

### Customer Centric Interaction

By Tony Procops, General Manager, ASC America

"You can't always believe what you hear." A co-worker told me the other day how steamed he was by the way he was treated regarding an online transaction with a paintball manufacturer. He'd ordered a paintball gun for his son more than one month before, and he called to find out why the gun had not arrived. It was already too late for his son's graduation party, but he still wanted the gun. The customer service representative admonished him for calling, saying he must have received the paintball gun because it had been shipped a long time ago. My co-worker eventually found out, though, that the agent handling the online transaction had typed in the wrong numbers, and the gun had gone to the wrong address.

My co-worker canceled the order and vowed never to buy anything from the company again — not because of the delivery error but because of the way he'd been treated when he called.

### The Problem

In today's competitive business climate, organizations must gain customers' trust by attending to their needs in a personalized, caring manner. Failure to listen to them will eventually result in reduced service levels and declining margins. MBNA, a worldwide financial institution, estimated that a five percent increase in customer retention could yield up to 60 percent more profits in just five years.

Customers want to be treated fairly and base their loyalty on both the value of the product and the ability of the vendor or phone rep to discern their needs.

In a recent study by the Purdue Call Center Benchmark Survey, contact centers resolve 78 percent of calls on the first contact. The rest of the time, the customer is either lost to the competition or must call back. The callbacks result from the agent's inability to complete the order or effectively solve a problem. Improving first-contact resolution will lead to satisfied customers.

In the long-term, this satisfaction yields repeat purchases; better relationships, loyalty and retention rates; decreased marketing costs; and increased sales revenue and profit margins.

Additionally, contact-center managers today must also meet customers' demands for convenient transaction options and inexpensive communication modes such as e-commerce and VoIP.

### What is CCI?

Customer Centric Interaction (CCI) provides one way to respond to these needs by keeping the buyer happy and satisfied. It may be defined simply as seeing your business through the eyes of the customer. How was I treated? How long was I put on hold? Were my concerns handled expeditiously? Did I receive what I wanted or did the rep take advantage of me by cross-selling or upselling something I didn't need?

CCI tracks customer interests, needs and buying habits according to their life cycle and learning curve about your product, and it allows you to modify your marketing efforts in the process. By listening to how customers are using a product as it and they mature, CCI enables you to modify your service strategy to satisfy their evolving needs.

### Practical Steps

How can managers understand and improve customer satisfaction? First, they must analyze typical interactions to understand the needs, wants and buying motives involved. What are the customer's basic requirements and how can they be resolved? Once you have answered this question, you can build the perfect solution by creating a value proposition sprinkled into the brand experience.

Secondly, you must create a customer interface to convey your key message and assist customers with their decisions. Your model must include intangibles such as behavior and attitude.

Lastly, you must strive for continuous improvement and innovation. Whatever can be done to improve the customer's experience should be your top priority.

### **Customer Feedback**

Obtaining cost-effective and timely feedback on customer interactions will ensure loyalty and increase retention rates.

Some quality-monitoring vendors offer customer feedback or survey modules in their systems. This feature allows you to analyze customer feedback and compare it to the recorded call. It provides a complete view of the customer interaction before it is too late. Fifty percent of customers who don't communicate bad experiences to the vendor defect, while 87 percent who do stay!

As with any system, the customer-feedback module must ask the right questions to get the right answers. Therefore, a lot of thought must go into survey development, based on your marketing plan and many other factors. From that point forward, results must be continually analyzed to fully understand how the customer views the interaction, and to compare it to the QA analysis from the recording. The survey questions should be modified or changed frequently based on the customer's perception.

### **Other CCI Solutions**

Automating the quality-monitoring process and reducing the number of customer complaints will increase management productivity. All statistics and comparisons should be calculated automatically to provide the total picture. Call calibration, in addition to customer feedback, will ensure objectivity.

Customer-centric quality-monitoring solutions will improve agent performance through more efficient training methods. Remember that low employee turnover is linked to increased customer satisfaction, and, conversely, no one benefits from an untrained contact-center agent. Measuring internal quality is a crucial CCI technique.

### **Conclusion**

Only with Customer Centric Interaction (CCI) can you quickly, accurately and continually reinvent and adapt to the dynamic marketplace. Using customer feedback will improve your service, and disseminating it throughout your organization will keep your best customers and win back the others.

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