates Moser. "We are still seeing customer care organizations living in a highly fragmented world, which impacts how they can interact with their customers. "

In his work on the solution provider front, Moser finds that only 33% of businesses he visits possess proper integration.

That means two-thirds of businesses possess gaps in their customer experience operation. Those gaps present numerous costs.

Suboptimal Experiences: When customer and/or internal knowledge is fragmented, the business is fundamentally unable to meet the tenets of an ideal customer experience. Agents and systems endure delays gathering the necessary information, which impacts speed. Agents and systems lack consistent access to the most accurate and useful intelligence, which in turn reduces interaction quality. Siloed contact channels can neither provide unified, consistent service nor accommodate seamless movement to new touch points. Limitations on information prevent the business from optimizing the customer journey. They also prevent the business from proactively anticipating – and remedying – issues.

Increased Operational Costs: While different organizations ascribe different value to customer centricity, all accept the importance of the almighty dollar. Disintegrated customer experiences are more costly. When interactions are slower and less resolute, the cost per call increases. The existing support team's ability to handle demand decreases.

On a longer-term basis, these problematic, unsatisfactory experiences heighten the risk of customer churn. Reduced revenue and profit are the consequences.

Agent Attrition: When operational gaps emerge, customers are not the only ones who leave for greener pastures. Agent churn also emerges.

Customer engagement is a fundamentally demanding and challenging job, but it becomes particularly – and unappealingly – stressful and problematic when agents are inherently unable to perform. When they do not have the necessary information about customers or about the organization, they cannot provide efficient and effective service. They are simultaneously forced to deal with unpleasant interactions and unimpressive performance numbers. They become unhappy. Management becomes unhappy. The relationships fail.

As these customers leave, the organization is burdened with the cost of new recruiting, new training, and new onboarding. None of that investment is as productive, let alone customer-friendly, as cultivating a team of wholly engaged agents who know the business, know the customers, and know how to foster the best relationship between the two.

"Turnover and a highly fragment customer care environment can impact culture and agent satisfaction in a negative way, which can correlate to negative experiences for our customers," adds Moser.

Building Bridges

The gaps crippling today's customer experiences need not exist. Solutions and strategies exist for effectively and efficiently bridging those gaps – and remedying customer experience weaknesses.

The bridges directly mitigate the costs articulated in the preceding section. They directly empower businesses to deliver the idealized customer experience described in the section before that.

CRM with Global Case Management: Unifying the customer experience is not merely a change in high-level philosophy. It also means transforming the way individual interactions are managed. These individual interactions cannot be viewed as disparate; they cannot be stored in isolation. The organization's CRM must provide all departments and systems with access to all global customer cases. Each individual interaction possesses context for the overall customer journey; all people, processes, and technology must have instant access to that context. Where possible, the organizations and systems should be able to leverage this global access to automate processes.

Improved Knowledge Management: Intelligence – whether related to customer interactions, service procedures, or product knowledge – cannot be clustered into individual islands. It must be centralized so that all agents can access the information they need when they need it. Customers expect speedy, effortless service; agents cannot provide that service if collecting data is a slow, cumbersome process.

Unified Infrastructure and Processes: The customer experience is a business-wide construction. The processes and technology used to create that experience, therefore, must be unified and integrated across all business units. Feedback acquired from a customer support call should be directly accessible for the marketing team. Promises made on a sales call should be directly accessible for customer service employees.

Singular, Omni-channel Agent Desktop: Even if an organization positions specialized, dedicated agents within each channel, its desktops must provide agents with a window into all channels. Customers demand a singular journey, and the organization cannot allow seams to show as they move between touch points on that journey. A singular desktop facilitates this seamlessness.

Integrated Self-Service Tools: When implemented correctly, self-service tools represent a win-win for today's customers. They enable customers to quickly solve problems on their own terms and reduce costly call volume. The correct implementation involves a combination of user-friendly interfaces and omni-channel organization. Each self-service channel should have access to relevant insight about the customer and his particular issue. It should also be able to seamlessly pass the customer – and all relevant information – to live agent channels upon request.

Predictive Analytics: The customer experience is not simply about optimally responding to customer inquiries. It also involves proactively engaging customers, remedying potential concerns, and uncovering new sources of value. Through predictive analytics solutions, an organization can stay ahead of the customer – and ensure it is perpetually able to provide the most fruitful journey.

Impact of Integration

"Integration" is not a buzzword. It is a prerequisite for customer experience elements like speed, contact quality and omni-channel accessibility.

It is also a pathway to meaningful – and quantifiable – business rewards.

Increases in Performance Visibility: Before assessing the impact on performance itself, it is important to note the valuable role integration plays in accurately measuring that performance. By centralizing data and providing global, consistent, seamless visibility into all processes and customer interactions, the organization has a markedly better sense of how it is performing. The voice of the customer can be more vividly tracked and assessed. The business will know whether resolution truly occurred on the first contact. It will be able to determine whether agents are truly operating more productively.

Increases in First Contact Resolution: When agents or systems have access to the necessary information, they are better equipped to provide satisfactory outcomes. More issues are resolved on the first contact, which is valuable for the operation and for customers.

Increases in Customer Satisfaction: When the contact center operation is integrated, customers enjoy a smoother front-end interface free of disruptions and delays. They also benefit from more valuable interactions with agents, who have the information needed to provide more accurate, more responsive, more personalized, more resolute care. Add in the fact that customers have more autonomy regarding channel – including self-service options – and you have markedly more satisfied customers.

Increases in Agent Efficiency: Modern thought leaders may advise against using metrics like average handle time to quantify the success of the customer experience, but none can downplay their relevance from an operational standpoint. They, when used in conjunction with a customer centric mindset and customer-oriented metrics, speak to the efficiency of the experience as well as the availability of operational resources. When barriers to service delivery are removed, the experience becomes more efficient (without compromising quality) and agent bandwidth increases. Each agent can handle more interactions – and handle them more quickly – thus improving customer satisfaction and minimizing headcount and overall internal spend.

Increases in Agent Retention: "Empowering Agents with information and an automated and scripted decision making process, will allow for a better culture and more satisfied agents, reducing onboarding costs and increasing the customer experience," says Moser. Intuitive, less disjointed desktops minimize the need for training and the stress that comes with broken systems. Agents perform better and are happier, which creates a better scenario for agent engagement. Immersed in the organization, agents are less likely to leave and more likely to thrive in their roles.

Success in Practice

By developing – and leveraging – solutions related to Microsoft Dynamics CRM, Omni-Channel, and Agent Desktop, PowerObjects has helped businesses achieve tangible results in measures that matter.

On average, clients have seen 5-25% increases in first call resolution, 20-40% increases in CSAT and Net Promoter Score, 20-40% reductions in average handle time, and at least 5% decreases in required headcount.

The benefits carry direct ramifications for all stakeholders – customers, agents, managers, and C-level executives alike. Integration, therefore, drives undeniable improvement.

No matter the specific industry or contact center structure, solutions exist to bridge gaps and foster the aforementioned results.

Here are some recent examples of how the PowerObjects approach has yielded a more integrated, more agent-centric, more customer-centric experience:

Leading Distributor of Plumbing and Lighting Products

Challenge: The organization was relying on an antiquated ERP system, which inhibited agents' ability to view a detailed customer profile. Calls were slow, unproductive, and impersonal.

Solution: PowerObjects created a logical, unified interface for agents. Customer information was integrated into a CRM system. A CTI agent application "listened" for customer calls on the telephony system, which would then search the CRM for details on the calling customer and provide agents access to those details in a custom web interface.
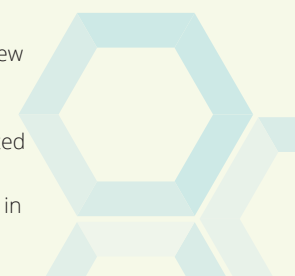
Health Care Payer

Challenge: Epitomizing the concept of disintegration, the organization relied on 24 customer applications and 16 mainframe screens to serve its 550,000 members. Processes could not be repeated, let alone automated, performance could not be properly tracked, and onboarding and training were difficult.

Solution: PowerObjects used Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Agent Desktop to create a unified environment for the contact center. Agents gained access to all relevant customer information, processes like member search and call segmentation were automated, and KPIs were more effectively defined and reported.

International Home and Automotive Insurance Company

Challenge: Reliant on an outdated interface, agents could not efficiently access customer contact or plan details. Interactions were consequently slow and unsatisfying.

Solution: PowerObjects constructed customized "caller validation" screens. Through a single click, this validation process compared caller provided information to that stored within the unified CRM. The first phase focused on policy information; an update provided a 360-degree view of validated customers, providing agents with all the information they needed to provide quick and successful service.

inmoment
EVERY EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Unlocking the Value of the Customer Experience

The customer journey concept and the customer lifetime value concept are undeniably connected.

Lifetime value is an assessment of an individual customer's ultimate worth to a business. Instead of making a valuation based on specific transactions, it encourages businesses to measure customers based on their totality of what they are spending now, what they have spent in the past, and what they will potentially spend in the future.

The customer journey concept similarly argues that customer experiences cannot be defined by individual interactions; each interaction is instead part of a broader, potentially perpetual relationship between brand and customer.

Journey-oriented customer experiences, however, require businesses to go one step further.

The business cannot exclusively focus on assessing the value the customer will bring throughout the lifecycle of the relationship. It must also ensure it is providing the customer with corresponding value at each and every moment of the journey.

Customer lifetime value helps a business understand a customer's worth. The journey-oriented experience compels a business to develop an experience mindful of that worth.

Constructing a great customer experience journey thus involves determining the value of a customer to the business, determining what that customer values when interacting with the business, and creating an unbreakable, perpetual alignment between the two.

Value: What It Means To Businesses

Journey-oriented experiences are guided by customer lifetime value. They are guided by an emphasis not on individual interactions but on the worth that will be generated through an optimized relationship with a customer.

For businesses that provide subscription services, such as cable and wireless providers, the lifetime value calculation is straightforward. Since they already know how much the customer will pay per term (and approximately how much profit each payment will generate), such businesses need only multiply the predetermined term value by the number of terms they anticipate retaining the customer.

The subscription model perfectly illustrates the importance of a customer lifetime value assessment.

Suppose a wireless customer paid $100 per month for his services, and there was no inherent reason why he would sever ties within the next five years. That customer would therefore represent the promise of at least $6,000 in revenue.

Losing his business would, in effect, cost the company up to $6,000 in revenue (and a great deal of final profit, which is the preferred lifetime value benchmark in many organizations).

When viewed through that lens, behaviors like providing discourteous service, instituting bait-and-switch promotions, and refusing to compromise on minor transactional disputes – all of which could result in the customer departing for a competitor prior to the anticipated exit date – are exposed as particularly costly.

On the other hand, behaviors like providing proactive support and offering customer loyalty promotions – which improve the likelihood of retaining the customer for the duration of the anticipated lifecycle, if not longer – become exponentially more valuable.

The lifetime value approach reveals that exceptional service is not merely a "feel good" endeavor. It can be a direct pathway to considerable long-term value.

While the value calculation is more difficult for organizations that primarily offer non-recurring products, the principle is simple.

If anything, the lifetime value concept becomes even more important, because the customer's future purchasing is not even remotely guaranteed. In order to realize the full potential of the customer's value, the business must work to earn the customer's future business during every transaction and in every support interaction. It must operate with an eye on a longer-term prize.

If someone purchases a pair of sneakers at your department store, did your experience make him want to return to buy his next pair of sneakers? Will he consider your business when shopping for dress shoes? What about socks?

In today's world, a customer's lifetime value principle arguably extends even beyond his own purchases. If a customer advocates for your business within his circle of friends – let alone on social media – has he not provided even more value? Alternatively, if he condemns your business in a public forum, has he not resulted in an even greater cost than his own lost business?

The customer relationship is a valuable – and potentially extremely valuable – asset. That value should serve as a reminder that the customer experience matters.

It should also serve as an impetus to ensure every facet of the experience is providing requisite value to the customer.

Value: What It Means To Customers

In Call Center IQ's annual customer experience survey, respondents nearly universally defined a good customer experience as one that provides value for the customer.

What does a customer value?

Quite simply, **he values being valued.**

Advised that today's era is one of consumer centricity, the customer is conditioned to believe he represents more than a number. He is more than a random customer calling about an isolated product; he is someone the business identifies, knows, and wants to consistently and perpetually delight.

The customer, moreover, expects the business to recognize his worth transcends his most recent purchase – or the specific product about which he is calling.

"Customers have become more sophisticated and know that companies have big databases about who they are and how much they spend," explains Eli Fillmore of InMoment. "They expect them to know their lifetime value. When they call or e-mail about a $50 issue, they expect the business to know that it is not simply $50 on the line – it is their history of payments and future spend."

How can a business communicate its customer-centricity? How does a customer know he is being valued?

Recognition: Certain industries and transactions warrant a greater degree of personalization than others, but all require the business to demonstrate recognition of the customer. At no moment – and at no touch point – should doubt emerge about who the customer is, how the customer has previously engaged with the business, and what the customer wants moving forward.

Appreciation: Customers expect the business to know they carry a lifetime value beyond an individual transaction. They expect the business to prove said knowledge through an unmistakable degree of appreciation. The business should consistently demonstrate that it wants to retain the customer's business. It should do everything in its power to say "yes" during customer interactions.

Trust: Customers are not naïve. Aware that support occurs within the confines of business realities, customers acknowledge that not everything will go their way. They should, however, be able to trust that the business is making every possible effort to act in their best interest. They should never feel as if

a "no" was given out of expediency or short-term financial motivation. They should never feel as if an up-sell or offer is designed to trick the customer rather than to sincerely improve his experience. A customer who cannot trust a business with his time, effort, and money knows he is not being valued by that business.

Accuracy: Businesses that value their customers ensure their communications are accurate. Recognizing the need to earn trust, they would never dare risk misdirecting a customer. Recognizing the significance of lifetime value, they take the time to get it right.

Consistency: A journey-minded business – one that recognizes the value of its overall relationship with a customer – ensures consistency throughout the lifecycle. No matter the channel, agent, or issue, the business operates in accordance of its brand promise and with cognizance of the customer it is serving.

Creating a Valuable Customer Experience

Customers are valuable to businesses, and they expect businesses to demonstrate that value through customer experience practices. They expect consistent, accurate, personalized engagement from a trustworthy, appreciative, customer-centric business.

If they do not receive that value, they may reduce their level of spend, sever ties altogether, and/or condemn the business among friends and social media followers. All such activities reduce the lifetime value they bring to the business.

The conclusion is simple. In order to maximize a customer's lifetime value, the business must provide value throughout the customer journey. It can do so through a combination of corporate philosophies, best practices, strategic initiatives, and solutions.

Customer-Centric Leadership: Escaping the short-sighted, transactional approach to the customer experience requires a commitment from leadership. Those responsible for setting budgets and measuring the success of customer experience initiatives absolutely must accept the lifetime value concept. They must recognize that a call with a short-term price tag of $50 actually carries the potential to make hundreds, if not thousands of dollars in long-term impact.

Customer-Centric Culture: While it is imperative for leaders to embrace the value-oriented approach to the customer experience, leadership buy-in alone is insufficient. That buy-in must spur a customer-centric culture in which every facet of the business is committed to

creating valuable experiences. Customer-centricity is not something a business merely declares; it refers to the way the business must operate.

Clarity of Purpose: Agents are employees reliant on their paychecks; they are going to operate in accordance with the instruction they receive from management. There consequently can be no mixed messages about an agent's role when engaging with customers: it is to ensure the realization of a customer's lifetime value by providing an experience of corresponding value.

"Teach employees the 'why and 'how' instead of black and white instructions," explains Fillmore.

Agent Empowerment: If enforcing a policy would be undesirably costly from a lifetime value standpoint, the agent should not at all feel encouraged, let alone compelled, to enforce that policy. Clear on the organization's customer-centric, value-oriented approach to the experience, agents should be permitted – and entrusted – to act in the spirit of that approach when interacting with customers. A business cannot craft a perfectly customer-centric experience from the confines of the boardroom; it requires front-line agents to tailor experiences to real-world, ever-changing context.

"Let the employee become an extension of the business instead of a linebacker for the brand," advises Fillmore.

Relevance of Information: Systems – those that empower agents to perform and those that provide information and

support to customers – must be designed to consistently provide relevant, valuable information. Inaccurate, impersonal, ineffective information produces hassle on both sides of the interaction. That hassle devalues the experience.

Improved Voice of The Customer Platform: It is the great irony of customer management: businesses declare their commitment to customer-centricity then construct experiences without input from customers. Such experiences are never of optimal value. In order to create the best possible experiences for customers, businesses must actually listen to the customers. Using an improved voice of the customer platform, they can better understand what customers want, whether customers believe they are getting what they want, and how they feel about the process of getting it. With that information, the business can make the adjustments needed to provide the experiences that preserve and even increase customer lifetime value.

Predictive Analytics: A fundamental tenet of the customer journey concept – and a key way of maximizing lifetime value – is respect for the future. What can the business do right now to put the customer on a more satisfying, more valuable course going forward? How can the business anticipate future interactions so that it is ready to quickly, effortlessly, and accurately provide what the customer wants when he does call? A robust predictive analytics solution enables a business to successfully answer those pivotal questions.

In Practice: The Value-Driven Customer Experience

Not simply a pleasing ideal, the value-driven customer experience is an attainable reality. Implementing the aforementioned best practices is feasible for organizations big and small. A simple mindset shift – combined with the introduction of the tools and tactics that support that mindset – can transform a customer experience from one that businesses impose into one that customers truly value.

Such a customer experience provides measurable benefit for the business, rendering any concerns about upfront costs and process shifts – and it is not as if they are particularly significant anyway – non-threatening.

InMoment has partnered with various organizations that have leveraged a blend of strategy and solution to create more rewarding experiences.

Healthcare Provider

Initiative: The organization identified customers who provided low or negative voice of the customer feedback and initiated a detailed review. It analyzed the individual scores and then called the customers back to further navigate the challenge.

Value: Customers were ecstatic that someone was not only listening to them but calling back to make things right.

Impact: The organization saw a 5% lift in customer lifetime value. Considering it was a healthcare organization in which many just default to the cheapest plan, the increase is extremely impressive.

Cable Company

Initiative: The organization mapped out and called back customers who were demonstrating signs – if not outright claiming – they planned to cancel their service.

Value: In addition to taking complaints and feedback seriously, the business was proactively identifying – and resolving – potential problems. It recognized and demonstrated its recognition of the significant value carried by each customer.

Impact: Since contented customers typically stay with cable providers for many years – if not their entire lives – the business could see increases of up to $15,000 in lifetime value.

Retailer

Initiative: The organization blended voice of the customer insights with predictive analytics to not only better understand customers – but better understand their sentiment, anticipate their future behaviors, and identify any problems.

Value: Emphasis on voice of the customer reveals the business' interest in what its customers want. The predictive element enables a business to demonstrate its commitment to the customer's best interest; it can provide value adds before they are requested and thwart problems before they make an impact.

Impact: The combination of VoC insights and predictive analytics enabled the business to identify and delight the likeliest repeat customers. It enabled the business to understand differences in how certain customer segments behave and train agents accordingly. It empowered product development to more consistently offer items customers actually wanted. Collectively, they enabled the business to develop a more effective experience while operating more efficiently.

CallMiner
Eureka

Making
Interactions Count

The emergence of the customer journey concept naturally encourages a big picture approach to the customer experience, but it also places the spotlight on individual interactions.

In a transactional approach to the customer experience, each of those interactions is viewed and managed in isolation. The agent answers the call, responds to the inquiry, and moves onto the next one.

In a journey-oriented approach, the interactions become pieces of a bigger and potentially indefinite relationship between the brand and customer. Each interaction is an opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which the business knows and values the customer. It accordingly represents an opportunity to either increase or decrease the customer's satisfaction and loyalty.

Essentially, each interaction represents a moment of truth – a pivotal, high-impact checkpoint on the customer's broader journey.

The success of the customer experience and value of the customer journey, therefore, hinges on a business' ability to make the most of individual customer experience interactions and understand how those interactions affect future interactions and the overall relationship.

Moments Matter

"Moments matter." It is a statement of fact about the customer experience journey. The big picture, relationship-minded approach to the customer experience is not justification to take a relaxed approach to individual customer experience interactions. It is a reminder that all have lasting meaning. It is a reminder that each interaction – positive or negative – affects each future interaction, as well as the overall relationship between brand and customer.

"Moments matter." It is also a statement regarding the way organizations must approach customer experience interactions.

The interaction is an opportunity for the business to demonstrate the extent to which it values the customer. Impersonal, inefficient, inaccurate interactions – ones that reflect the aforementioned relaxed approach to individual customer experience moments – are not acceptable. Moments matter, and it is the job of the business and its agents to consistently communicate that to customers regardless of the issue that prompted the interaction or the channel in which the interaction is occurring.

Interactions that recognize the importance of the individual moment possess fundamental tenets.

They yield a resolution: Customers interact with a specific purpose in mind.

They may want information. They may need assistance with a product. They may seek remedy for a problem. To be successful, the interaction must yield that desired outcome (or at least an outcome relevant to the matter and of undeniable value to the customer).

They do not impose a burden: Customers indeed want their problem solved, but they do not expect, let alone want, to exert significant effort in order to achieve that resolution. Successful interactions are simple and nearly effortless for the customer. The work required to produce a resolution is the responsibility of the business and its agents, and it should primarily be done behind-the-scenes and prior to the actual interaction. It should never represent a visible disruption to the customer.

They are personalized: Not every interaction requires a lengthy, intimate conversation about the customer's hopes and dreams, but it does require demonstration that the business knows – and values – the individual to whom it is speaking. It requires a cognizance of the customer's profile, behavior, past interactions, and expectations for future value. Journey-oriented organizations do not view the customers with whom they are interacting as numbers; they see them as people.

They offer consistent quality: Consistency is commonly identified as a central customer expectation, but it is important to understand the context of the demand. In demanding consistency, customers are not literally asking for the same experience to be offered each and every time. Different issues, channels, and customers warrant different experiences; the goal is to personalize the interaction, after all. Customers do, however, expect a consistency in the quality of the interaction. Each interaction must possess the same commitments to accuracy, service level, efficiency, and accessibility. Customers may expect interactions to differ from others based on context, but they absolutely will not tolerate experiences that are fundamentally inferior to others.

They spur evolution: In addition to helping businesses develop a better understanding of their customers, interactions help businesses develop a better understanding of their own people, processes, and technologies. They provide the business with a vivid sense of which elements of the experience are working for customers and which are breeding inefficacies and inefficiencies. Using that information, the business can drive meaningful change and improvement to optimize future interactions. Customers want to see that evolution; they want to see that the business is using past interactions as launching pads to create stronger future interactions.

Know, Understand, Improve

Businesses are unified in their declaration that the customer experience matters, but their improvement efforts are often thwarted by a simple reality: they do not truly know what is happening within interactions.

"Research indicates that businesses have an inflated view of how they are performing in terms of the customer experience they are delivering," says Scott Kendrick of CallMiner. "They rate themselves much higher than consumers rate them."

It is the voice of the customer – not the insular confidence of the business – that determines the success of an interaction as well as the experience at large. If the business is operating with a comparatively more favorable view of its performance or a comparatively weaker standard for excellence, it dooms itself to underperformance.

Suppose, for instance, that the New York Knicks were trailing the Golden State Warriors by a score of 80-100 but somehow believed they were winning 105-95. They would not feel the urgency to improve their offensive performance, they would not make the most of each possession, and they would surely lose the game.

While some business leaders may possess unwarranted confidence or inherent aversion to change, they are not irrational. They certainly recognize that the voice of the customer is the relevant scoreboard, and they certainly know an experience is only successful if it optimally satisfies the customer.

Unfortunately, they have limited visibility into how they are performing – and into how customers are reacting to that performance. They are not ignoring the voice of the customer; they simply have no way of hearing it.

They do not have a robust analytics platform. In turn, they cannot understand how the overwhelming majority of interactions are flowing, let alone how agents are specifically performing and customers are specifically reacting within those interactions.

"Making significant improvements in customer experience throughout the entire journey is difficult to accomplish without interaction analytics technology because, when done manually, supervisors are only able to monitor a small fraction of each agent's interactions," explains Kendrick, who estimates that

businesses without an automated analytics platform are, in a best case scenario, only measuring 1-3% of interactions.

If the key to a successful customer experience journey is making each interaction matter – performing optimally on the interaction and leveraging insights from the interaction to craft a stronger, more personalized long-term journey – such organizations do not stand a chance!

In order to escape from that trench, overcome that challenge, and create moments that matter and journeys that satisfy, the organization must revamp its approach to analytics. Businesses should know precisely how customers are behaving and feeling – regardless of when, why, or in what channel they are interacting. They should precisely know how agent performance is contributing to those behaviors and sentiments, also without regard for the interaction forum.

An analytics platform capable of providing that level of insight requires some key components.

Automated Quality Monitoring:
Assessing interaction quality – an essential ingredient of a successful customer experience – requires a comprehensive, unbiased, cross-channel method of evaluation. Automated quality monitoring enables that optimal form of measurement. Whereas resource limitations typically prevent companies from manually reviewing more than 1-3% of calls, automated quality monitoring enables them to readily measure all interactions. Unaffected by human error or the personality traits of the quality managers, it also provides an impartial, accurate view of the experience: all interactions are measured uniformly and objectively. Automated quality monitoring extends to all channels, providing the business with a complete sense of its current experience and a complete sense of what it can do to improve.

Automated Agent Feedback and Monitoring: Much like automated quality monitoring, an automated approach to agent performance management ensures a more accurate, more useful data stream. It additionally provides agents with real-time insight into their performance and how that performance tracks against customer-centric metrics and the performance of other agents. Collectively, the benefits will yield more consistent – and more consistently great – agent performances.

Interactions will be stronger, and customers will be happier and more loyal.

Real-Time Analytics: To truly measure – and improve -- the quality and value of its interactions, a business must understand precisely what is happening within those interactions. A real-time analytics platform, which enables a business to track context, behavior, agent performance, and customer reaction during the interaction, is thus a requirement. In addition to providing valuable interaction insights, a real-time analytics solution also empowers agents and supervisors to recognize and address issues as they are happening. The result will be better interactions, a better sense of the voice of the customer, better agent performance and, ultimately, a better customer journey.

Post-Interaction Analytics: With a robust post-call analytics solution, the organization can take a deeper dive into its interactions. Specifically, it can also uncover and contextualize trends in behavior and sentiment that, while not necessarily visible within the call, can play an instrumental role in understanding and improving the overall customer journey.

360 Degree Analytics: The customer journey is not a linear sequence of interactions within a given channel; it encompasses direct and indirect interactions at all conceivable touch points.

Each of those interactions provides a valuable opportunity to learn about individual customer and groups of customers; that intelligence must then be used to inform and optimize the experience across all future interactions in all contact media. A successful analytics platform, therefore, enables a 360-degree view of the customer. It reveals what the customer is doing and thinking throughout the entire journey.

Comprehensive Customer Measurement: All customers count. All moments matter. Strategy-defining metrics like customer satisfaction scores and first contact resolution rates, therefore, should not be determined only by a limited sample of calls. It should incorporate the full spectrum of interactions across all contexts, agents, and channels, thus giving the business an undeniably precise sense of where its strengths and weaknesses lie.

Seamless Data Flow: Data should capture customer behavior and insights from across all channels. It should also flow seamlessly between those channels. No matter where the interaction is taking place, the relevant agent or system needs to have a firm sense of the voice of the customer as well as a vivid portrait of the specific customer with whom engagement is happening.

Intelligence in Practice

CallMiner produces solutions with the aforementioned capabilities, and they truly yield improvements in performance. They truly make interactions matter.

Aggregate benefits include increased first contact resolution, decreased wait times, better omni-channel consistency, improved agent coaching, training and retention, stronger cross-departmental reporting, reduced compliance risk,

greater sales revenues, and better customer experiences throughout the entire journey.

Individual case studies provide specific illustrations of the benefits.

CALL CENTER IQ

British Gas

Initiative: Improve chat by creating integration with other channels and introducing real-time analytics.

Impact: Prior to implementing automated analytics, the organization was unable to properly assess the sales conversions being generated by chat.

Automated analytics which improved the integration between chat and other channels, revealed a clear link to sales conversions. Using that information, the business could improve its process for turning leads into revenue.

Real-time analytics also provided supervisors with greater insight into how agents were performing on chats. Using that information, supervisors could correct aggregate issues and tailor training to the individual strengths and weaknesses of each agent.

Ultimately, the business became more productive, more efficient, and more profitable. The customer experience also improved, as indicated by Net Promoter Score rising by 84%.

Trade Global

Initiative: Trade Global used speech analytics to monitor 100% of agent interactions. Reliant on manual monitoring, it had previously been able to assess only 3-4 of each agent's calls per week.

Impact: The increased level of monitoring positioned agents for greater success. They had better visibility into their own performances, while their supervisors had better visibility into the areas that required training. Trade Global and its agents made the most of the created opportunities, and agent quality scores improved by 10-15%.

Automating the quality monitoring process also eliminated the need for a manual quality assurance team, allowing the company to reposition staff

Mercedes Benz, Bluegreen Vacations America, The Results Companies, Listening Methods

Initiative: Improve agent engagement by automating agent quality and performance monitoring.

Impact: The revamped approach to agent quality monitoring provided agents and the business with considerably greater visibility into performance and engagement levels.

The information enabled the businesses to optimize training and coaching, spot potential "problem" agents, and improve agent loyalty.

These more engaged, more loyal, better-trained agents delivered better experiences for customers.