How to improve your digital customer service strategy

By Ndagi Job Goshi   19 Apr 2021

In today's customer-driven world, the role of the customer service and support team is more critical than ever. Businesses need to shift their mindset to view their customer service and support not as an expense but rather as an investment and a partner for success.

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Providing a positive customer experience entails more than just having helpful people on hand to assist with any issues that arise. Businesses should instead adopt a customer experience strategy that incorporates both conventional and digital elements.

That being said, digital channels should not be siloed, but instead should be leveraged as critical components of an overarching customer services strategy. Traditional service alone will no longer be sufficient for serving customers as the processes are unable to anticipate and meet changing expectations.

Call centre operations are being replaced by virtual ecosystems of digital tools, such as self-service portals, chatbots, and voice assistants. Companies that are able to provide relevant and agile customer service will be the ones that differentiate themselves from their competitors.

Here are three essential elements of an effective digital strategy:

1. Understand current customer journeys

The question we should be asking ourselves as businesses is "why do we exist?" Hopefully, the answer should have something to do with, "for the sake of our customers." If so, ultimately, every element of customer services needs to support the customer and improve their experience. This will require a thorough understanding of how a typical customer interacts with the business.

Ask the following questions:

- What channels are currently provided to the customers, both traditional and digital? Which of these are most popular?

- Where are the points of conflict during a typical customer journey when a customer will reach out for help? Remember to consider the entire journey, from first-touch, to purchase, and afterwards.

- Is it possible to streamline this journey?

- Are there commonly asked questions or processes that customer service teams spend a lot of time answering?

Throughout their journey, customers interact with a variety of channels and touchpoints, from customer portals to a website or an app. Plan how all channels, traditional or digital, can work together to deliver an experience that will satisfy customer demands.

2. Implement the necessary technology

Driven by a heart of service and a more comprehensive understanding of customer behaviour, access and implement the technologies needed to execute the overall strategy. Investments into these technologies should not be made in isolation or simply to keep up with the latest trends, but they should rather make sense for customers, within the context of the larger customer service strategy and business requirements.

- ## Self-service

  With self-service, you can empower customers to find content and information they need themselves. This also brings benefits such as cost savings and increased productivity by reducing the number of calls to the customer support centre. By implementing self-service into different channels, such as a corporate website and customer portals, it will be more scalable to deliver consistent experiences throughout.

- ## Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

  AI technologies are becoming more and more commonplace in enhancing existing applications and processes. Like investments for any technology, businesses need to first identify how AI should fit into the customer service journey or what specific pain point it will resolve. Some use cases for AI include virtual assistants or automated case management solutions and workflow assignments.

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3. Measure success
Equally critical to implementing a strategy is measuring its effectiveness.

Track metrics such as:

- How long does it take for customers to resolve their issues

- The volume of calls to customer support

- How many users log onto each of the digital channels provided

- Cost savings from adding digital channels

It's also beneficial to have either customer support teams or a neutral third party reach out to customers to rate or review their experience. Make sure to incorporate a regular assessment of tactics and channels to implement improvements and build out an experience that will actually be beneficial to customers.

Getting started on a digital-first customer service strategy may seem difficult and resource-intensive; however, the investment and commitment put into maturing a digital customer service strategy will be well worth the benefits of optimised business efficiencies, increased agility and scalability, and ultimately enhanced customer experiences.

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