TRANSFORMING A CUSTOMER SERVICE TO A CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE CENTER – A BLUEPRINT

Abstract

In today's unsettling business environment, even the most advanced customer service organizations need help in providing an engaging customer experience across multiple channels. Most of the contact centers fail to deliver the required, compelling customer experience as the strategy for customer service is pivoted on insignificant terms that focus on individual interactions rather than complete customer journeys.

The effort involved in building key customer service journeys can be complex, as the focus of a service center should be based on customer personas in this journey. Our experience has taught us that most of the successful customer service centers have three focus areas – governance, quality of service, and team performance.

This white paper focuses on providing a blueprint to address the customer journey effectively based on the context and root cause of customer calls to the contact center. It not only addresses customer service, but also creates feedback loops across multiple channels for effective upstream and downstream interactions by transforming the current contact center into a comprehensive customer experience center.

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Why should the focus lie on customer experience and not conventional customer service or contact center?

Even the most advanced customer service units are still not able to understand what their customers' ever-changing needs are. Advances in technology have given customers unprecedented control over the experience of sales and services. In today's world, marketing, sales, and services occur over many channels and touchpoints. Customers are now used to new benchmarks of experience that are set by leaders such as Amazon, Apple, and Google — and hence the same level of customer experience is expected from every call center, across all industries.

Customers, irrespective of the industry, expect immediate service and insist on a 'social experience.' This leads to feedback that is online, immediate, and direct.

The key is to adapt to new processes, cultures, and mindsets to manage the entire customer experience across touchpoints. The benefits reach not only customers, but also employees and the bottom line.

Touchpoints in customer service

Many contact centers fail to deliver the required, compelling customer experience as the strategy for customer service is pivoted on individual interactions rather than the entire customer journey. Some contact centers focus on operations, but forget to pay heed to the service provided from the customer's perspective. And, many organizations tend to ignore the importance of internal cultural changes needed to achieve and sustain a new customer experience.

The focus should be on identifying each touchpoint in the customer journey across service calls, pre-purchase services, billings, onboardings, and so forth. For a customer, all these operations form a part of the same journey.

The effort of perfecting the customer service journey can be complex, as the focus of the service center should be on each persona in this journey. Our experience has taught us that most of the successful customer service centers have three focus areas across each touchpoint of customer service:

- **Governance** – How do we manage risk in a contact center? For instance, a service agent should be able to predict workload changes or at least the volume of cases added to his / her service stack

- **Quality of service** – Metrics such as average handling time / turnaround time / response time are key to the success of a contact center. In many cases, the contact center manager does not have an end-to-end view of these metrics nor of how the service provided meets these quality metrics

- **Team performance** – One of the most ignored areas is the performance of the team, which provides the customer service. Many times, senior management needs a unified view of the team's progress towards meeting the right levels of customer experience

Right diagnosis of customer experiences from the eyes of a customer service agent

Customer experience begins with service agents who know and care about it, and are well-positioned to deliver it. Every successful contact center recognizes that it lies in the customer experience business and hence focuses its energy on creating a customer-driven marketplace. To build the internal momentum, the key is to develop a simple and unique customer experience strategy for the contact center. Understanding the fundamental 'wants and needs' of customers must be a pivotal step in determining what a great experience for them should look like.

There are several key questions which would help the contact center if the service agents provide the right customer experience:

- What is the contact center's appetite for change in the near term?
- What is the gap between the expected customer experiences for customers against what is delivered?
- What are the required capabilities of support staff to provide this level of customer experience?
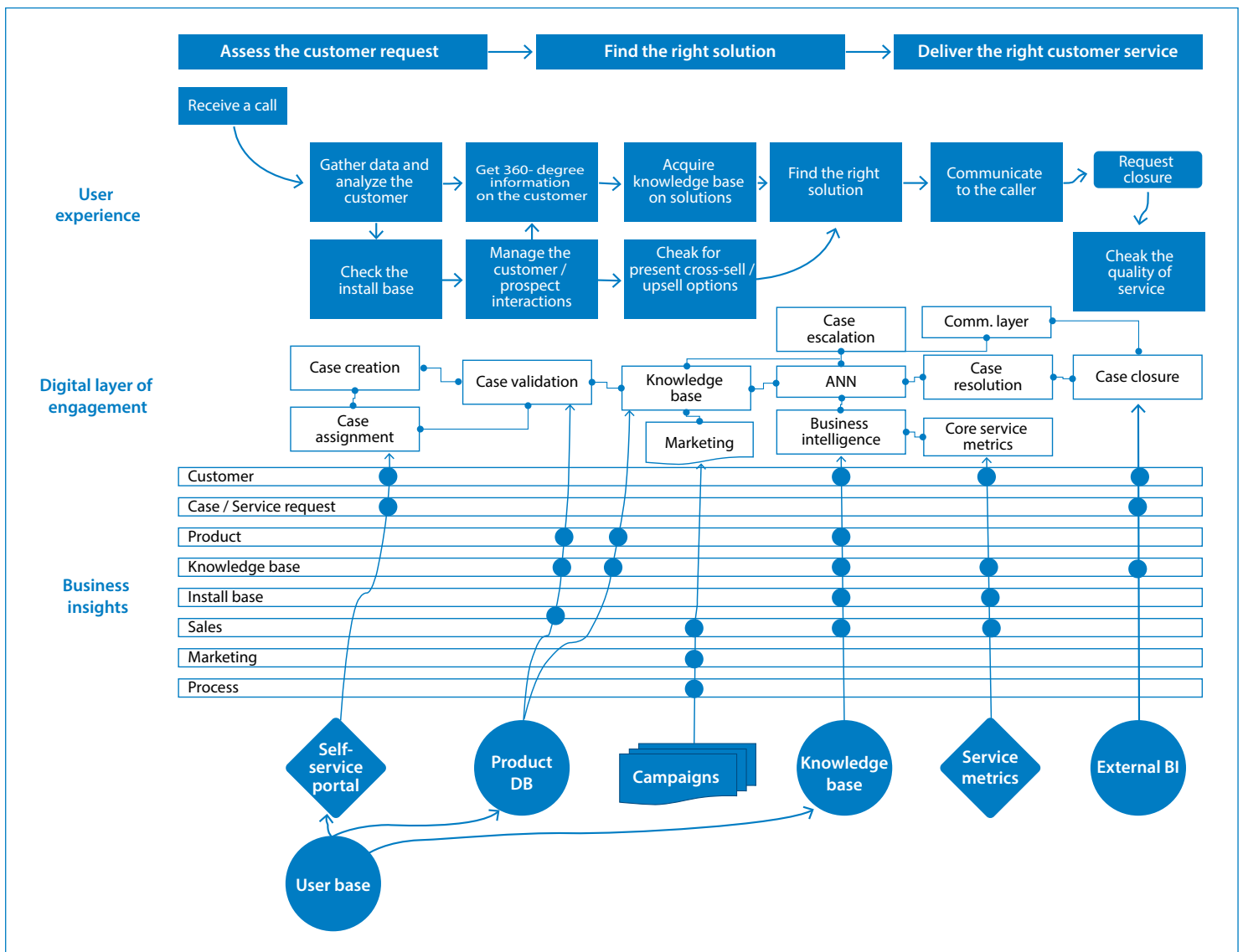
Gathering and segmenting data are starting points to understand a caller's needs.

However, data is not enough — successful customer experience needs a good understanding of the targeted persona as well. This includes answering fundamental questions — who are my customers as individuals? What motivates them? What do they want to achieve? Who are the key personas who interact with these customers?

Tackling these questions requires a concerted analytical effort, which helps an organization design and implement a more sophisticated program and, critically, persuade employees to embrace its customer experience goals.

Designing and starting up a customer experience – the blueprint

To design a customer experience, let us look at one measurable routine service event – say a customer service request – from the point of view of the service agent, who is receiving the call, and the customer. The call center could receive thousands of calls, but it is imperative to handle each call appropriately. This is because customers perceive these calls as more than a 'query on a product' – each call has a context – the customer could be trying to fix a technical issue or evaluating options at the end of a contract.

Diagram

Assess the customer request → **Find the right solution** → **Deliver the right customer service**

Receive a call

User experience

- Gather data and analyze the customer
- Get 360- degree information on the customer
- Acquire knowledge base on solutions
- Find the right solution
- Communicate to the caller
- Request closure

- Check the install base
- Manage the customer / prospect interactions
- Cheak for present cross-sell / upsell options
- Cheak the quality of service

Digital layer of engagement

- Case creation
- Case assignment
- Case validation
- Knowledge base
- Case escalation
- Comm. layer
- ANN
- Marketing
- Business intelligence
- Case resolution
- Core service metrics
- Case closure

Business insights

- Customer
- Case / Service request
- Product
- Knowledge base
- Install base
- Sales
- Marketing
- Process

Self-service portal | Product DB | Campaigns | Knowledge base | Service metrics | External BI

User base

Call center agents should effectively address the customer journey, as and when they understand the context and root cause for the call from a customer. The focus is to address the customer query and create feedback loops across multiple channels for effective upstream and downstream interactions.

Linking customer experience to value of service

To build customer experience, leaders in the field of customer service pursue a range of approaches, three of which are:

- **Intent-driven user experience design** – Can we design a user experience based on the primary intention of the user? The customer service platform should have a user experience customized for each of the key personas involved in customer interaction such as the service agent, service manager, or the director of service operations. For each of them, the contact center would need a specialized user experience to effectively connect and interact with the end caller.

- **Digital layer of engagement** – In a complex customer service-based process, there are multiple data sources to be referenced. Many of the data sources would be external – for instance, the install base could be mastered in the back-end enterprise resource planning (ERP) that needs to be referenced by the customer relationship management (CRM) platform, acting as a digital layer of engagement.

- **Actionable insights** – The key part of a customer service solution is how the collected customer data is modeled to mine useful, actionable insights on customers. This would enable call center agents to be more proactive rather than corrective. To acquire actionable insights on the caller, the key is to design a predictive model, which can take insights from call data, queue status, and product trends.

Structuring a service organization to deliver a superior customer experience can be challenging. The key to tackling this problem is to make customer experience the top priority, so as to model customer-centric behaviors that will engage and motivate employees at the forefront.

About the Author

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