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Why Call Centers are critical to Digital Experience Platforms

The phone is still key to customer service. Now customer retention and satisfaction are the forefront of the next marketing frontier. A DXP can't do its full job without a call center solution.

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A new phase of the digital marketing age is upon us, with e-mail, live chat, IVR phone solutions, and AI-driven chat bots promising to make customer support more efficient than ever before. Does that mean that the need for a staffed call center is coming to an end?

Studies demonstrate that the answer to that question is an emphatic no. While the above tools provide valuable ways to offer more support to more people, users are still calling in for help with things when they don't want to use automated systems, need multiple problems solved, or they're frustrated by available options.

Seeking support still represents a key potential tipping point in customers' sentiment towards an organization. It's essential that trained agents, augmented by AI and other smart call center technologies, are there for them.

At the same time, the customer journey is undergoing permanent change – online review sites and the pre-outreach research trend make customer satisfaction not just about stopping churn, but also a key marketing metric. Advocacy has never been a more powerful force for driving sales.

Not only that, but as more and more products move to subscription/cloud-based models, customers are no longer making single purchases, but instead making regular decisions to continue with a service. They can essentially stop buying at any time, and competitors are looking to take advantage of that with incentives, advertising, and more.

Now customer service and marketing walk hand in hand, and that means that martech needs to encompass customer service in order to truly cover the whole journey. There are major boons to be gained by being able to track and analyze end to end, and emerging call center technology allows emotion and sentiment analysis for a more complete picture. A true Digital Experience Platform then, by definition, needs call center functionality.

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> **"Disjointed experiences cost millions and lose customers. Growth comes from continued use of your product."**
>
> -Forrester[1]

The Digital Experience Platform (DXP)

Key marketing tools, such as CMS, CCM, DAM, and more are starting to reach a confluence in the market, coming together to form a new breed of platform: the Digital Experience Platform (DXP).

Orchestrating a cohesive, contextual experience across channels that meets brand standards, while delighting customers, is a massively difficult task. DXPs take these disparate solutions and integrate them together to form an even more powerful whole, capable of offering effective brand control with personalization at scale across the entire customer journey.

Customer-centric businesses are investing in DXPs to help their marketing and operations teams deliver, but there's another frontier that's becoming relevant to the DXP definition: customer service.

Customer service and marketing

While marketing departments have traditionally focused on the acquisition part of the journey, times are changing. Companies are realizing that not only is competition to acquire new sales ever-increasing, but it's also getting harder and harder to keep the customers they already have.

Competitors are devoting a lot of effort to poaching customers with advertising and incentives, and they're doing it with good reason: customer bases are proving to be quite vulnerable. Studies show that roughly 65% of consumers will switch to a competitor after just 1-2 poor experiences. That percentage increases to 88% after 1-3 poor experience[2] .

Cloud subscriptions extend the journey

The events of 2020 have hit the gas for many organizations' cloud migration strategies as they look to cover remote employees, keep onsite IT requirements down, and transition to OpEx pricing. This is a big opportunity for companies with cloud/SaaS deployment options, but also influences the customer journey.

While cloud solution sellers often benefit from "lock-in" designs like walled garden architecture and extensive storage, the fact remains that subscription customers are making continuous buying decisions rather than single ones. Outside of the bounds of a contract, they can walk away at any time. That means recurring decision points. Marketing and customer support have to work together to keep them happy enough to keep putting their money on the table.

Customer service as marketing

That said, customer service isn't just about playing defense with the customers you have. Existing customers can be some of the most powerful forces for good, or ill, in terms of new customer acquisition. Today's users do a lot of research before they even show up on your radar as prospects, and one of their most important steps is looking to see what others are saying about you.

1 Accelerating out of the crisis report © 2020 Forrester Research, Inc. 2

2 "Future of the Contact Center: A Forecast" – Brian Cantor - https://www.customercontactweekdigital.com/customer-experience/whitepapers/november-market-study-future-of-the-contact-center-a-forecast

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Expert product reviews or coverage by independent analysts are both important sources of truth for people who know the category. However, people also set a lot of stock by what people who are most like them have to say. That means your other customers. The web is making it ever easier for these people to let their voices be heard…which means good customer service has become a sort of advertising, even if the budget comes from a different department.

That means that Digital Experience Platforms that truly cover the entire customer journey have to be involved in support and service as well.

The limits of self-serve tools and content

There's no question that self-service web content, IVR tools, and chatbots are all becoming essential parts of a modern customer support deployment. The potential savings in staffing costs and caller wait times are significant.

However, the human touch of one-on-one support is still very important and often the final defense against a bad customer service experience. Here's why.

IVR/bot-driven self-service helps, a lot, but it isn't for everyone

IVR and AI-driven customer tools are becoming ever more important for a reason – they allow customers to interact with your organization on their timeline (e.g. outside business hours) and take the stress off service staff. However, they're not for everyone. A ContactBabel study[3] surveyed organizations with call centers about why their customers were asking for live support from the midst of self-service tools:
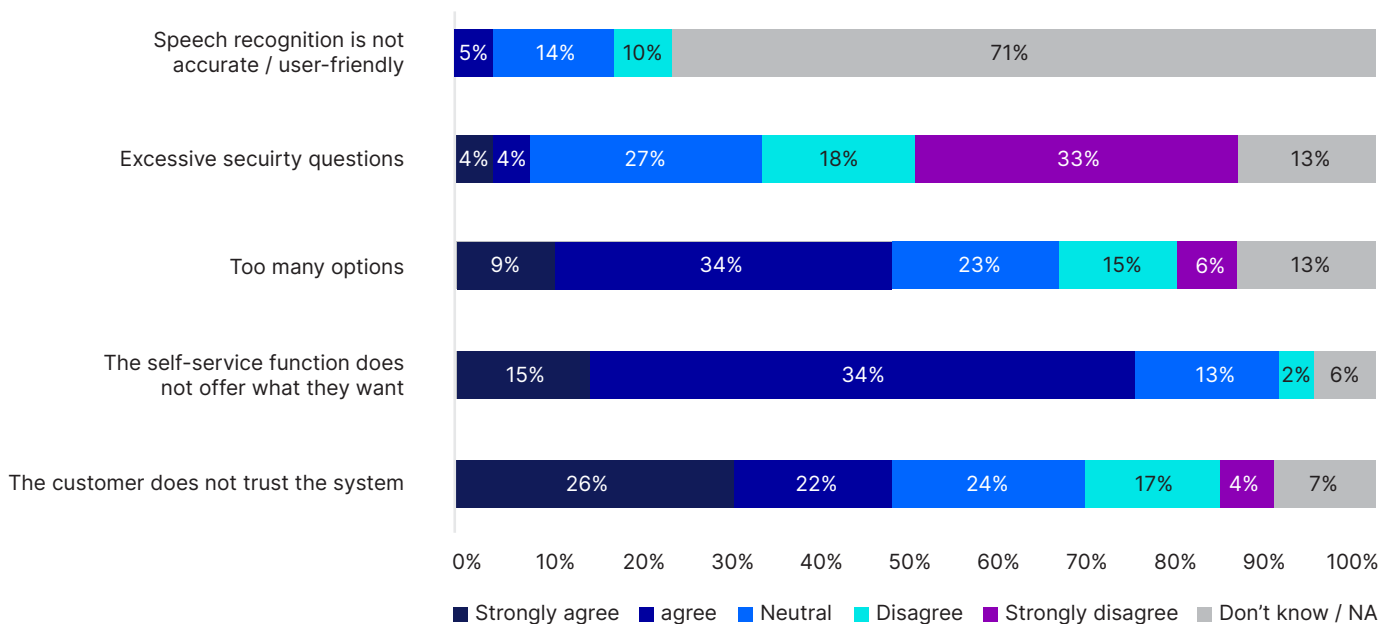

Figure 1: Reasons for abandoning self-service sessions

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Many customers won't use self-service web support

The same ContactBabel survey also discovered that a huge proportion of callers had not even attempted to use web self-service content prior to their call.
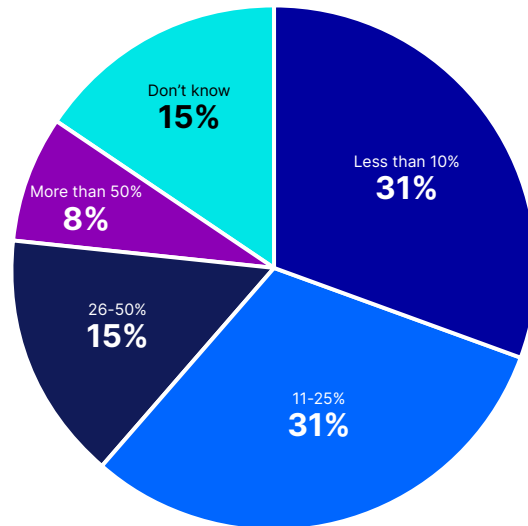

Figure 2: Proportion of self-service sessions 'zeroed-out' to an agent

Regardless of their reasons for going around self-service and automated support options, once they've done so customers are clearly looking for the active, personal help of a real human being. Frustrating them at this stage (especially if they've already tried your other options) can strike a major blow to their satisfaction with your brand. One that they're likely to complain about to others.

End to end data, and the power of emotion

A modern call center solution that integrates with your DXP offers another huge potential benefit – maintaining the flow of data throughout the entire journey. Today's customers use many communication channels and touch points, but most businesses can't understand the patterns and trends within those interactions or compile them for sharing with decision makers.

Moving beyond disparate customer interaction data to aggregating cross-channel interactions collectively provides a far more comprehensive picture of customer behaviors. The power of a cohesive vision into how your customers interact and feel throughout the journey lies in its ability to inform process improvements, training, and even new product development.

According to a McKinsey survey, businesses that report extensive use of customer analytics are:

- 112% more likely to have higher sales growth than their competition
- 115% more likely to report higher ROI figures
- 93% more likely to have higher profits than their competition
- 82% more likely to have higher sales than their competition

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So there are substantial advantages to be gained through achieving a better understanding, but how do you get there?

While it's true that without a contact center integration you're still getting data (views, open rates, click through rates, etc.) – enterprise grade call center solutions can add natural language processing of recordings, sentiment analysis beyond calls into social media, and other incredibly valuable insights. Customers haven't stopped talking, and you need to be able to hear what they're saying.

These sorts of analytics can bring you insights into an incredibly important human metric: emotion. When are customers stressed? When are they annoyed? When are they happy? If you're simply looking at where and when they click, it can be hard to discover the why they click.

The more you can understand your customers at every step of the journey, the more you can refine the journey to reduce costs, improve retention, and introduce cross-sell/upsell opportunities at exactly the right point. To maintain the chain of data from end to end, you need a modern call center solution that integrates with the rest of your DXP.

Powerful new evolution in the call center market

The modern call center – much more than a phone

While the core job of the call center agent remains the same, massive advances have been made in technology that makes those agents more efficient and effective. OpenText™ Qfiniti™ is an industry-leading call center solution that combines recording tools, AI-driven analytics, speech and sentiment analysis, compliance/privacy tools and more.

Understanding the customer with AI-driven insight

OpenText™ Explore allows organizations to deploy powerful Voice of the Customer features such as surveys; speech analytics; and AI-driven insight as well as sentiment analysis across social media, call center interactions, text communications and more. As a result, training, messaging, workflows and other key elements can be more informed and better designed.

Reaching your customers where they are

Part of providing a stronger customer experience is proactive outreach and follow ups. Customer Communications Management (CCM) takes this task, previously either time-consumingly manual or customer-annoyingly one-size-fits-all, into the modern era.

OpenText™ Exstream™ allows messages to be broadcast to your customer base formatted and transmitted to suit their preferences. Whether they prefer voice calls, email, SMS texts, or digital faxes (still key to B2B communications), Exstream will follow their preferences on a one-to-one basis as it moves down the list, while also personalizing each message based on your customer records (name, account info, registered products, etc.).

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OpenText Qfiniti Call Center

OpenText Explore

OpenText Core Experience Insights

Plot the entire customer journey to spot trends and opportunities

Data can be an incredibly powerful tool for spotting problems, opportunities, and trends. Unfortunately collecting it and making sense of it are two very different challenges. The more information you bring in, the more ground you have to cover as you hunt for insights.

OpenText™ Core Experience Insights helps you visualize the entire customer journey with segmentation, data sets, drilldown analysis and monitoring. Then take what you've learned to Exstream, TeamSite, and/or Qfiniti to use your discoveries to orchestrate and automate actions based on customer behavior.

About OpenText

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