The Five Parts of Smart Customer Service

While there is no standard definition for “smart” customer service, most people would agree that it is service that is Scalable, Multichannel, Agile, Relevant, and Timely. Here is more about these five parts and how they lead to smart customer service.

1. Scalable

Scalable customer service not only refers to the ability to support a large number of users, but also to the ability to scale service quality. One could argue that customer service is even more mission-critical than employee-facing applications since moments of truth in customer service expose your brand more than any other customer interaction. Make sure your customer service system is proven in large-scale deployments. Moreover, a knowledge management (KM) system is essential to scaling quality of service across the agent pool and customer self-service systems. Without KM, your customer service systems will be “flying blind,” leading to agent frustration and customer defection.

2. Multichannel

Today’s customer is not “going multichannel”—they are “born multichannel”! These customers often undertake multichannel journeys to make a purchase or complete a service interaction. Remember “a journey saved is a customer earned or kept.” For instance, according to a recent Gallup poll, 40% of Americans have showroomed (researched in brick-and-mortar stores and bought online) at least once. A recent Harris poll revealed 69% of Americans have webroomed, where they browse Amazon and then pick up goods at physical stores. There’s no doubt that businesses that are able to design and deliver connected and consistent multichannel journeys will be better positioned to grab an “unfair” share of the market.

Customer Engagement Hubs (CEH) are fast emerging as the best approach to deliver such journeys. A concept advocated by Gartner and increasingly embraced by market leaders, a CEH consolidates interactions, knowledge, processes, analytics, and administration into a common platform. The benefits? Connected multichannel experiences, improved contact center productivity and sales conversion, and reduced Total Cost of Ownership.

3. Agile

Consumers are adopting and discarding communication channels and devices at breakneck speed. Look no further than MySpace and Blackberry. How can you keep up with today’s fickle consumers? Again, a CEH is the answer—the hub allows you to plug in new interaction methods and devices without creating new silos, frustrating customer experiences, and perpetual integration projects.
4. Relevant

Irrelevant service is as bad as no service. Providing smart guidance to customers across their multichannel journeys, reactive and proactive, can make or break customer journeys. A KM system that can deliver fast and accurate answers and help execute processes and next best steps that are compliant with best practices and regulatory compliance is key to success here. Look for a unified KM system that combines the power of multiple search methods, case-based reasoning that mimics human intelligence, and easy multichannel, multi-device access to take journey guidance and relevance to the next level.

5. Timely

“Better late than never” is not acceptable for customer service. Make sure you deliver on your promise by setting the right policy and leveraging service level management processes, including workflows that trigger alarms to proactively manage compliance. Note that customer expectations for speed of response vary across channels, industries, and the nature of the business. While a multi-hour response time might be OK for email customer service, it might be tardy enough to take down a brand in a Twitter storm of complaints about a business’ non-response in social.

Getting to “Smart”

Like anything else, getting to “smart customer service” is a journey. Start by understanding the channel and device preferences of your customers, implementing the most popular touchpoints first. As the next step, prioritize journeys, including the touchpoints and the nature of the “touches” that are the most common and deliver the highest value for the business. Make those journeys memorable and friction-free. Take your service vision to reality with a knowledge-guided CEH approach to get “smart” for today and “smarter” for tomorrow. Going with a proven partner like eGain with best-of-breed customer engagement solutions, a unified multichannel platform, pioneering cloud capabilities, and 15+ years of domain expertise has helped market leaders go from “smart” to the “smarterst” in customer service, and so can you!

About eGain

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