An eGain White Paper

Transform Customer Service with Next-Gen Knowledge

Why and How

Why knowledge

The consumer has spoken.

Forrester Research recently asked 5000 of them, "What created the biggest pain when you contacted a business for customer service?" The answer was loud and clear—the lack and consistency of agent knowledge, followed by the difficulty of finding relevant answers on company websites. The feedback sounded like a broken record for customer service pain across a whole bunch of industries. So what is driving this dissatisfaction? We think the following issues have something to do with it.

Self-service and peer-to-peer service adoption continues to rise, with millennials leading that trend. Naturally, questions that come to agents are more complex, posing a big challenge to a labor pool, where the high average churn rate of 40% makes the problem worse.

Contact center training budgets are ironically being cut by as much as 60 percent. This is against the backdrop of agent roles becoming more complex. Still considered cost centers by many businesses, contact centers can ill-afford to keep agents in perpetual training mode. With inadequate training, agents try to improvise with their answers, leading to repeat calls, compliance issues, and customer complaints.

Legacy knowledge management (KM) systems are not smart enough for the modern contact center. Moreover, many organizations confuse data, and document/content management systems with KM. With such systems, agents are unable to find the "answer needle" in the ever-expanding information haystack in a timely manner, when the customer is on the line.

Channel-specific knowledge silos compound this problem, creating multiple "right" answers that frustrate agents and consumers alike.

Why knowledge first

There are so many ways to get to pain-free customer service, but what is the fastest path to relief? "Knowledge first" would be a sound approach, based on what consumers are saying. Here are some more reasons to go that way:

- The knowledge deficit can be the root cause of many operational ailments in the contact center such as repeat calls (i.e., lower FCR or First-Contact Resolution), increased AHT (Average Handle Time), slow ASA (Average Speed to Answer), and increased agent shrinkage (partially caused by endless training). One can also add strategic metrics such as customer loyalty to this list.

- Customers are often in a negative emotional state when they get to the agent since they are likely to have already had a negative experience with self-service or another agent. So the challenge and stakes are even higher when it comes to human-assisted service.

- Contact center agents tend to be "blue collar" knowledge workers and do not command the relatively high salaries associated with typical "white collar" knowledge jobs. They are mostly younger, most likely millennials or late Gen X. While older workers internalize knowledge and often keep it in their heads, this generation, often called the "look up" generation, goes to the Web to literally run their lives. Having a KM system in place, aka a place to look up information or get guided to answers or next best steps in the service process, is therefore a must for today's contact center workforce.

- Automating everything else without knowledge guidance can detract rather than help the customer experience. It's like turbocharging an automobile engine to speed it up when the driver doesn't know where to go and what to do next. With no guidance, the driver (consumer in the case of self-service, and the agent in the case of human-assisted service), is going to reach the wrong destination or take U-turns in cul de sacs, leading to awful service experiences.

Knowledge-enabling customer service contact centers

In your quest to knowledge-enable your contact center, here are key attributes to look for in your KM system (and the solution provider) to maximize your odds of success.

Does it find?

Can the KM system find accurate answers fast when the customer is on the line and the pressure is on? Make sure your KM system makes findability easy with flexible search options so that the user can pick the path to the answer he/she likes. The contact center could also mandate the path, based on agents' tenure with the organization and regulatory requirements in the case of human-assisted service. Examples of "find" paths include FAQs, keyword search, natural language search, federated search, topic tree browsing, etc. Suffice it to say that the business value of content without fast findability is zero, or even negative if one were to look at the cost of content creation and maintenance.

EGAIN CLIENTS FIND: A leading retailer was able to deflect up to 60% of incoming calls with knowledge-enabled self-service, and a global media and legal services giant deflected up to 70% of agent assistance requests with fast findability, powered by eGain Knowledge™.

Does it federate?

Thanks to the Web, online forums, and social networks, knowledge is literally everywhere and is easily accessible. And sometimes, "power users" know more about products, tips, and tricks than even the companies that make them, which could come in handy in customer support situations. Likewise, in consumers' purchase journeys, online reviews are often the first stop. It therefore makes eminent sense to tap into all this information and present the results on the business' own website when customers search for answers rather than having them go to other websites, creating abandonment risk. Compiling answers from multiple sources and presenting them to customers while marking them as trusted/curated or otherwise is called "search federation," an important KM requirement now. Likewise, the KM system should be able to "harvest" answers from such sources automatically and feed them to the knowledge manager for quality control and publishing as trusted knowledge.

EGAIN CLIENTS FEDERATE: Leading promotional products company federates search across multiple internal and external sources to answer questions from suppliers, distributors, business clients, and consumers.

Does it personalize?

Finding accurate answers and getting to resolution is good, but depending on where the user starts the quest for answers it can be fast or convoluted. One way to increase speed to answer is to get hyper-relevant right at the start by personalizing for customer preferences, agent roles, agent skills (e.g., based on products supported, functions performed such as servicing, selling, onboarding,

collections, language skills, etc.), past history, etc. The system should be able to personalize for authenticated customers or even anonymous prospects to the degree possible, while making it easy to deliver hyper-relevant knowledge from one single knowledge base. Doing it from multiple, disparate knowledge silos fragmented across touchpoints creates pandemonium rather than personalization.

EGAIN CLIENTS PERSONALIZE: A financial services BPO serves multiple clients from a single eGain-powered knowledge base. To make it easy and efficient for agents, eGain Knowledge delivers personalized views for them, depending on the clients they serve, the agents' roles, and if the caller is a consumer. Queries cover payment processes, credit card issuance and reissuance, fraudulent use, complaint resolution, etc.

Does it guide?

While an important business use of KM is finding answers, next-gen KM systems can guide agents and customers through next best steps in their conversations and processes. After all, today's millennial agents (and customers) are used to being guided in all aspects of life. For example, use of smartphone GPS apps for driving is 26% higher for millennials than for boomers, according to Experian!

Artificial Intelligence (AI) takes guidance to the next level. AI-infused KM systems can handhold agents through customer interactions, based on organizational best practices and regulatory requirements for automated compliance. The output might be step-by-step guidance to a customer goal like problem resolution or even a go/no-go decision on whether to take on or do something. Watch out for pretenders like rigid scripting and rule-based systems that claim guidance—they tend to put agents and customers in conversation cul-de-sacs, especially when the customer goes off-script (which is not uncommon), and cannot make mid-course adjustments to move the interaction towards the customer goal. Moreover, such legacy systems are difficult and expensive to maintain.

EGAIN CLIENTS GUIDE: Global bank uses eGain's patented AI technology to guide a largely novice agent pool through best-practice interactions across 11 countries, while reducing training requirements by half! The same technology enables a global media and legal services giant to make decisions on whether to take on malpractice lawsuits, based on multiple factors like the amount of damages, win rates in the past for any given topic, tendencies of specific courts/judges, etc. A leading telco guides 10,000 contact center advisors and associates in 500 retail stores with eGain Knowledge for a 37% improvement in First-Contact Resolution (FCR), 50% improvement in advisor speed to competency, and a 20% boost to their NPS (Net Promoter Score).

Does it comply?

Compliance with ever-changing industry regulations, whether it is for content, access, or interaction, makes customer service even more challenging for companies, particularly in highly-regulated industries. In fact, 70% of compliance professionals expect increased regulations, 59% expect increased personal liability, and 69% expect compliance staffing costs to rise . This is where AI-enabled guidance can help.

EGAIN CLIENTS COMPLY: A marquee global bank guides advisors through a step-by-step dialog and industry-compliant questions as they qualify and onboard small business clients, with eGain AI. Another bank serves wholesale clients in multiple countries with a single eGain-powered AI system that incorporates the global parent's best practices, while taking into account local regulations in those countries. Utilities clients use AI guidance not only to resolve customer problems but also help them avert safety hazards due to gas leaks and the like, while complying with regulations on who asks and does what and when.

Does it embed in other systems?

eGain partners with "systems of record" providers such as call center infrastructure, CRM, and content management solution providers, where its award-winning digital engagement and knowledge management capabilities are embedded in the agent desktop. CSRs can find fast, accurate answers for customer questions by simply clicking on a "Solve" tab or button, whereby eGain Knowledge is bootstrapped with expanded context from third-party systems for speedy problem resolution.

EGAIN CLIENTS EMBED KNOWLEDGE: A multinational telecom services company embeds eGain Knowledge in its agent desktop, where the solution pinpoint answers from a SharePoint content repository at the push of a button. A leading financial services BPO embeds eGain Knowledge in its CRM desktop where our solution leverages expanded context from caller information, IVR context, etc., to bootstrap the search for answers and resolution. A toy manufacturing leader does the same, embedding eGain Knowledge into a CRM agent desktop. A leading IT management services BPO embeds it in its agent desktop from a voice infrastructure provider, where the integrated solution enables great omnichannel support experiences and proactive customer engagement with contextual offers.

Does it pervade?

Clearly, the world has gone omnichannel, with omnichannel penetration of commerce at anywhere from 35% (healthcare) to 65% (consumer electronics.) And it is no secret that mobile is a big part of omnichannel. Can the KM system deliver consistent and channel-tailored knowledge on any channel or device? Does it support mobile, whether it is the mobile web with responsive design or an app? Can it bootstrap a human-assisted service conversation or an autonomous remote fix from device data?

EGAIN CLIENTS PERVADE: A retail giant pushes contextual knowledge to omnichannel shoppers, related to ten brands which are their retail subsidiaries, across channels, including mobile. Another

retailer delivers knowledge across self-service, email, and chat to help shoppers across their journeys before and after the sale. A telco giant bootstraps service interactions with data and context gathered from the calling number even before the agent starts the conversation, and also fixes problems remotely with the push of a button from the agent console!

Does it engage (proactively)?

While delivering knowledge on demand in a reactive way is table stakes, contact centers that want to differentiate themselves deliver contextual, personalized knowledge proactively across touchpoints to accelerate customer service journeys.

EGAIN CLIENTS ENGAGE: A leading catalog and digital retailer deflects requests for human-assisted chat by proactively pushing eGain-powered contextual knowledge to the shopper at the time of escalation to live chat. The same retailer makes over 50 million contextual content or promotional offers per year with eGain Knowledge, complemented by its offers engine.

Does it unify?

One of the top pain points in customer service is the inconsistency of answers across touchpoints and even across agents serving the same touchpoint, per the consumer survey mentioned earlier. Is the KM system capable of delivering knowledge that is personalized to the customer and the touchpoint from a single omnichannel source?

EGAIN CLIENTS UNIFY: A large federal government healthcare system in the US uses eGain-powered omnichannel knowledge across phone and digital channels to deliver consistent answers that are also compliant with regulations. The agency powers over 24,000 agents and 2 million self-service sessions per year with eGain with plans for additional use. Likewise, a leading North America telco leverages eGain Knowledge across web self-service and voice channels for consistent omnichannel service, reducing repeat calls and improving customer satisfaction. A major telco leverages a unified omnichannel knowledge base across 10,000 contact center advisors and 500 retail stores!

Does it make it easy?

Out-of-the-box functionality, proven domain expertise, best-practice methodology, ease of trial, ease of deployment, and ease of optimization are critical to not only creating business value with knowledge but also doing it with speed and expanding it over time. Here's how eGain makes it easy:

‣ Easy "riches": Unlike solutions from new entrants and do-it-all generalists, eGain Knowledge offers best-of-breed functionality--including patented AI technology--out of the box for rapid, cost-effective value creation. A pioneer in KM, consistently rated #1, eGain has developed the richest solution for customer service through sustained innovation and collaboration with world-class clients for over two decades.

▸ Easy to pilot: eGain Try+Buy™ is a unique production pilot in the cloud that enables contact centers to try our solutions—knowledge or other products—free of charge with no obligation to buy. Unlike traditional pilots, eGain Try+Buy also includes free assistance from domain experts to guide the pilot to quick business value.

▸ Easy to deploy: eGain uses its proprietary eGain Knowledge Method™ for rapid value creation with KM. The method includes time-tested best practices across scoping, content, consumption, training, value creation, measurement and optimization, and ongoing governance.

▸ Easy to optimize: eGain Knowledge offers slice-and-dice KM analytics out of the box for continuous optimization. For instance, knowledge managers can measure and fine-tune the effectiveness of answers/knowledge base articles, scope of knowledge, etc., based on what's working and what's not, and automatically create and track knowledge tasks for the service organization.

EGAIN CLIENTS "EASE" (INTO KM): A multinational manufacturer of cleaning systems piloted eGain digital engagement and proactive knowledge solutions as part of eGain Try+Buy. Happy with the results from the pilot and the hands-on guidance provided by domain experts for success, they moved forward with the eGain partnership. Next in their plan is to add advanced AI guidance for agents and the next level of real-time digital engagement with cobrowse.

A toy manufacturing leader, a household name, used eGain Try+Buy to arm agents with contextual knowledge to serve consumers for its own brands and third-party brands that white-labeled its products. In the latter case, the knowledge had to be compliant with the agreements that the manufacturer had made with those companies. In addition, the company simultaneously tried out eGain Superchat™, the most comprehensive solution for real-time digital collaboration. Happy with the benefits from the production pilot, the manufacturer is deploying both solutions to their entire agent pool!

Does it "pay"?

If there is a killer use for KM in the enterprise, it is in the contact center. Historically, KM has been limited by weak technology and generic content management substitutes. Not all knowledge providers walk the walk when it comes to delivering actual success. eGain stands out, having created transformational value for over 20 years for the world's leading companies!

eGain clients get "paid":

▸ Telco giant speeds up agent time to competency by 100%, First-Contact Resolution by 37%, and NPS by 20%, while reducing advisor training time by 43% with omnichannel knowledge across its 10,000 contact center agents and 500 retail stores

▸ Leading global bank reduced call handle time by 67% and agent training time by 50%, while its subsidiary vaulted to the #1 position in customer experience in its market

▸ Global media and legal services company deflected up to 70% of its calls, while making go/no-go decisions on high-profile litigation services projects

▸ Leading North American telco reduced average handle time by 17% and incoming calls by 19% with omnichannel knowledge

- ‣ Leading US branded manufacturer improved service quality by 33%
- ‣ Leading European telco reduced unwarranted handset returns and exchanges by 38% through better problem resolution in the contact center, while enhancing agent experience by 90%

If this is not customer service transformation, what is?! You could transform, too, by taking the next step!

Next Steps

The best way to pilot software is through a real-world trial in a production setting rather than playing with toy sand-boxes. That's exactly what eGain Try+Buy offers, and with no-charge guidance to value by domain experts with no obligation to buy! That is walking the walking in putting skin in the game! This offer is also available to pilot our AI-infused knowledge management solution. Contact us today to set up a 30 minute no-obligation phone meeting to see how we can work together.

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eGain customer engagement solutions power digital transformation for leading brands. Our **top-rated cloud applications** for social, mobile, web, and contact centers help clients deliver connected, knowledge-guided customer journeys in an omnichannel world. Businesses can **try our solution** in a risk-free production pilot with expert guidance to success. For more information, visit www.egain.com/.