ONLINE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: THE CHANGING RULES OF CUSTOMER CARE

"Get closer than ever to your customers. So close that you tell them what they need well before they realise it themselves."

Introduction

When executed well, a customer engagement strategy will foster brand growth and loyalty. Live customer engagement is about encouraging customers to interact and share in the experiences built for them by a business and a brand.

Businesses that focus on customer engagement focus on value creation, not revenue extraction. They give people something significant: a brilliant end-to-end customer experience, great content, interactive, real-time customer support.

The customer experience is important because it gives marketers and business owners a way to increase satisfaction and loyalty. A study by The White House Office of Consumer Affairs found that 80% of U.S. consumers would pay more for a product or service to ensures a superior customer experience.

Business engagement strategies

Customer success strategies are always changing, but what never changes is the need for unique and efficient solutions to keep customers engaged.

As marketing and advertising evolve to meet the changing demands of a more digital landscape, they often struggle to keep methods human-centered. This is a problem because most consumers expect brands to be transparent. They also prefer to find brands through interruption free experiences, increasing the challenges for marketers in reaching consumers without becoming a nuisance.

According to Gartner, 80% of future company revenue will come from existing customers. This increases the pressure on marketers to find clients that are a match for their services, to prevent costly turnovers and missed revenue opportunities.

Richard Branson, marketing and business magnate, said: "A good entrepreneur starts with a customer problem. From this point, they can develop a solution and with passion, hard work and a bit of a risk and luck, they stand a good chance of success. Marketers are very well positioned to understand those customer problems, which is a great start."

Omichannel engagement

Recent developments in technology let us know that customers will want to reach sellers and companies through different channels - mobile, on-site (or specifically, on-page), social media, voice chat and more. To be able to meet and help customers wherever they are, and engage them before they need it, companies need more tools and functionalities.

Multi-Channel Communications

Open more communication channels to let your customers reach you.

Website live help

The website is one of the flagship branches, and needs a personalised customer service.
Having a live help customer service gives the company plenty of opportunities not just to solve customer problems, but also to help website visitors make important decisions.

Video chat

Through video chat, it is possible to build more trust with online customers. For example, since most bank's processes have to deal with money, the element of trust is very important.

Video chat also allows agents to help customers better through screen sharing and co-browsing, allowing agents to remotely guide customers in their resolution process.

Callback

Give customers the option to speak directly to one of your service agents. Sometimes customers want to share sensitive information over a voice call, feeling more safe with this channel. The call back now system removes the need to make the customer wait on hold by allowing them to schedule an appointment with the contact center.

Social Media

Facebook has taken its chat capabilities to the next level with chatbot applications and by allowing companies to use Facebook Messenger as a contact point.
This could be an opportunity to engage Millennials, who are more comfortable communicating through social media chat.

Real-Time Monitoring, Insights and Reports

Integrate a way to monitor customer engagement in real-time.
Some useful information to be tracked is: total number of customers served, total number of customers managed, average waiting time, page from which the contact originated, active contacts on a specific page, website visit rates through time, daily failure rate, agent reports (contacts served per hour, average answer time, average work time), etc.

Integrated Platform

Customers today have different needs that only an integrated multi-channel customer engagement platform is capable of satisfying.

Of course, you can always choose to use several tools to handle the different aspects of your customer service strategy: a software for calls and chats, a business intelligence software and Facebook Messenger for a start.

However, only an integrated system that has all the necessary tools will be sustainable for the best management of your organisation.

Proactive Live Chat and other Engagement Channels

Within the customer journey, find the moments of truth in the digital touchpoint to proactively offer personalised support on your website and within your mobile apps. This will guide the conversations from social media to private chat sessions when needed. Moments of truth represent events in the customer journey when customers either struggle with the engagement, are willing to buy or could use additional assistance.

Live chat is increasing in popularity as a preferred customer digital engagement channel, today representing 2% of the overall interactions, and growing to 10% in 2018.

IT leaders should follow these best practices fulfilling customer expectations of convenient, fast and meaningful engagements.

Companies should capture all customers' behaviour on their website to learn about their journeys.
A proactive chat can be launched manually by an agent, automatically based on time on a Web page, or through a rule-based invitation.

Also, determine how you want to use chat as an engagement tool. Some companies actively restrict chat availability, for example, by only allowing customers to engage with a chat agent after they have completed a purchase; others disable the live-chat button when the feature and/or agents are unavailable.

Enterprises are adopting live chat now as it has become essential to competing in the market.
However, live chat should form part of a broader, multichannel engagement strategy to improve customer service.
Chat by itself is not that powerful, but sending additional information across multiple channels, can be very powerful. Often, video chat and/or co-browsing are implemented only as escalation channels.

Companies must carefully assess interaction management architectures, as customers expect to receive the same experience regardless of the point of engagement.
Focusing on an architecture independent from channels and on the use of channel-appropriate interactions, independent of device and process, is the key to success in a customer engagement strategy.

Use it to build a more complete and integrated web customer service plan that takes into consideration all of your current and future multichannel requirements.

Online shopping customers: hooks and practices

The human desire for social connection is part of what gets people "hooked" on apps and other products.
Today there's less of a focus on checking out and more of a focus on checking in.
Retailers are beholden to networks if they want to connect with consumers.
In retail, brand loyalty used to be tied to the convenience of a physical store location.
Now consumers can shop at any store online, so brands need a deeper relationship and engagement with customers to obtain loyalty.

One of the most important ways to make a customer engaged is by using the company's online platforms to attract their attention.

Customers enjoy getting that serendipity and experience of purchasing in a physical shop.
Hence, clustering products based more on fashion than on utility or cross-selling could enhance merchandising.
After this consideration, we could affirm that content marketing is perhaps another way of customer engagement.

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Telecommunication case: engagement tips

Today customer experience is at the center of telcos' digital transformation efforts.

Telecommunication is one of many industries that are transitioning towards becoming more digitalised businesses.

As revenue growth in the industry continues to decline and telecom operators' core services become commoditised, customer experience remains as one of the few areas operators can differentiate themselves from their competitors and maintain relevance with consumers. This places greater need for operators to make customers engagement a priority.

There is no shortage of commentators and technology providers extolling the virtues of a more customer-centric focus, urging operators to adopt an omnichannel approach.

By integrating online call center through omnichannel capabilities the promise to operators is that they can deliver joint customer experiences: simultaneously improving the effectiveness of telecoms marketing by building a "single-view" of the customer, reducing time spent on resolving customer service issues, and preventing data from getting stuck.

Those operators who have built omnichannel capabilities are reaping the rewards.

However, operators also appreciate that success is not just down to implementing fancy systems: it's also about what you do with them and having the right skills.

Although most telcos are investing in their efforts to digitalise customer experience, it may not be obvious where they should be concentrating their efforts and what targets they should be aiming for. For this, there is a need to determine what the relevant benchmarks are when it comes to best-practice for digital engagement, how well they stack up and how they should seek to close the gap.

Telcos are looking to learn from outside their industry as customer engagement is a domain that all businesses constantly seek to improve. Telcos often look for best-practice examples from other industries, which are undergoing a digital transformation and still have the burden of legacy services, systems, processes, people and infrastructure.

These industries include finance, retail and media.

Nonetheless, when comparing telcos' digital customer engagement to these industries, many different measures suggest that telcos are still lagging behind.