

Agent Experience: The Weak Link in the Experience Chain

Seven must-have traits of a digital agent desktop

Here are some of the things you have to endure in a typical work day as a contact center agent (compiled from the web):

“Having to be at your desk half an hour early to load up and log in to the twelve different programs needed for your working day before you go live at 8 am.”¹ (Source: Metro)

“The customer’s frustration at having had a long wait time, meaning that no matter what you say, you have no chance of success in getting this call to go well.” (Source: Metro)

“You may consider yourself even-keeled. . . But all that goes out the window when you call tech support. Then you fume. Your face turns red. You shout things into the phone that would appall your mother. It’s called tech support rage.”² (Source: The New York Times)

The results are to be expected:

“I lasted four months before chucking my headset unceremoniously down and making a diva strop exit from the building.” (Source: Metro)

“The risk of mental health problems is higher for call handlers, and job-related well-being is lower, compared to benchmark groups of employees in other occupations.”³ (Source: Health and Safety Executive)

1 Metro: <https://metro.co.uk/2015/03/03/30-things-only-people-who-have-worked-in-a-call-centre-will-understand-5082191/>

2 New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/04/technology/why-tech-support-is-purposely-unbearable.html>

3 Health and Safety Executive: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr169.pdf>

Enterprises have long been trying to move the needle in customer experience (CX) without paying as much attention to the agent experience (AX). No wonder CX has been stuck in doldrums while agent churn has remained astronomically high.

Here are some stunning AX stats to ponder:

- ▶ 84% of agents say that their desktop tools are not helpful to them in resolving customer queries ⁴ (Source: Gartner)
- ▶ Agents have to navigate an average of 8.2 applications, when they have the customer on the line, to get answers/resolve problems (Source: Gartner)
- ▶ Agents have an average of 10 hostile encounters per day with customers ⁵ (Source: Psychology Today)
- ▶ Agent churn is 30% to 45%, depending on whom you ask ⁶ (Source: Quality Assurance and Training Connection), and Gen Z and Millennial agents tend to stick around less long than agents from older generations

Rx to Fix AX

We know customers have gone digital. Less talked about is the fact that today's contact center agent workforce -- dominated by Millennials and increasingly Gen Z -- is also digital. However, these agents are stuck with phone-centric desktop tools from the 1990s. Talk about going to a digital gun fight with an analog knife! The solution? The digital desktop.

Traits of a Digital Desktop

What are the traits of a digital agent desktop? Here's the short list.

DIGITAL-FIRST AND OMNICHANNEL

The digital desktop should not only be a "one-stop" desktop for all digital interaction channels, but also comprise deep capabilities for digital customer engagement, including emerging interaction channels such as messaging, video chat, social media, and cobrowsing, as well as more mature channels like chat and email. The digital desktop should also be integrated with voice, since some interactions might still require

⁴ Gartner: <http://www.smartcustomerservice.com/Articles/News-Features/Agents-Find-Technology-Unhelpful-Gartner-Finds-127697.aspx>

⁵ Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/201312/customer-anger-causes-emotional-injuries-service-reps>

⁶ Quality Assurance and Training Connection: <https://qatc.org/winter-2015-connection/exploring-call-center-turnover-numbers/>

a phone conversation for resolution. As an example, the new digital customer would rather have an agent collaboratively fill out a form online with them than go to a branch office to do it. At the same time, your cobrowse tool should offer the ability to control who can see and do what for privacy and security reasons. Likewise, a digital customer would rather show damage to his/her asset over video chat than set up an in-person meeting with a claims agent.

GUIDED

Today's digital agent is accustomed to driving cars with a GPS or managing their finances with robo advisers. They won't even know what a AAA map looks like, nor will they want to pore through documents for an answer when the customer is on the line. It is, therefore, essential that the desktop provide contextual, conversational guidance to the agent that adapts to how the conversation flows, which is very different from brittle scripts that break when customers lead the conversation in an unexpected direction.

COLLABORATIVE

While the ability to collaborate with the customer is important, as we discussed with the topic of cobrowsing, the agent should also be able to collaborate internally with other available agents or subject matter experts to resolve queries with the click of a button when the customer is on the line.

UNIFIED

All interaction channels should be unified with one another, as well as with systems of record such as CRM and transactional systems, for a unified 360-degree view of context and analytic insight. Moreover, agents should get guidance from a common AI and knowledge engine for accuracy and consistency of answers and best-practice and regulatory compliance.

EMBEDDABLE

The desktop should be componentized and offer two-way embeddability—it should allow embedding information from third-party systems, while allowing itself to be embedded in other systems. Equally important, the solution should come with easy out-of-the-box integrations and an open architecture.

FLEXIBLE

The desktop should adapt to multiple contextual factors such as the interaction channel, customer attributes, and task at hand, as well as the experience levels of the agents and their work habits. For instance, it should behave differently for a cobrowse

or social media session versus a phone call, and offer flexibility to be used in a single screen or multiscreen setting.

AGILE

Can the solution provider have it up and running in a matter of days? Does the provider offer deep functionality out of the box or require multiple partner solutions and ongoing integrations? Does it offer a risk-free desktop consumption model, not only for the initial deployment but also for value expansion on an ongoing basis?

Conclusion

Customer experience remains a key battlefield for competitive differentiation. However, enterprises are now realizing that customer experience is linked to other stakeholder experiences—agent experience being one of the most important ones. There is no question that the digital desktop can transform CX through great AX. So why not make the experience chain stronger by adding the missing link?

About eGain

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