Social Customer Engagement: From Buzz to Business

When social started to become hot, businesses rushed to acquire point tools for social presence and monitoring. While these have helped businesses become “social spectators” and sometimes generate buzz, companies have struggled to generate true business value. Moving from “monitor” to “monetize” in social requires a unified or “hub” approach to customer engagement, of which social is an integral part. Here are some tried-and-true practices for success.

1. **It pays to listen.** First, understand where your customers “live socially.” Is it Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or somewhere else? Focus your social initiative on the “places” that matter. Once you know where your current and target customers live, monitor for product or service issues, feedback, ideas, and sentiment. Pay attention to frequently repeated themes for possible action. But remember that listening is only the first step!

2. **Not all customers are created equal.** Some are of greater social or economic value to your business than others; know before you engage. What is their purchase history and long-term value to your business? What is their social value? Are their opinions trusted? How many Twitter followers or Facebook friends do they have? How often do they get retweeted? Have they already engaged with you on traditional channels and are expressing their frustrations on social channels or vice versa? Engage selectively but with 360-degree customer context from a multichannel engagement hub, separating out the signal from the noise.

3. **Same answer to the same question.** Provide answers from a “single source of truth” or a common multichannel knowledge base. Another tip: Keep social and mobile responses short and provide short URLs for detailed information.

4. **A Platinum customer is a Platinum customer.** Customers should be treated consistently at any touch point, whether social or traditional. Make sure you provide service levels based on a common set of business rules. To do this, you need a robust, multichannel workflow engine as part of a unified hub.

5. **Harvest from the crowd.** Tap the knowledge of “brand advocates” and super users that are active on your online forums and social networks. Leverage these unpaid experts by harvesting their wisdom and publishing it back to the social cloud after robust quality control. Don’t forget to reward them as well!
6. **Ensure seamless transition across social and traditional.** Take sensitive or complex issues private, to a one-on-one interaction over chat, cobrowse, or phone. The key here is to be able to transition the conversation with full context to the sales or service agent so that she is fully aware of the customer’s history and sentiment. The last thing you want to do with irate customers is ask them to repeat context.

7. **Assess hard and soft value.** Assess the business value of social engagement, measuring both cost savings and new business generated but don’t forget about benefits to the brand. For example, ask yourself: How many calls were you able to deflect through social networks or an online forum? How many social prospects were generated and sold to? How much was the average handle time reduced through context integration across traditional and social? How much did you move the Net Promoter score or positive brand sentiment?

8. **Go with a hub.** You need a unified omnichannel engagement hub to be able to implement these best practices. A concept advocated by Gartner, the hub consolidates multichannel interactions (including social), knowledge, rules, policies, and administration in one place. A hub-based solution allows you to deploy apps for today, while future-proofing customer engagement for tomorrow!

**Best practices in action:** A major European telco provider and eGain client put many of these principles into practice. An unhappy customer posted on Facebook a photo of his parrot shredding a monthly statement from the provider. Because the company had a 360-degree contextual picture through an eGain-powered engagement hub, it knew the customer was just letting off steam. In response, the agent sent the customer a package of bird seed! They both had a laugh, and the customer praised the brand publicly for being “real people.” The intelligent, hub-enabled customer engagement resulted not only in social buzz but also contributed to an uptick in their net promoter score!

**About eGain**

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