Four Secrets to Providing Better Customer Service

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Sales and customer service employees are usually your company's most "customer-facing" roles. It is more important than ever that everyone in your company, in both the front-office and back-office, is prepared with the right tools and data to serve your customers.

Without a single, centralized repository of customer information, businesses often have to manage and search through multiple sources of data when trying to answer customer questions and resolve issues. This leads to slow response times and poor collaboration between team members.

On the other hand, when a team works out of a single system where all contact, transactional and service history data is contained within a unified customer profile, employees can quickly access the right information and efficiently meet the customer's needs.

Customer satisfaction issues can arise when businesses don't take advantage of customer service automation and fail to provide self-service options.

When your employees waste hours on manual case assignment and escalations, they have less bandwidth to solve actual cases. Customers can easily sour on your brand when they aren't able to resolve routine tasks on their own like researching technical documentation or submitting product returns.

In order to retain customers and increase their lifetime value, you need to exceed customer expectations and be responsive. Repeat customers tend to spend more over time while increasing their average order value. That's why just a 5% increase in retention rate can lead to profits growing 25%-95%, per Bain & Company.

If you want your customers to become brand ambassadors, then you should carefully consider every moment in the customer journey before, during and after a sale is made, and look for ways to optimize your customer service experiences. Here are four steps businesses can take to make that happen.

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Automate Case Management

If your customer service managers are manually assigning support cases to reps, then you are losing time in two ways. Manual case routing results in new cases sitting in the queue waiting to be reviewed, prioritized and assigned, which slows down the time to first response. Not only are customers left waiting for a response, but you are also wasting time that could be better spent elsewhere. The same slow-down repeats itself when an escalation is needed. Meanwhile, urgent situations might deteriorate if reps address cases strictly based on ticket age and ignore priority, incident type and other key factors.

You can speed up support case resolution by automating case assignment and escalation processes. Rule-based case routing will ensure that each case immediately lands in the queue of the rep who is best prepared to respond. When an escalation is required, time isn't wasted while team members negotiate over who should handle the issue. Automated escalation pathways prevent confusion, proactively delegate responsibility for complex situations and help minimize customer frustrations when replies are delayed or unhelpful.

Case assignment, management and routing should be automated across all communication channels, not just email. If you are receiving support requests through your website, social media, phone and perhaps even snail mail or fax, all support activities should be logged in a central repository, regardless of how they originate. The easier it is for support reps to create a new case and respond in the respective channels, the faster customers will have their issues resolved.

Your case management system should allow you to track support cases according to product, issue, case type, partner or customer. If you are establishing support KPIs for the first time, you should monitor customer service metrics such as case resolution times, customer satisfaction, subscription renewals, and case trends such as volume, severity and type. Ideally, your system should automate these analytics and let you know when you fall below your KPI thresholds.

"NetSuite fundamentally helps us provide better service to the people we support through intelligence that we didn't have before."

Hugh Hill, Director of Services and Development, Simon Community Scotland

Answer Frequently Asked Questions

Customers often have questions that have been asked many times before such as, "How do I submit a return?", "What is the status of my order?" or "How do I request a quote?"

Instead of reauthoring answers to these questions every time they come up, your support team can save time by documenting them in an active knowledge base library that users can directly access. When customers can use a rich, searchable knowledge center of support articles, best practices, help topics and training videos, they are able to find their own answers instead of waiting on your support team's assistance. If a customer submits a case to support that contains frequently asked questions, you can leverage standardized email templates that point to relevant articles instead of providing a unique but time-consuming response.

A well-rounded knowledge base is also an asset for your employees, not just your customers. Whether you are onboarding new hires or simply trying to standardize your business processes, you can use your support articles as a training and reinforcement tool. By teaching new customer service reps to look up answers they don't know in the knowledge base first, they'll ramp into their roles faster. This will also help standardize your support team's responses to be more consistent throughout the entire organization.

You can even create internal-facing support articles specifically to guide your employees on best practices and tips and tricks. Businesses that don't document standard operating procedures usually rely on tribal knowledge from seasoned employees and are at high risk of suffering from "brain drain" when these veterans leave the company.

Ask your employees to document their processes, and work with them to ensure that crucial knowledge isn't walking out the door on somebody's last day. Solicit input from leaders and individual contributors as you build customer-facing and employee-facing how-to guides and review them regularly to keep them up to date.

When it comes to customer service, easy access to knowledge can make the difference between making the sale and losing an opportunity.

70% of customers prefer to use a company's website to get answers to their questions rather than use phone or email, according to Social Media Today. It can be the deciding factor between a customer easily resolving an issue or posting a negative review.

Deploy a Self-Service Customer Portal

Nobody likes to be stuck on hold or waiting for a callback or email response. Both business buyers and direct consumers may not be available to call your customer service team during business hours to resolve an issue or ask a question.

If your customer support is only available on certain days at specific times, you run the risk of disappointing customers and losing prospects during the hours when you aren't available to respond. By the time you make it back into the office, your lead might have moved on to a competitor who was able to help them find what they needed more quickly.

Instead of assuming your customers' schedules align with yours and making them wait to connect with you, you can empower you customers to resolve common issues on their own whenever they want with a self-service account portal.

Customer support portals personalize and simplify customer service by giving your customers a straightforward way to view their order and case history, submit a new support inquiry, and review sales quotes. Self-service portals also allow customers to view and pay invoices or submit return authorizations without having to contact support, saving your company time and resources while enabling customers to do business with you 24/7.

> "NetSuite's platform has helped our business improve customer service, eliminate paper and waste and bring new products to market quickly. We are not only saving money but also using NetSuite to help grow our sales."

Jason Howard, CEO, Malco Energy

Measure and Report on Customer Satisfaction

It's tempting to assume that because you answered a customer's question and closed the case, they are satisfied and happy to have done business with you.

This might not be true, but if you aren't directly asking your customers how they feel, you might never find out. Instead of reacting to public reviews or social media posts, you should proactively engage customers about their experience with your brand.

Every touch point with your customers is a potential opportunity to solicit feedback. Work with your support team to decide on a cadence for sending out a Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) or Net Promoter Score (NPS) survey.

Many customer support teams close out every case and every completed sale with an optional CSAT survey, giving customers a chance to declare any unresolved issues or poor service. It also gives your customers a chance to highlight employees who were especially attentive and helpful, boosting morale.

Look for ways to motivate your employees to strive for high CSAT and NPS scores. Establish KPIs that are easily accessible in dashboards and share results in monthly reports. When reps receive outstanding feedback, recognize them for their work, then try to determine what went well and how you can extrapolate that success into a consistent, repeatable process for the rest of the team.

On the other hand, when you receive customer feedback that is less than stellar, don't sweep it under the rug as a fluke or someone just having a bad day. Take responsibility for every interaction and look for root causes of dissatisfaction. These are opportunities to make your business stronger. Track common themes in your survey responses or product reviews. When you see a pattern emerge, such as "returns are too complicated" or "my shipment arrived late", pursue a solution and then monitor operations closely until the problem is truly resolved.

Although it is tempting to blame one person for something going wrong, remember that your customers won't blame their poor service just on a single customer service rep. They will associate their negative experience with your entire brand. Because of that, it's important that your employees understand that everyone is equally responsible for customer satisfaction, from marketing and sales to accounting and warehouse. Every individual should feel responsible for delivering amazing customer experiences.

Although it can take time to implement truly effective changes, improved CSAT and NPS scores directly correlate to stronger customer lifetime value. Indeed, according to the latest research from Temkin, promoters are 4.2 times more likely to buy again, 5.6 times more likely to forgive a company after a mistake, and 7.2 times more likely to try a new offering compared with the detractors. Adobe confirmed the finding: Customer-centric businesses grew revenue 1.4 times faster and increased customer lifetime value 1.6x more than other companies.

Delivering Exceptional Customer Service With NetSuite

NetSuite CRM customer service management capabilities provide a complete view of customer information for improved satisfaction and lower service costs. NetSuite's unified cloud solution gives everyone who works with customers—sales, support, service, fulfillment—access to complete data that's updated in real time. That unified view empowers employees to better support your customers while driving upsell and cross-sell opportunities.

When customer service is part of a single cloud-based platform that connects with CRM, ERP and financials, it's easier for support teams to deliver a high-quality, high-touch experience for clients while reducing the cost of customer care.

Integrated **case management** helps accelerate issue resolution time by automating case assignment and escalation processes from multiple communication channels, including phone, fax, email and web. Track support cases according to product, issue, case type, partner or customer. Monitor customer service metrics including call resolution times, customer satisfaction, subscription renewals, call volumes and case trends.

Customers are empowered to resolve common issues on their own instead of clogging up support queues with a **self-service customer portal** that allows them to view past support cases, quotes and order history. Allow customers to view and pay invoices or submit return authorizations without having to contact support.

Develop a rich, **searchable knowledge center** of support articles, best practices, help topics and training videos to enable customers to help themselves. Organize and publish content easily and empower your customers to quickly track down the information they need. Provide users the ability to **submit online support cases** when search results don't answer their questions.

NetSuite CRM empowers customer support teams to focus on what matters—creating and retaining satisfied customers—something that is only achievable with a powerful customer service management solution built on a platform that unifies your entire business.

"We would not be where we are today without the unified CRM and ERP system that we have with NetSuite. If not for NetSuite, our business would not have scaled as it has."

Thomas Löfblad, Vice President of Global Sales and Board Member, Handheld Group