7 Customer Service Mistakes Companies Should Avoid Making in 2021

2020 was a tumultuous year but it did bring customer service back to the forefront of the business planning agenda for 2021. As you plan and prioritize your initiatives, it is important to avoid mistakes. Here are some common but critical ones.

1. Foot off the digital gas

When the pandemic hit us all in early 2020, many businesses had to shut down their retail operations and branch offices or reduce their operating hours due to lockdowns. Consumers, too, opted for contactless service (aka digital) to avoid getting infected. In fact, in a survey conducted by Dimensional Research on behalf of eGain, 80% of consumers said that they had increased the use of digital customer service since the pandemic hit. This megatrend has forced businesses and government entities to shore up their digital customer service capabilities. Significantly, 75 percent of people using digital channels for the first time indicate that they will continue to use them when things return to "normal," according to McKinsey.

As you plan for 2021, a big mistake you could make is to think that digital customer service will become less important as we get back to post-pandemic normalcy later in the year. The reality is that the digital genie ain't going back into the bottle, per Forrester. In fact, Forrester predicts that digital customer service interactions will increase by 40% in 2021. The answer? Keep pressing that digital gas pedal!

2. Stick with silos

Despite sustained evangelism from industry experts, many businesses still take a piecemeal approach to implementing customer service channels. So, some of them rushed to add a chatbot to handle the spike in customer service traffic related to Covid, without making sure

they are connected for context and continuity with other touchpoints. Others have been deploying messaging silos. And this problem is only going to get worse in 2021.

Forrester predicts that organizations will increase the number of customer service channels they deploy from 8 to 11 to encompass a broader range of asynchronous messaging channels, introducing more silos than before.

Having to repeat information across touchpoints continues to remain one of the top hassles in getting good customer service. Go with a hub and platform approach to resolve this issue. For example, with eGain, you can deploy a digital-first, omnichannel customer service hub without compromising deep functionality. In short, have your cake and eat it too!

3. "Connect" and done

Connecting with customers is only the first step in customer service. In fact, it is better not to connect with customers than to connect and not offer the solution or advice they are looking for. Which is why a rich knowledge management solution is vital.

Make sure the solution is powered by AI and reasoning and goes beyond just raw content to include easy findability of answers and conversational guidance. It is equally important that the same knowledge base is leveraged across all customer touchpoints, which is often not the case.

In a Dimensional Research-eGain survey, 57% of consumers complained that they got different answers from chatbots and human agents, reducing trust in the customer service capability of the business.

Once you solve customer issues with knowledge, make sure to optimize your service operations and knowledge base with analytics!

4. There's a toolkit for that

Some vendors check all the boxes in the RFP response, but look under the glossy covers and you will find that you have to build capabilities from scratch with a toolkit. This takes time and resource you can ill-afford as the pressure to accelerate digital transformation gets ratcheted up.

The answer? Look for solutions that offer rich capabilities out of the box and quick time to value!

5. Business value is a 5-year plan

According to McKinsey, less than 15% of companies can quantify the impact of their digital initiatives. Beware of providers that can't measure the success of their deployment. And stay away from big iron vendors that promise to solve world hunger in 5 years, while putting your wallet on a radical weight-loss plan!

Take AI to illustrate the point. Gartner says that it takes an average of 4 years for enterprises to get their AI solutions up and running, let alone get ROI from them.

Ask: What is the vendor's approach to digital value creation? What is the typical time to value? What ROI can they sign up for? Can they provide client success stories?

6. It is all about technology

As you evaluate solutions, look for vendor partners with proven domain expertise in customer service. Technology is clearly important but so are best practices for quick business value and deployment success. You don't want a solution partner to learn on your dime!

7. We are good enough

Companies often make the mistake of simply benchmarking their customer service operations against peers in their industry. However, today's digital-first consumer expects you to be as good as digital CX leaders such as Amazon and Uber in delivering smart, easy experiences. Plan to match digital giants in customer service before your peers do!

Final Word

2021 is a transition year and experts predict a return to normalcy only by the fourth quarter of the year. Taking a digital-first approach, while avoiding the above mistakes, will put you in a strong position to retain and grow your customers in 2021 and beyond.

About eGain

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