

talkdesk

**Improve customer experience
with your call center**

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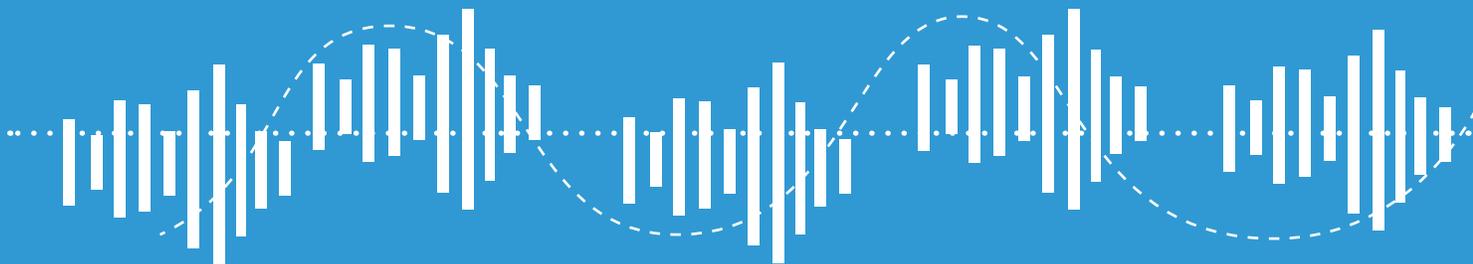
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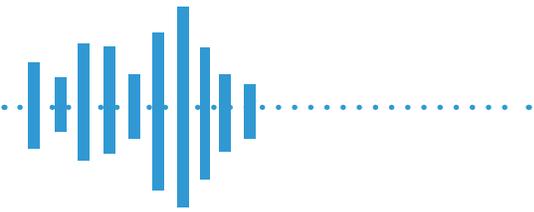


Welcome to the Age of the “Unloyal” Customer

Plenty has been written about the Age of the Customer, but the truth is we are now in the age of the impatient, unloyal, demanding customer. With information and experiences available to customers directly, customer expectations are higher than ever. Customers demand that every interaction with your brand provide them with real time, quick, accurate experiences, whether it be speaking with an agent, in store, through your mobile app, on social media or any other channel. Your ability to deliver experiences of this caliber has a direct impact on your company’s ability to generate revenue. 78% of consumers report they have abandoned a transaction or not made an intended purchase because they had a bad service experience.¹ Imagine the revenue impact if you could convert those lost transactions to paying customers!

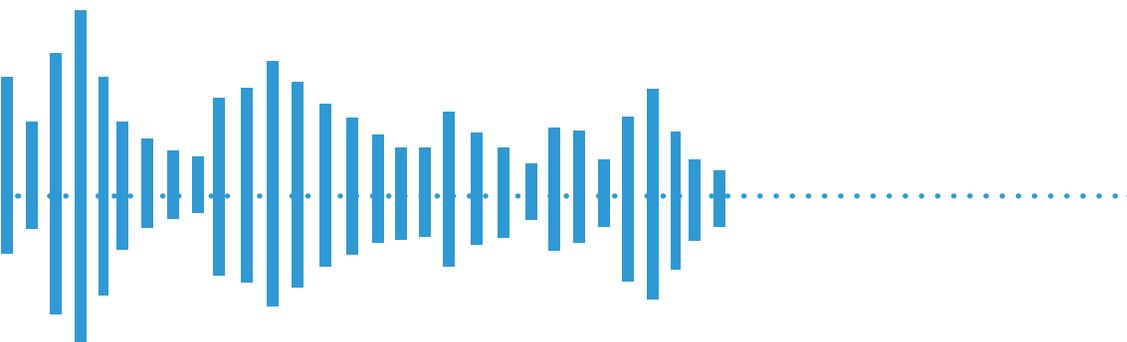
¹ American Express Survey, 2011





Leading companies are responding by prioritizing customer service as a top company goal, often with C-level attention and oversight. 92% percent of companies say customer service is among their top goals, with 28% reporting that customer experience is the number one priority.² These innovative companies see customer service as a way to differentiate their brand, inspire brand loyalty and drive revenue growth. This loyalty is key as companies are struggling to evolve as quickly as customer expectations, as markets and as competitors. While top companies aspire to provide positive customer experiences across every customer journey moment, achieving this goal is much more difficult than it seems.

2 The State of Customer Experience, Forrester Research, Inc., 2013





Superior Service Is More Difficult Than It Looks

According to Lee Resources, 80% of companies say they provide “superior” customer service, but only 8% of customers rate these same companies as delivering “superior” customer service. Why is there such a gap between perceived service levels and reality? The truth is delivering superior experiences that differentiate your brand is very difficult to deliver. There are three main factors that make this so challenging: customers are coming at you from multiple touchpoints, different groups are responsible for individual sections of the customer journey, and support tends to have a tactical focus.

“91% of unhappy customers will not do business with you again but resolve a complaint in their favor and 70% of the time they will do business with you again.”

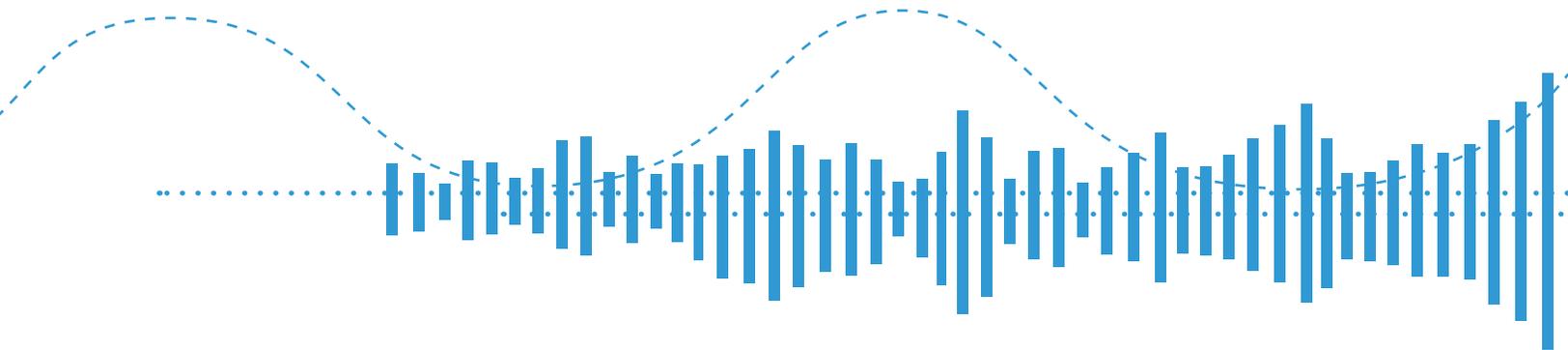
— Lee Resources

Segmented customer touchpoints

With the introduction of social media, mobile and even the internet, customers now interact with your brand through a dizzying array of touchpoints. The same customer may walk into your store, research a product through your website, ask for recommendations through social media, buy a product through your ecommerce site, and call you when they need support. Each of these steps usually represents at least one (if not multiple) application, meaning you have disconnected technology silos that can lead to a fragmented customer experience. Your customer has no patience for this. They expect their history and context to move with them as they channel hop.

Who is responsible for the customer journey?

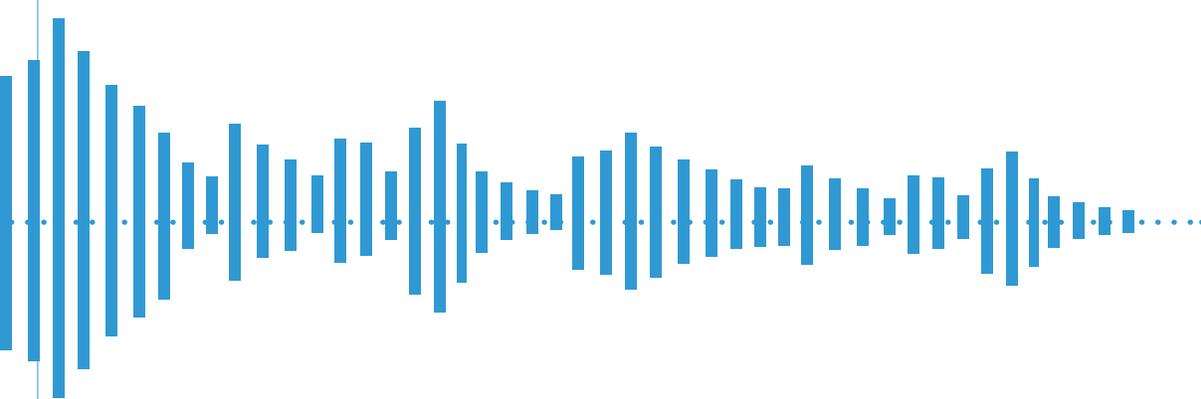
Not only are there multiple applications that manage customer interactions across channels, but there are also different teams and departments in the company responsible for parts of the customer journey. Marketing, sales, support and services are the major players, but within each group, there may be subgroups. For example, the support team may have separate teams for social, phone, web chat and email. Despite sharing a common goal of delivering superior customer experiences, these separate groups each have different ways of achieving that goal. Often, these approaches may appear to be in conflict with each other. Without cross-functional alignment across stakeholders, or an organizational change, customers end up with a fragmented experience.



No time for strategy, there's a fire to put out

While a clearly defined strategy is a key component of meeting customer experience goals, most companies are more tactical when it comes to their customers. 52% of companies admit to having no clear strategy for customer service, with 46% saying a lack of defined processes are hurting their customer experience.³ They are focused on responding to customers as they reach out, but this reduces the time available to plan for and design how to deliver superior experiences. Putting out a fire or neutralizing a negative experience takes precedence over strategic planning for future experiences. In addition, the focus is on responding, not on building the business case for investment in the overall customer experience.

3 The State of Customer Experience, Forrester Research, Inc., 2013



How do you achieve your Customer Experience (CX) goals?

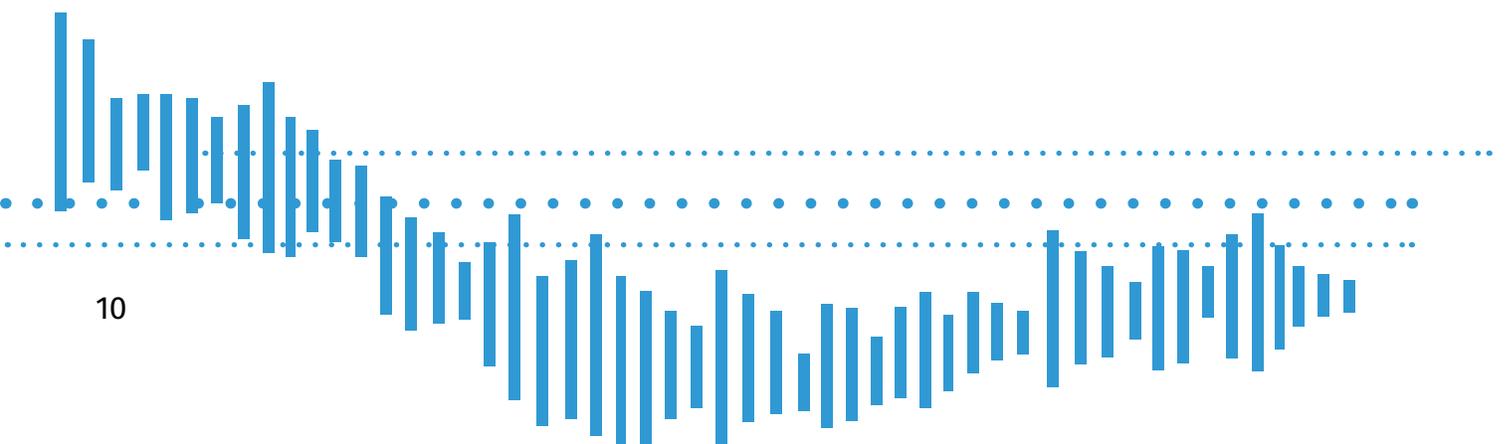
To overcome the challenges above, you need to focus on optimizing the complete customer journey, not just looking at each element individually. All groups and touchpoints that impact the customer need to be seen in context, and as critical components in a single customer lifecycle.

In order to figure out how to do this, map out the journey for your customer, from engagement, discovery, buy, use, support, and back again. At each stage in the journey, identify which groups play a role and what applications are involved. Elements of this lifecycle include social media, self-service channels, email and the call center. By doing this, you will have a clear sense of what elements are involved for your business.



**“Loyal customers can be worth up to 10 times as much as their first purchase and a new customer is 6-7 times more expensive to acquire than it is to keep a current one.”
— White House Office of Consumer Affairs**

In mapping out your customers’ path, be sure to account for the context that goes with a customer as they move from step to step. For example, the call center is a system of engagement that makes it possible to talk to your customers, but the agent should be able to view the purchase history recorded in an CRM system, a system of record. No application is an island, so it is important that both systems of engagement and systems of record are integrated through APIs and integration. In the customer journey, be sure to note where the context comes from, and where it must be viewed. In order to have successful customer service throughout the journey, the strategy, processes, technology and people must be aligned.



Call centers are the cornerstone of customer experience

Even with the emergence (and prevalence) of other channels of customer communication, the call center remains a critical element of the customer experience, with 62% of companies reporting that their leadership views customer experience in the call center as a competitive differentiator.⁴ This isn't surprising, as voice is relevant across all industries and company sizes. A global pharmaceutical company and a small retail outlet both need to provide a channel for customers to call them.

However, the role of the call center has changed. For example, web self-service has become the primary channel customers turn to first, as customers typically set out to answer questions themselves. That means that when customers call into your call center, it is because they could not find the information they needed, or did not receive the answer they wanted. As a result, the call center is handling more and more complex questions, customer escalations, and other difficult interactions. Where 98% of calls used to be tactical ("What is my balance?", "What are your store hours?"), now that same proportion is high value interactions ("Why is my package not here?", "How do I get this product to work?").

⁴ Global Contact Center Survey Results, Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2013

To keep pace with the evolving role of the call center in the overall customer journey, the technology used in the call center must keep pace. Customers want accurate, relevant, empathetic, but most of all, quick calls. 77% of US online adults report that valuing their time is the most important thing a company can do in providing good customer service.⁵ This doesn't necessarily mean short call times, but effective call times. A short call, where the customer is rushed off with incomplete or inaccurate information is counterproductive; conversely, so is a long call where the customer must repeat the same information multiple times. A call that is short because the agent has all the customer context at their fingertips and is therefore able to quickly provide accurate information is the goal.

Why do call centers need to evolve?

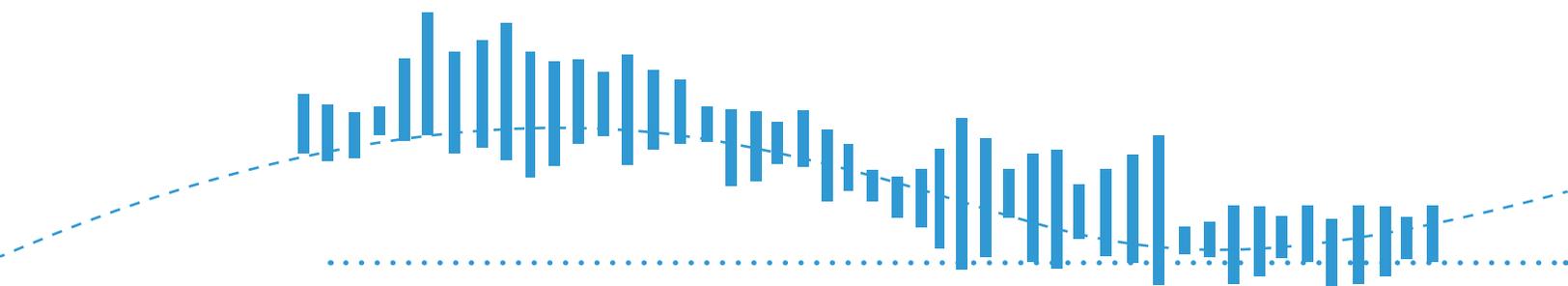
A call center can have a very tangible impact on revenue, positive or negative, based on the service provided by agents. Customers want accurate, relevant, complete answers upon first contact, as well as an empathetic agent. Unfortunately, consumers report that at least 50% of the time, customer service agents fail to

5 North American Technographics Customer Experience Survey, Forrester Research, Inc., 2013

answer their questions.⁶ One way to improve this outcome is to enhance how you match agents and customers through skills-based routing or behavioral analytics. When a customer is paired with the right agent, they are more likely to have a positive experience and purchase again.

Not only do you have to match the right agent with the right customer, but agents also need to have access to the customer's history and information to deliver a personalized experience. However, according to Econsultancy, only 4% of companies worldwide believe they provide an "excellent" multi-channel experience for customers. That means that the majority of companies still have customer data locked in application silos. At best, an agent is spending critical time looking up information across multiple systems. At worst, customers become frustrated and churn as they are asked repeatedly to enter the same information over and over again. Customer success teams need to consider implementing call center technology with easy integration to systems of record, that is intuitive for agents to use, and that makes it easy for managers to monitor customer happiness.

6 Harris Interactive



Top 7 Considerations For Your Call Center Technology

1. Is it easy for your agents to use?

Technology has to be intuitive to inspire use.

2. Is it easy for your IT team to set up?

Solutions should be scalable, configurable, reliable and available.

3. How easy is it for agents to access the information they need?

Today's norm is distracted mental state, and as a result, agents work better when information is easily searchable, not just memorized in a script.

4. How effectively can you match agents and callers?

Advanced matching, based on skills, or behavioral analytics, can help increase revenue.

5. Can agents understand the context of the caller?

Customers interact across multiple channels and superior service integrates all those touch points to paint a complete picture.

6. Can managers easily monitor the performance of the team?

Comprehensive reporting makes it easy to see how the team is performing and how happy customers are, as well as make real time adjustments to policies, training, staffing and more to address any potential issues.

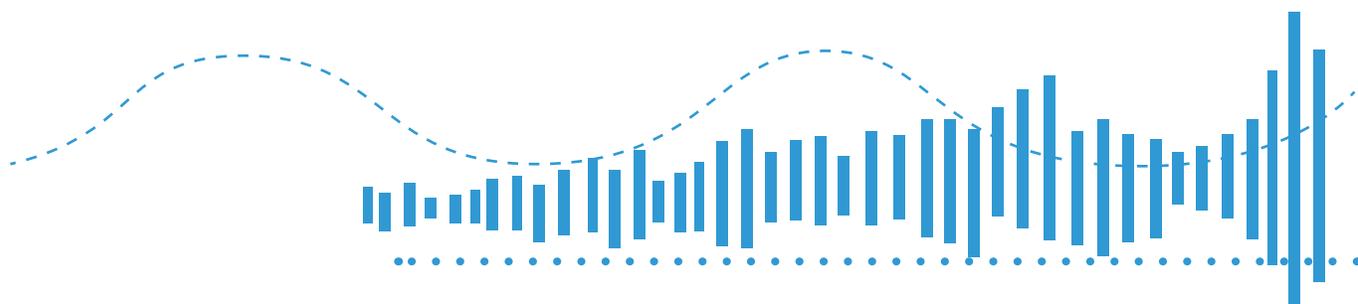
7. Is the data generated in the call center actionable?

Call centers generate a lot of data (the contents of the conversation & call recording, call times, wait times, call volumes, etc). And call center technology should make this data actionable to benefit the business.

Next steps

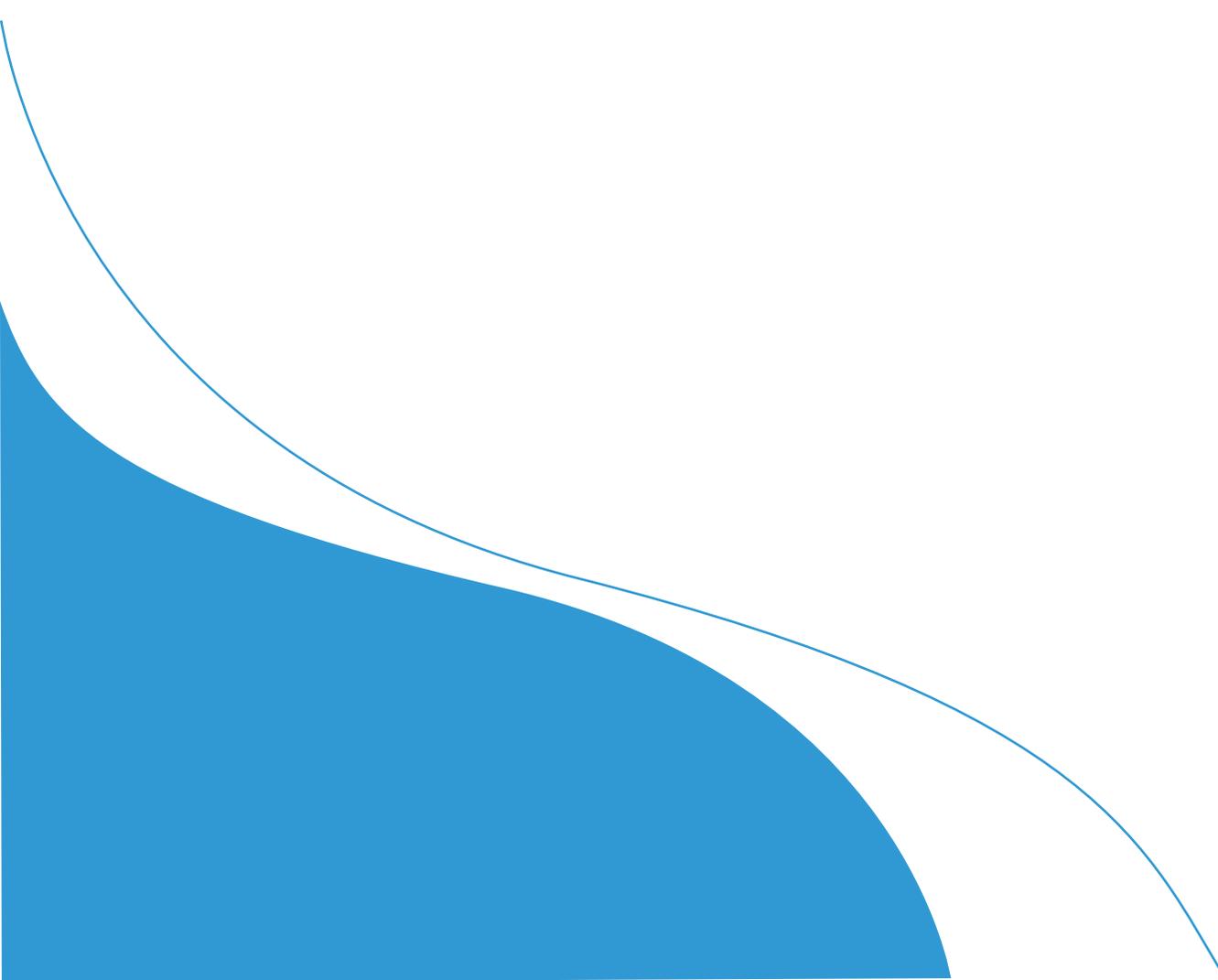
Looking at your customer experience goals, and how the call center fits in, there are a few tangible steps you can take to ensure success. The most important is to tie any customer experience goals into the company-level goals and KPIs. For example, if you are a hotel chain, you should strive to show how better customer experiences translate to more rooms booked. If your #1 focus is cost cutting, the metrics in your call center should reflect this (ex. reduced call times); however, if like many leading companies today, your top goal is service, you should adjust your metrics. For example, you may want to prioritize first call resolution and satisfaction scores like NPS scores over call times alone.

As there are multiple channels across which customers can interact with you, it is important that you understand your customers and which channels they use. For example, your customers may turn to social media first, and use the call center for escalations. In this case, those should be your primary channels. On the other hand, your customers may not be social media users, in which case, web self-service and chat may replace social media as the first response. Whatever the primary channel is, it is important to view the phone as a fundamental piece of the customer journey. This has become the channel for support, escalations, timely resolution



and other critical moments in customer satisfaction. Leverage next-generation technology to turn the phone into a differentiating experience for your brand.

Lastly, you should work across departments and applications to align people, processes and technology to a common customer experience strategy. Senior executives across the business and technology should be working together to achieve a common goal. The same can be said for departments that touch the customer: sales, marketing, customer success and support. Each has a critical part to play, but strategy and goals must be consistent across all. The trifecta is good people, efficient processes and appropriate technology to meet your needs.



About Talkdesk

Talkdesk is easy-to-use, cloud-based call center software that helps growing businesses provide excellent customer service with phone support. Talkdesk makes it possible to have real time, personalized conversations with customers, without hardware, coding or downloads - all that is needed is a computer and an Internet connection. With Talkdesk, companies can have a call center up-and-running in minutes and have access to robust call center functionality including IVR, skills-based routing, call conferencing, comprehensive reporting, all in an intuitive web-based interface. Integrations with top business tools and CRM systems, such as Salesforce, Desk.com and Zendesk, make customer data easily accessible, so agents never have to wade through endless systems to provide superior service.

For more information, visit www.talkdesk.com.



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