



Transforming Customer Support With

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The reason customers are contacting you is that they need answers. All customer support starts with that simple truth.

Effective knowledge management (KM) is crucial to providing customers with the information they need, in a quick, concise, and consistent way across all communications channels. More than just a technology solution, effective KM has to be a core strategy that is continually refined to satisfy customers, empower employees, and deliver value that directly affects the bottom line.

In the following Best Practices installment to *CRM* magazine, three leading experts share their insights into what effective KM can do for your customer support—and to ultimately drive better outcomes for your organization.

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Knowledge Management: An Essential Component of Any Customer Service Strategy

Knowledge management (KM) has become a key solution for successful customer service delivery. And it is set to play an even bigger role as customer service channels and environments continue to evolve.

Today, we are surrounded by a sea of content. KM applications are helping organizations address this challenge by capturing, distributing, and effectively using knowledge to unlock the value contained within. Small snippets or kernels of information extracted from the main content body and managed by the KM application are much easier to consume by end users, offering significant advances in the quest for content that is quick and easy to find, and that enables consumers to even more effectively self-serve.

ADDING VALUE ACROSS CHANNELS

KM can transform customer service productivity through effectiveness and efficiency improvements, helping organizations do the right things in the right way. Today, KM applications are a fundamental component of the following customer channels:

- Self-Service**
 Web and mobile self-service portals use KM to deliver information to customers using search. KM features, such as browse trees and guided process flows, can guide customers toward answers to their simple and complex queries, while helping deflect traffic away from the contact center. Advanced KM applications even use context to time and automatically surface information to customers, eliminating the need for search.
- Web Chat**
 Of all the new customer channels deployed by businesses in recent years, web chat is showing to be among those with the fastest rate of adoption. Pre-built answers and knowledge snippets for common customer

problems can be pasted into web chat replies, significantly improving agent productivity and helping ensure consistency of answers and compliance.

- Social Customer Engagement**
 On social media, customers have enhanced speed and service-level expectations compared with other communications channels. Using knowledge snippets optimized to meet social media message size restrictions, KM can significantly speed up social response times, improving both agent productivity and customer satisfaction.
- Email**
 The availability of pre-built, approved email responses managed by KM applications can significantly improve the productivity of employees and management of email (including secure email) channels. As with other text-based channels, the objective is to drive consistency, compliance, and productivity improvements while making it efficient for the end customer.

EXTENDING THE BENEFITS OF CRM

When paired with CRM systems, KM can provide your organization with critical information, such as insight into key searches and topics navigated in a knowledge domain. This offers visibility into the types of questions, needs, issues, and ideas that users (and customers) have—providing useful ways for your organization to respond quickly to opportunities and improvements.

CRM systems using knowledge management can also provide an assessment of the top content resources used by customers. This information can indicate which products and services are of the greatest interest.

In fact, some of the most effective knowledge systems can correlate the top inquiries and content resources with

key service drivers, such as call types, web sessions, and escalations, to show where and how knowledge can be further enhanced and expanded to drive better future service experiences.

EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES WITH INFORMATION

KM can support smarter answers, improved decisions, and better outcomes, not just for the customer, but for your employees as well. It helps put intelligence at their fingertips in the context of the task in hand to drive improved first-contact resolution, faster speed to answer, and more complete, accurate, and contextual responses. By analyzing how and when employees and customers use knowledge, your organization can gain the insights needed to optimize the knowledge base and the customer experience itself.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SOLUTION

KM is an essential part of today's omnichannel customer engagement mix and is well positioned to play an even bigger role in the future. Solutions such as Verint® Knowledge Management™ can help your organization use context to deliver the right knowledge to users in the contact center and to customers through self-service. This powerful solution can give your customers the ability to self-serve as desired, while giving your agents the tools they need to provide exceptional service to improve the consistency and quality of answers, enhance compliance with regulations and company processes, and reduce staff training time.

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The Transformational Value of Knowledge Management for Customer Service and Support

What is the secret to customer loyalty? The answer straight from ~50,000 consumers, per a massive survey conducted by Corporate Executive Board, was: Make it easy to get service.

In order to find the recipe for “ease,” Forrester Consulting asked 5,000 consumers (on our behalf) about their biggest pain points in getting customer service. The answers (by far) were lack of contact center agent knowledge and inconsistency of answers across touchpoints, followed by the inability of websites to deliver answers. With a common “knowledge” theme running across the pain points, the panacea is clearly an intelligent and unified omnichannel knowledge management (KM) system.

Done with the right technology, process, people, and best practices, KM reduces customer effort and creates loyalty. KM also enables breakthrough enhancements to operational metrics, which not only *transforms* the contact center but *transcends* it in many ways. Here are sample metrics and real-world examples from our Global 2000 clientele. One caveat: Remember “different strokes for different businesses.” Force-fitting Walmart-style metrics to a Nordstrom brand intent is not a good idea!

FIRST-CONTACT RESOLUTION (FCR)

FCR is a key customer-focused contact center metric that significantly reduces consumer effort. While FAQs, search, topic-tree browsing help with simple queries, more sophisticated technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) are essential to resolve issues of medium to high complexity at first contact. When a premier telco client made it mandatory for agents to use eGain AI™ to solve customer problems, FCR improved by 37%. In fact, *any agent* is now able to handle *any call*, the “holy grail” in contact center customer service!

AVERAGE HANDLE TIME (AHT)

As you know, AHT without FCR increases customer effort and defection. Happily, KM, when done right, can transform both of these seemingly conflicting metrics. A premier banking client reduced AHT by 67% while improving FCR by 36% by leveraging eGain AI to guide customers to answers. In fact, advisors in its contact center used the same technology to guide customers through processes such as account opening and other banking transactions while complying with industry regulations!

ANNUAL TRAINING HOURS (ATH)

How do you reduce training needs without compromising service quality? Again, KM delivers the answer. With eGain AI, a leading global bank was able to reach the #1 spot in customer service NPS and reduce ATH by 50%, even as it expanded to 11 countries with mostly novice agents in its workforce! With the same technology, a telco reduced induction training time by 43% and time-to-competency by half. Note that reducing the need for training also reduces shrinkage, which is the amount of time lost due to agents’ breaks at work, sick time, training, holidays, another commonly used contact center metric.

CALL/EMAIL/CHAT DEFLECTION

One of the popular metrics for measuring digital self-service effectiveness is the number of deflections from agent-assisted channels. Using contextual self-service, with robust KM as its backbone, a media and legal services giant deflected 70% of requests for email and chat customer service.

PRODUCT RETURNS/EXCHANGES

No-charge product returns or exchanges has become standard policy in many branded manufacturing firms, retailers, and telecoms due to customer expectations and competitive pressures. Called No Fault Found (NFF),

many of these returns and exchanges are unwarranted where the products were not defective but the contact center could not solve the customer’s problem. NFF (No Fault Found) costs organizations tens millions of dollars each year, but here’s the good news: KM can address this issue head on. One of our large telco clients has reduced unwarranted handset exchanges by 38% while improving FCR by 19% and call quality by 23% in its contact center.

DISPATCH AVOIDANCE RATE

Depending on the industry, each truck roll or engineer callout for issue resolution can cost from a couple of hundred to a few thousand dollars. With omnichannel AI deployed in the contact center and on the website, a water utilities client was able to save ~\$5M per year by reducing unnecessary engineer callouts, and even improved FCR by 30%!

Some technologies improve customer service on the margins, some enable incremental improvement, but only a handful actually transform it— Knowledge management, infused with AI, clearly falls into the last category. ■

About eGain

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 customer journeys in an omnichannel world. To find out more about eGain software, visit www.egain.com/products/

Headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, eGain has operating presence in North America, EMEA, and APAC. To learn more about us, visit www.egain.com or call our offices: +1-800-821-4358 (US), +44-(0)-1753-464646 (EMEA), or +91-(0)-20-6608-9200 (APAC).



A Customer Service Approach for the Long Haul

By Jeff Weinstein, President and CEO, RightAnswers

“The definition of insanity is doing something over and over again and expecting a different result.” While I doubt that quote was really uttered by Einstein or Ben Franklin (they often get attribution), it certainly rings true when it comes to the contact center and customer service. Companies want to provide stellar customer service experiences. But they have to realize they are not going to make a paradigm shift in their level of support by doing the same old, same old.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT APPROACH?

For over a decade RightAnswers has been helping organizations transform their customer service and support through better knowledge management. After all, the crux of any customer service experience is *knowledge* – the company’s vetted content that answers customers’ questions.

There are several areas an organization needs to address to be successful with their knowledge initiative – such as offering multiple channels for customers including self-service, mobile and communities. But in this paper we want to address two foundational areas that it’s crucial to get right:

- Defining processes for your staff to follow – a “playbook,” if you will
- Investing in your staff, making sure they have the tools they need to succeed

Without addressing these fundamental issues, you would only create a quick fix that might boost your customer service in the short-term. But keeping all your stakeholders motivated over time and creating a lasting effect requires a new approach.

WHY DO YOU NEED A PLAYBOOK?

When you’re undertaking any process that involves multiple steps and multiple people, it’s helpful to adopt a process that can keep you on track and achieve your goals. Individual teams are looking to understand their required tasks and how to best perform them.

When it comes to your knowledge initiative, a defined process, or playbook, steers it in the right direction. A structured, repeatable approach leads to faster task completion, whether you’re a novice or an expert.

No less important, people understand what is expected of them and they will take responsibility to meet their goals and achieve results, and will have good teamwork. In addition, when leadership takes the effort to create a playbook for the support organization, the team understands that it performs an important role, which increases motivation and improves job satisfaction.

Knowledge-Centered Service (KCSSM)* is the preeminent set of practices for knowledge management. KCS provides guidelines to ensure that knowledge is written for maximum usability and “findability,” and that your knowledge base is kept up-to-date.

Democratization of knowledge is an important concept in KCS, where everyone in the organization is encouraged to create knowledge for the benefit of all, increasing all employees’ engagement with the knowledge. Most importantly for customer service, KCS empowers customer service reps, the people with the most contact with the customer, to create and update knowledge. This also serves to increase satisfaction among reps and reduce turnover.

KCS also advocates using **gamification** to keep customer service reps and other knowledge authors engaged with your knowledge so they use it, find it, and fix it when needed.

GIVE YOUR PEOPLE THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

When customer service reps don’t have the tools to do their job well, they become frustrated and disengaged. And only engaged employees build engaged customer relationships. Moreover, engaged employees are 18% more productive, 87%

more likely to stay in their job and make much fewer errors. Interestingly, employee engagement predicts a company’s financial performance, not the other way around. When organizations engage their customers and employees, they gain a 240% boost in business outcomes (Gallup, *The State of the Global Workplace*).

Keep customer service reps engaged by giving them the tools and autonomy to do their jobs. Make it easy for them to find and use knowledge and link knowledge to cases – ideally using a specialized solution that’s integrated with your CRM or other system of record, so they don’t have to swap between systems as they work. By investing in the support organization rather than settling for mediocre tools, company leadership sends the message that they are important to the company, which keeps customer service reps motivated.

Espouse the value of creating useful knowledge and fixing knowledge that needs updating – by all employees, not just by customer service reps. You will enhance your available knowledge enterprise-wide and improve collaboration, sharing and morale. Establish a community to enable customer service reps to help each other. They will not only find answers faster but they will also feel more connected to the organization. A community also reduces the required training time for customer service reps – an added benefit for your company.

REAP THE BENEFITS LONG-TERM

Investing in people and infrastructure – a playbook and highly effective tools – are two fundamental issues that are essential if you want to transform your customer service and continue to deliver exceptional service long-term. ■

Visit rightanswers.com to see how we can help you transform your customer service through better knowledge creation across the enterprise, timely knowledge maintenance, multiple channels for customers to access your service the way they want, and a Client Success Team to keep you successful.