

Is Your Organization Ready to Take the Leap Towards Customer Care?

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Executive Summary

Since the dawn of commerce, humans have marketed and sold items to one another and provided pre- or post-sale service. Now, sales, marketing and service disciplines are each a science in their own right, with huge volumes of knowledge published on each. Large corporations have invested vast resources in establishing separate business entities that engage the customer in either a sales, marketing or service activity. Marketing budgets run into many millions of dollars while thousands of agents staff 24-7 contact centers to service customers who have been sold a product or service.

However, these siloes of organizational structure are often where the customer's needs are most ignored. Customers don't care about organizational structure or who is responsible for the marketing, sales, or service silo. Their only interest is in engaging the organization at the time that they choose through the channel they prefer in order to obtain the same answer for the same question irrespective of the point of interaction (POI).

From a customer's perspective, sales, marketing, and service silos are merged into one interaction channel, but these organizational silos should be merged from the organization's perspective, as well. Each time they market to a customer, they are, in fact, also selling. Each time they sell a product or service, they are also marketing. Each time they service a customer, they are also marketing and selling. Organizations that look at the customer through an integrated marketing + sales + service lens are going to create consistent customer experiences. Those that do this successfully and sustainably are working through an integrated Customer Care framework, which should be defined in a Customer Care charter.

Customer Care is not the same as "customer service." Whereas customer service is often confused with sales, marketing and service siloes, or is thought of as "the service provided to a customer," Customer Care focuses on both measurement of and delivering on expectations. It can be defined as: "Meeting the expectations of customers and giving them more than what they expected." Customer Care is the new focus of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) for the next century, and this best practice framework will help your organization migrate to a comprehensive Customer Care strategy.

Customer Care Framework is an Omni-Channel Architecture

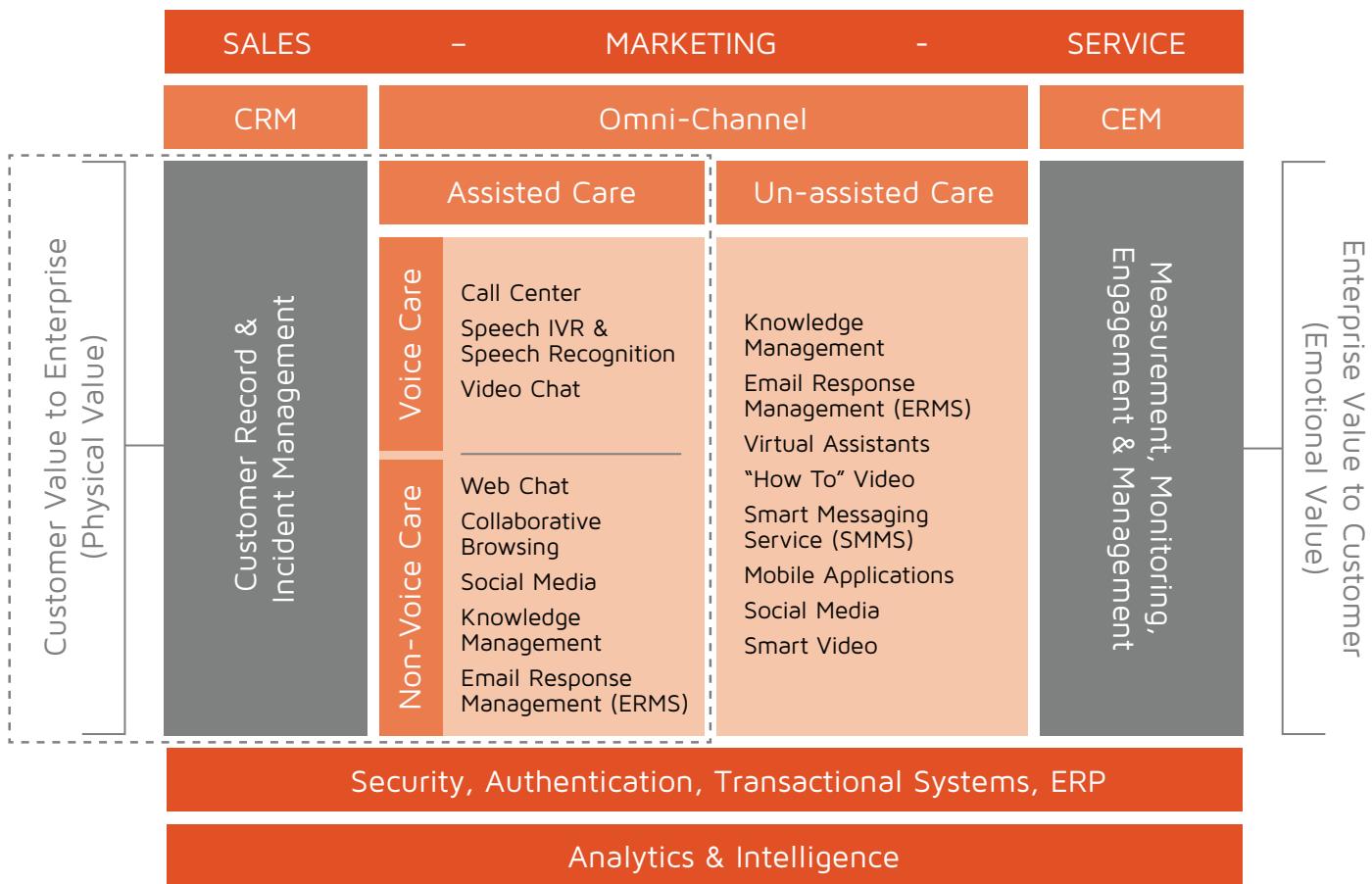
Many organizations do not take a holistic approach when deploying customer care channels. Typically, the website established years ago with a static Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) list was their first attempt to provide customers with information. Following from that, many organizations deployed a phone based call center, which in many cases, is still the only mechanism used to engage with customers. When the social media trend hit the market a few years ago, organizations scrambled to buy and

deploy a social media product. With the current focus on using web chat to communicate in real time with customers, they are once again scrambling to buy and deploy a product to cover the latest craze.

This haphazard approach to deploying interaction channels results in poor technology selections and wasted implementation, development and deployment resources when the various products from different vendors fail to integrate easily.

Figure 1.

Customer Care Framework



Customer experience suffers when lack of channel integration results in information from one interaction channel being lost when customers engage with another channel. This siloed approach to developing an omni-channel architecture can potentially increase the three year total cost of ownership (TCO) by as much as 50% to 60%.

Organizations need a framework, like the one depicted in Figure 1. It illustrates the architecture for a customer care environment that is conducive to providing a consistent experience to each customer, irrespective of which channel the customer uses to interact with the organization for sales, marketing, or service activities.

An overall vision and strategy for customer care should include multiple parallel initiatives to measure, manage and improve the performance of all service channels; perform analytics across various web channels; and solicit feedback about the customer's experience when using a channel.

Always Start with CRM

The first component of your customer care architecture should be embedded in your CRM solution. The CRM component is not where transactions and commerce happens; it is where the master customer record resides, including customer interaction history and trouble tickets that might have been recorded. The customer record contains all the likes and dislikes of the customer, what channels to engage with, what links he prefers, what links he has to other entries (people) on record, as well as personal customer details. Each time a customer contacts the organization, an entry is made in the CRM solution; if a customer phones, sends an email and has a web chat, then each of these entries is recorded in the CRM interaction history. Each time

a customer lodges a complaint or query, a trouble ticket should be opened against the customer record and the resolution communicated to the customer.

The CRM solution and omni-channel solution(s) must be well integrated and accessible to customer-facing agents so that the servicing agent can easily see a holistic picture of past customer engagement. Analytical software will interrogate the CRM solution in order to establish the customer's intrinsic value to the organization. For the customer's financial value, the transactional systems should also be interrogated.

The Omni-Channel Challenge

An omni-channel strategy should form part of the broader customer experience management (CEM) approach, and because customers expect the same behavior across various POIs, organizations must carefully assess how each channel is deployed. However, most organizations that start down the path of adding customer interaction channels to their existing phone channel from the call center do not set out with an omni-channel view or develop an omni-channel strategy. They tend to focus on immediate customer interaction needs from either the sales, marketing or service department that is shouting their priorities the loudest. This often results in poor product selection and wasted implementation effort and resources, because there is neither a focus on a larger corporate-wide need nor a focus on creating a consistent customer experience across all channels.

A critical success factor (CSF) is focusing on a channel-agnostic architecture or using a channel-appropriate interaction that is independent of device and process. Organizations should use the customer care framework to create the vision and plan for all omni-channel investments and initiatives, as well as

to define, align and integrate the technologies, people, processes, components, methodologies and capabilities associated with different interaction channels. The framework should also be used to align the business needs of the sales, marketing, and service departments so that the customer does not see three different corporate entities engaging with

him/her. This Digital Clarity Group (DCG) framework can also be useful for performing a completeness assessment of current initiatives, and for assessing the alignment and integration of customer-care technology with existing business imperatives.

Assisted Care vs. Unassisted Care vs. Self Service

Assisted care channels are those where a human agent provides services during interactions; for example, the phone channel in the contact center, web chat and collaborative browsing sessions.

Calculating the cost of assisted care interactions must take into consideration agent salaries, office space and technology infrastructure. Phone channels are the most expensive, followed by video chat, then web chat interaction, the cost of which is 5x lower than the cost of the phone channel (see the web chat section of this report). Due to high cost, many organizations are trying to move away from assisted channels such as phone and face-to-face (F2F), and some are making it very difficult for customers to engage with an agent. Unfortunately, this move typically ends with poor customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores and lost customers. One of the biggest challenges faced when providing assisted care is that the customer often receives a different answer depending on which channel he uses.

Unassisted care refers to customer channels where no human agent helps with the interaction. Examples are the virtual assistant, “how-to” videos and a knowledge-based interaction. Unassisted channels are the least expensive to service and deliver the highest ROI, but customers stuck in an unassisted channel where there is no opt-out to an assisted channel get hugely frustrated and will provide very low CSAT ratings. The critical success factor for an unassisted channel is its integration with a deep, rich knowledge base that is able to deliver a single right

answer (see further discussion in the knowledge base section of this report). Unassisted care presents the opportunity for huge cost savings if deployed correctly, but one of its biggest challenges is providing for an automatic escalation to an assisted care channel should customers not receive answers to their questions.

Unassisted care should not be confused with self-service. Unassisted care channels all focus on supporting customers and providing them with answers to their questions, whereas self-service refers to a transactional service where a customer engages with a transactional system to complete an activity. For example, when booking travel online, conducting a mobile payment or ordering and paying for an online purchase, the customer will typically engage with an authentication process, then a back-end commerce solution, then a supply chain solution for the delivery. However, if during the process of making an online purchase the customer needs assistance, then the customer can use an unassisted channel such as a knowledge base search to find an answer, engage with a virtual assistant or use an assisted channel such as a web chat or call to the contact center to answer their question. One of the biggest challenges when using a self-service solution comes when an organization has not provided either an assisted care or an unassisted care channel to assist customers should they have unanswered questions.

Assisted Voice Care Channels

Voice care refers to channels where customer interaction uses spoken word as opposed to non-voice care where customer interaction is in writing. With voice care services, it is important that agents be taught proper language skills, listening skills and

angry customer management skills. These skills differ completely from the writing skills needed when servicing non-voice care channels, and differ depending upon the type of assisted voice-care channel.

Table 1.

Assisted Voice Care Agent Skills

Agent Activity	Skills Needed
Call Center phone operator	Multiple language skills; Listening skills; Skill of persuasion; Ability to handle conflict
Speech IVR	Audible multi-lingual skills
Video Chat	Must be presentable; Multiple language skills; Ability to show empathy

1. Call Center

Many call center deployments stem from the 80's with huge desktop phones, poorly designed ergonomics and large client server on premise solutions. The metrics in the call center are typically focused on call duration and speed of answer, which are equally inappropriate as it relates to customer satisfaction. Agents in the call center are seldom empowered to resolve customer issues, and five calls asking the same question typically receive five different answers. Customers are seldom keen to phone the call center as they know they will get stuck in lengthy queues and may not have their issue resolved.

Many call centers have been modernized with added customer care channels, but poor practices still prevail. Many agents are tasked with blended channels to handle voice and web chat interactions, which leads to poor productivity and poor quality for both channels. A lack of typing skills result in poor quality written interactions or a lack of phone skills result in poor quality voice interactions. Even where call centers have been modernized, these centers are rarely managed according to metrics such as issue resolution and customer satisfaction.

The call center voice care channel is also one of the most expensive customer interaction channels around. The cost of the agent, office infrastructure, phone technology, call charges and only being able

to service one customer at a time results in costs of \$35 - \$55 per interaction. Organizations that are still providing only this channel need to strongly consider building a business case to migrate customers to other more effective and lower cost channels.

2. Speech IVR and Speech Recognition

The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) unit has probably resulted in more dropped calls and lower customer CSAT scores than any other single technology component in the history of customer service. Unfortunately organizations today still take their customers through endless menus of options to press a number in an attempt to route the customer to the correctly skilled agent. IVR has also been integrated into transactional systems that allow users to authenticate themselves using the phone keypad. This extends the usefulness of IVR by making the authenticated user's details visible to the phone agent that will service the call.

Modern IVR uses speech technologies rather than key presses to engage with customers. Speech technologies once had great difficulty understanding and interpreting customers from diverse cultures or with varied dialects, but today's speech recognition engines have come a long way in recognizing not only different accents but also languages, providing organizations with the ability to service a broader range of customers than in the past.

The latest deployment of speech IVR has advanced to voice authentication — customers are authenticated by their voice print file in a similar manner to being authenticated through a personal identification number (PIN). The future of Voice IVR is promising and will lead to the integration of voice based instructions with back end transactional systems.

3. Video Chat

Video contact between a customers and video chat agents is being deployed more frequently, not only for desktop or laptop, but also for mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. Several factors are driving the adoption of video customer service — the variety of endpoints and tools available to customers, customer preference for personal screens, increased bandwidth to homes and mobile devices, consumer acceptance of applications such as Skype, YouTube, etc. — all of these need to be considered when deciding how to approach a particular video customer service strategy.

There are, however, a number of considerations before organizations start offering video chat, such as the environment that video chat takes place in and the appearance of the agent. The same kind of consideration a business would take for presenting a receptionist should be taken when placing somebody on camera. Take note of the environment around the video chat agent, with attention to distractions such as people walking around behind the agent on camera. Consider the placement of the camera in relation to the agent, who will be required to look from the screen to camera and back again. Breaking eye contact with the customer on camera can give an impression of disinterest and can lower CSAT scores.

Video chat interactions must be stored, so organizations should plan for enough storage capacity and use a speech-to-text tool to strip the conversation from the video and store it against the customer interaction history for later mining and text analysis. When building out the video customer service strategy, consider what portion of your reachable audience has what type of devices and start by catering to the majority.

Assisted Non-Voice Care Channels

Non-voice care channels rely on written as opposed to spoken communication, so agents for non-voice channels need to have good business writing skills. Typing at 65 words per minute is a minimum

requirement, as is the ability to construct formal business communications as opposed to abbreviated text messages.

Table 2.

Assisted Non-Voice Care Agent Skills

Agent Activity	Skills Needed
Web Chat	Typing skills of minimum 65 words per minute; Ability to multi task during simultaneous chat sessions
Collaborative Browsing	Ability to multi task; In-depth knowledge of transactional systems being used; Ability to convey technical information in non-technical manner (verbally and non-verbally)
Social Media	Multi-tasking skills; Writing skills; Typing skills
Email Response Management	Typing skills minimum 65 words per minute
Knowledge Management	Knowledge authoring skills; Meta data tagging skills; Speed reading skills

4. Web Chat

Web chat is a fast growing communication channel with mature technology. Unfortunately, most web chat interactions are sliding down the poor customer experience hill and becoming useless Contact Center channels — not unlike the phone.

A web chat session involves online, live-text interactions between a web chat agent and a customer. These sessions are routed in a similar manner to voice calls — an incoming chat request from a customer is sent to one of many web chat agents equipped to deal with the contents of the

request. Web chat should not be confused with Instant Messaging (IM). In a web chat session, the incoming chat request is routed to an available agent – with IM there is no routing as the interaction happens directly from point to point between two individuals that are on each other’s “buddy” list. Web chat is used for external customer service, whereas IM is suited for inter-organizational collaboration.

During a web chat session, complementary interactions such as co-browsing, screen or application sharing, or assistance forms completion can take place. A web chat session can also be initiated through a virtual assistant and then passed to a live agent. The business case for Web Chat is usually motivated by reducing the cost of phone based interactions or introducing new interaction channels to the customers.

There are two types of costs associated with web chat: technology and agent costs. Many organizations focus only on the former and forget about the operational expenses (OPEX) of web-chat interactions. Typically, technology costs are in the region of 10 to 20% of that of a voice based solution, as there is no ACD, PBX, CTI etc., with cloud web chat solutions bringing even more saving. However, the human costs make up 72% of the cost of a web chat interaction, so organizations need to focus on the OPEX of customer interactions rather than technology costs for real savings.

5. Collaborative Browsing

Collaborative browsing, or co-browsing, provides the phone or web chat agent with the ability to interact with a customer using the customer’s web browser or a purpose-built mobile application that allows them to share the same web space. Regardless of physical location, an agent and a customer can share the same browser view and simultaneously browse a website.

With this, an agent can guide the customer through an on-screen process or assist the customer with completing a form. The business case behind collaborative browsing and the real time assistance provided in this manner is to reduce errors when customers capture information in forms or to assist with faster completion of complex activities such as a tax return or an e-commerce transaction.

Collaborative browsing differentiates itself from screen or application sharing because it is not achieved by sending a high rate of screen shots of the presenter’s screen to one or more participants. Instead, in a synchronous fashion, it distributes the URL(s) visited by the presenter to the participants’ browser.

The two most common ways to deliver collaborative browsing capability are via the customer downloading an applet or just browsing to a shared Web space. The applet allows for more security controls because it can block access to fields on the customer’s screen that the agent does not need to see, such as credit card numbers. The challenge is that most customers are not eager to install foreign applets on their mobile or desktop devices. However browser-based access often offers fewer controls over what information can or cannot be protected from agent access. These challenges result in low adoption rates of collaborative capabilities.

6. Social Media

With increasing frequency, organizations are deflecting customer care interactions to social networks and peer-to-peer communities in an effort to decrease customer care costs. There are thousands of social media forums that exist today that make it fairly easy for customers to obtain information and guidance on questions they may have on an organization’s products or services.

Organizations are also establishing a social presence manned by trained social customer care agents who can engage with customers contacting the organization via a host of social channels.

Organizations that are not actively monitoring social media networks will not know what is being said about their products or services, and will be ignorant of the impact that a single posting to thousands of readers or potential customers might be.

Social media monitoring tools have the ability to listen to many social networks at a time and collect data. Once the data is brought in house, social media analytics can sift through the noise and extract only the items that are relevant to the organization's products, people or services. The social media response team can then decide whether to respond publicly or privately to the person who made the comment. A best practice at this time is to migrate the interaction to another channel that would be better suited to address the customer's request or issue, such as a web chat or a phone call.

Social customer care can also refer to internal-facing social communities where a group, such as the contact center agents, establishes a social platform where team members can post customer questions that they are unable to answer. Other agents can then respond on how to best serve the interaction and how inter-organizational social collaboration will take place.

7. Email Response Management

Email is still one of the most used business communications channels for customer. Email volumes are expected to continue growing during the next five years, with the highest growth expected from mobile and smartphone users.¹ Most organizations are extremely poor in responding to emails, with SLAs typically ranging from 48 to 72

hours. The reason for the long SLAs is the difficulty associated with routing an email to the correct agent, researching the answer and then typing a response.

With Email Response Management Services (ERMS), email can be automatically opened and the contents read via Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR). The ERMS solution can then be integrated with a rich knowledge base. The answer to the question can be searched for in the knowledge base and an outbound email with the response content prepared. Should the email be related to a customer's transactional information, then the data can be extracted and populated in an email template. In both cases, the email can either be sent out automatically if the relevance of response rating is high or queued up for a quality assurance (QA) process before being sent.

Using an ERMS to handle inbound customer care email interactions can speed up the turnaround time from 72 hours to a mere five minutes. Some organizations have become so efficient in handling customer care emails via ERMS that they build in a delay of 20 to 30 minutes before the response is sent, so that customers do not start treating emails like an IM session. The ERMS must, however, not be implemented as a stand-alone/independent solution from the rest of the customer care channels as it will be difficult to integrate email communication into the contact history of a CRM. The ERMS must be tightly coupled with a knowledge base and the CRM interaction history.

8. Knowledge Management

A Knowledge Management (KM) solution is the most important omni-channel that exists today with the highest ability to deliver a great customer experience of any other solution in existence. It is also the very first place that organizations should focus on when they develop a customer care strategy.

Five different knowledge categories must be managed via the KM:

- **Agent knowledge:** The customer servicing agent needs a KM solution to reduce the time taken to search for answers to queries and to reduce training time on new products and services.
- **Corporate knowledge:** This contains the total body of knowledge necessary to deliver on the strategic aims and objectives of an organization such as policies, procedures, rules, regulations and corporate governance to name a few.
- **Social knowledge:** Many people belonging to social networks post information on bulletin boards and blog about a company's products and services. By harvesting this information and storing it in a socially accessible knowledge base, the organization can quickly build up rich content to assist with customer care activities.
- **Partner knowledge:** The partners in an organization's supply chain need specific content to assist with customer care activities as they are often the ones dealing directly with your customers. Also use partner knowledge to bring new partners online in as short a time as possible and to check on the quality and content of interactions that your partners have with your most valuable asset — your customers.

- **Customer knowledge:** This content is directly accessible by your customers and aids them in answering their own questions. The knowledge must be kept in sync with the other knowledge areas to ensure that the same answer is always given to the same question.

The SLA for knowledge is called Relevance of Response (RoR) and the industry standard is 85%, meaning that when a knowledge base is searched, the answer given must be 85% or more relevant to the question. Knowledge must not be confused with a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) list. The FAQ is one of the worst solutions any organization can use for customer care, as it provides endless volumes of content that seldom answer customer's specific questions. With knowledge, the goal is to provide a single right answer or maximum of three answers to a customer's question and answers must be 85% or more relevant. The value of the knowledge base for customer care depends on a long-term commitment to ongoing development and on fine-tuning the knowledge engine.

Unassisted Customer Care Channels

Unassisted care refers to channels where there is no human involved in the customer interaction. These channels have the lowest cost-to-service ratio of all

the omni-channels. Support agents of un-assisted channels require different skills than agents of assisted channels.

Table 3.

Unassisted Customer Care Agent Skills

Agent Activity	Skills Needed
Virtual Assistant	Graphic and video editing skills
“How To” Video	Video editing skills
Smart Messaging	Short code language skills
Mobile Applications	Programming and development skills
Smart Video	Video editing and programming skills

9. Virtual Assistants

A Virtual Assistant (VA) is a conversational, computer-generated character that simulates a conversation with a customer in order to deliver voice- or text-based information. A VA incorporates natural-language understanding, dialogue control, domain knowledge (for example, about a company’s products on a website) and a visual appearance (such as photos or animation) that changes according to the content of the interaction. The VA can engage with the customer in text-to-text, text-to-speech, speech-to-text or speech-to-speech, depending on the complexity of the VA.

Interaction with a VA could be through a mobile application, the web, SMS, chat messenger, or other web-based or mobile interfaces. In the case where voice processing is enabled, the VA has a key dependency on speech-based applications. This combination of speech technology with the VA provides a stronger customer care value proposition than when there is no speech enabled.

The VA could introduce a number of gamification² principles to the customer and has a great ability to attract and hold the attention of the customer. Enabled with a video or anime type graphical user interface (GUI) and speech interaction, the VA must

not only look great but also be able to provide relevant answers to customer questions. For this purpose, the VA needs to be integrated with a rich knowledge base that can provide highly relevant responses to questions. For transactional interactions, the VA can also be integrated with back-end systems to deliver in-context user advice and transactions.

The VA has an excellent value proposition and should be strongly considered by organizations wanting to create a great web or mobile customer experience. A best practice is to integrate the VA with an assisted care channel such as web chat so that the customer interaction can be escalated to a live agent should the VA not have the ability to service a potentially complex customer query.

10. “How To” Video Services

The attention given to YouTube and other social networks that use videos has created a great interest in how-to customer care videos that assist customers in resolving issues without necessarily having to make contact with an organization. How-to customer care video digital media can save money, because the video content relays instructions more easily than an agent can on a phone or web chat. These unstructured videos are evolving from obscure, poorly managed content produced by staff or external customers into valued business data types.

The how-to video customer care market is still immature, with content being generated both inside and outside the organization. Internally generated content can be created using formal video-editing and processing software or informally by employees using mobile phones. Externally generated content is mostly produced by customers using their mobile phones or other hand held video recording device. The benefit associated with informal content

generation is that there is often little or no cost involved. The disadvantage associated with informal content generation is that the organization has no control over the content.

Content can also be stored internally in a knowledge base as video knowledge or externally on private or social networks. A benefit associated with storing the how-to customer service video on a social network (e.g., YouTube) is that no organizational disk storage is required. It becomes immaterial how long the videos are, because there's no impact of the replay of the video on the organization's data networks. A further advantage is that the video can easily be found by anybody searching the social network. The disadvantage of storing the how-to customer service videos on external social networks is that it's difficult to create a text-based script of the content of the video.

11. Smart Messaging Service

The Short Message Service (SMS) channel is a very useful customer care channel that is highly underrated by most organizations. Many repeat contacts that a customer has with an organization are to find out the status of their request. The status request could be for an order that was placed, a problem that was registered, or relate to any other prior interaction. These repeat interactions waste both the customer's as well as the organization's time and can become expensive to service.

By sending the customer an SMS after the first contact, as well as each time the status of the request or transaction changes, the organization keeps the customer up to date with the progress of his issue, which not only ensures high CSAT ratings but also reduces the number of return contacts and therefore reduces the cost of servicing.

Smart Messaging Services (SMMS) takes the humble SMS to a new level by embedding a URL in the message and encouraging the customer to check back as often as they like. By clicking on the URL, the customer will be directed via phone browser to the trouble ticket or to the transaction where he can then the status of his request. By using SMMS, organizations are able to reduce the cost to service even further as the only costs incurred are for the first SMS sent to the client. There is, however, a prerequisite in that the organization's tracking systems need to be integrated with the channel and be up to date with the progress or processing of the issue at hand.

12. Mobile Applications

Many organizations and customers behave as if mobile devices are little more than web browsers, but mobile as a channel and mobile applications that access the channel have come a long way. Mobile technology offers numerous customer care opportunities, but organizations must leverage it carefully. The momentum generated by the first application that the organization deploys must be followed by more applications for other mobile platforms, as well as ongoing enhancements to existing applications.

Every website available today is accessible through the browser on a smartphone, but this does not mean that every website is mobile-ready. Many browser-ready applications are not formatted for display on a mobile device and content will "fall off" the sides of the phone screen, making browsing unwieldy and not customer friendly. Websites that are designed for mobile access will recognize the incoming device and repurpose the content on the screen according to the device, as well as incorporate functions such as forward suggestion and auto-complete to aid in typing text and completing sentences.

Mobile applications that are installed on mobile devices provide the highest level of web access, as all the controls, fields and menus have been specifically designed for that device. The challenge associated with mobile applications is that there is no standard in mobile platforms, causing organizations to develop, run and maintain multiple platform versions of the same application. The "mobilization" of customer care will require increased resources in budget, vendor management and specialized IT staff training.

13. Smart Video

It is not a question of whether your customers will interact with video in a way that affects their experience of your product or service; it's a question of how they will interact, where the video will come from, and how you will influence the customer experience through the use of video. Video care services have the ability to provide a huge amount of information in a very short time and are ideal for many customer care activities. With smart video, customer transactional information such as account balances and individual transactional details is dynamically embedded at time of video creation. A video account statement can therefore be constructed from generic marketing material as well as customer specific data. Smart video also has the ability to embed interaction components such as buttons to click and buy some of the items on offer or to open up a browser to a particular web location.

Video that has been scripted, developed and recorded can be transcoded so that there are multiple versions of it available to use on multiple types of desktop and portable devices. In this way, compatibility issues can be addressed without user intercession. The ability to acquire and view video on mobile devices is extremely important and must form part of the video customer care architecture.

Smart video also has embedded speech-to-text capabilities to allow the spoken content to be extracted into a structured searchable file which can be stored on a video content management solution or as video knowledge in a knowledge base. A best practice when dynamically generating smart video with embedded customer content is to never show

the face of the people talking. In this manner, multiple language overlays can be used to provide service in the preferred language of the customer. The use of smart video is still in its infancy but should grow exponentially as bandwidth and mobile data charges becomes less and less of an issue.

Customer Care Best Practices

1. Make a decision about which omni-channel to use for which product or service

Survey your customers – find out their preferred channels of interaction and how they best want to engage with your organization. Then match your products and services with the channels best suited to engage with them across their preferred channels. Just because you have, for example, a web chat channel, it does not mean that you must sell complex financial services via that channel. Consider whether the traditional phone channel or perhaps a new generation VA would not be better suited to that particular product or service.

2. Consider the best customer care architecture for your organization

Architectural considerations are paramount when deploying customer care solutions, whether transactional, assisted or un-assisted solution. The first step is to determine if you already have a knowledge base for your technical-support or customer service organizations, as you may not be able to successfully integrate the newer customer care channels into your current products. Search for the method that fits best within your architecture, processes and culture. Take an approach of developing an omni-channel customer care strategy first, then working with your systems architects, then going to the market and selecting a product to suit your business requirement.

3. Ensure that you cater for escalations

Un-assisted care solutions are not perfect. On occasion, the customer will need assistance from a human agent, so plan to escalate unassisted channels like a VA to an assisted channel such as web chat. Find out from your customers what channels they would prefer for escalation, and have them ready.

Reduce abandoned customer care interactions by clearly posting the response time and processes for escalation and service.

4. Exploit your existing care applications where possible

Customer care is focused not only on providing a service, but also on obtaining feedback from the customer about the service. To create a great experience, it is crucial to integrate all of your customer care channels so that transferring from one channel to another does not create a break in the service provided. Many traditional technologies already deployed in an organization may not be open to the integration of new channels for services, so decide up front whether a silo-based approach is best or whether an omni-channel suite-based approach will provide more benefits.

5. Create a great marketing campaign

Customers won't know about the existence of your customer care channels unless you tell them about it. To achieve the expected benefits, you will need to do more than architect a good customer care infrastructure. Create a marketing campaign that will not only let them know about the existence of your customer care services but also the benefits they will receive when using them.

6. Focus on a great customer experience

Implementing an omni-channel customer care solution is the first step toward providing a great customer experience. If implemented efficiently and if all the information is available equally via all the channels, then customers will have a good experience. Measure the customer experience at all points of interaction and continually tweak your services, all the while delivering relevant content via the appropriate channel.

Endnotes

1. Email Volume Growth source: The Radicati Group Inc. "Email Statistics Report 2013 – 2017."
2. Gartner defines Gamification as: "The use of game mechanics and experience design to digitally engage and motivate people to achieve their goals."

About Digital Clarity Group

Digital Clarity Group is a research-based advisory firm focused on the content, technologies, and practices that drive world-class customer experience. Global organizations depend on our insight, reports, and consulting services to help them turn digital disruption into digital advantage. As analysts, we cover the customer experience management (CEM) footprint — those organizational capabilities and competencies that impact the experience delivered to customers and prospects. In our view, the CEM footprint overlays content management, marketing automation, e-commerce, social media management, collaboration, customer relationship management, localization, business process management, analytics, and search. As consultants, we believe that education and advice leading to successful CEM is only possible by actively engaging with all participants in the CEM solutions ecosystem. In keeping with this philosophy, we work with enterprise adopters of CEM solutions, technology vendors that develop and market CEM systems and tools, and service providers who implement solutions, including systems integrators and digital agencies. For more information about DCG, visit www.digitalclaritygroup.com or email info@digitalclaritygroup.com.

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