



Optimizing Your Customers' Experience Across Digital Support Channels

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Customers want easy and fast answers. Where they turn for support varies based on a number of factors. These include individual preferences, support channel availability, and the perceived or realized effort involved in getting a resolution. With the use of chat, social media care and email support on the rise, one thing remains clear: **brands that effectively digitize the customer experience will gain a distinct competitive advantage.** Businesses hoping to thrive in this environment must deliver a seamless customer experience across channels, including chat, social media and web-based self-help tools.

According to a McKinsey and Company report from September 2016, website chat, social media care and email support accounts for 30 percent of all customer-care interactions. Analysts expect that number to jump to nearly 50 percent by 2020. Now more than ever, consumers value the omnichannel experience. A report published by The Northbridge Group in June 2015 found that online chat is edging phone support by two points in terms of exceeding customer expectations, emphasizing the importance of taking a holistic approach to customer engagement.

Not surprisingly, the desire to engage across digital-support channels is particularly prevalent in millennials. In a 2016 study of wireless customers, J.D. Power found that self-service care channels were more highly correlated with customer satisfaction than ever before. Millennials are leading the way, having a higher likelihood of engaging carriers online and an overall propensity to engage customer service compared to Baby Boomers (43 percent vs. 24 percent).

For mobile, broadband and media-service providers to get the most from cross-channel online care, they must think strategically and deploy specific channels effectively. Self-help tools provide a different experience than online chat, for example. Customers' expectations will also vary based on their issue, and their level of comfort/confidence in the channel selected. Accordingly, it's helpful to consider the two categories of self-help and understand their roles in the customer journey.

Two Types of Self-Help

- 1 Knowledge-based interactions:** These are common questions that can be answered by a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document, or searched for and managed by a database. FAQs serve as the first level of customer support that can defer the need for the consumer to seek more involved (and costly) assistance. However, FAQs are impersonal and limited — lacking the detail required for more complex questions. Organizations must constantly ensure they are updated and accurate.

2 Transactional interactions: These interactions are based on a simple exchange of account information. They include routine questions regarding account balance, data usage, etc., and can account for up to 80 percent of a customer's questions. Armed with the answers, the customer can update the details of their online account and make changes to the services or products in use. In many instances, such examples of straight-forward and repetitive customer interactions can be effectively met through self-serve options accessed on-demand by the customer. However, customers may not be aware of alternate channels available to address transactional questions, or they may be confused about the process. Giving a voice agent the tools and processes to educate customers about self-serve options can really move the needle on digital-care adoption.

Integrating chat

Approximately two-thirds of self-service cases have a documented resolution. However, when the customer can't find the right information or doesn't understand the process, integrating chat can go a long way toward improving issue resolution.

Online chat gives customers an easy way to maximize efficiency throughout their online experience by providing access to information and answers to questions quickly and seamlessly. Through chat, the agent can direct the customer to other online tools, including instructional videos, product instructions or forums as needed

Maximizing the Customer Experience Across Support Channels

When consumers have more complex issues or questions, ensuring that your process is simple and intuitive is even more important so users can derive the greatest value in the shortest time.

Best practices for improving the process include:

- Analyze the customer path to monitor cross-channel activity and usage patterns, discovering which combination delivers the most effective (fast and simple) resolution to a customer's inquiry or issue.
- Use prior-to-chat web forms to help move to problem resolution as efficiently as possible, reducing chat time.
- Have customers log to help you analyze ROI. Customer behavior can be tracked across both knowledge-based interactions and transactional experiences.
- Analyze agent attributes that result in positive outcomes, including first contact resolution and shorter handle times. Once these attributes are identified, ensure that quality assurance monitors and team managers are coaching to these proven behaviors.
- Identify follow up questions to ask the customer after a solution is delivered, anticipating additional issues that could prompt the customer to seek help again. Once these questions are identified, modify the Quick Text to deal with them proactively (and remember to update FAQs and other self-help tools as well).

Linking a Seamless Customer Experience Across Support Channels to Business Value

Strategic customer care across traditional and digital support channels contributes to both top- and bottom-line improvements. Forrester found that 44 percent of online customers said that having questions answered by a live person during an online purchase was one of the most important features a website can offer, reinforcing the value of integrating chat into a company's support strategy.

Additional value can be derived from integrating insight analytics to track the customer's behavior before and after the support experience. Such analysis can provide brands with useful insights that will allow them to make positive process, program and design improvements. This will impact the rate of issue resolution by addressing the three top priorities for customer satisfaction: ease, convenience and level of responsiveness.



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Lance joined the Sykes Enterprises, Incorporated executive team in January 2006. In his current role as Executive Vice President and General Manager of the company, Lance oversees SYKES' North America and EMEA businesses. He brings more than 35 years of experience as an innovative technology and business process outsourcing industry executive.

ABOUT SYKES

Sykes Enterprises, Incorporated is a leading provider of multichannel demand generation and customer engagement services for Global 2000 companies and their end customers. SYKES' differentiated full lifecycle solutions and services — digital marketing, sales expertise, customer service, technical support and more through multichannel delivery platforms — effectively engage customers at every touchpoint of the customer journey. Our complete service offering helps clients acquire, retain and increase the lifetime value of their customer relationships through cost-effective solutions that enhance the customer service experience, promote stronger brand loyalty, and foster high levels of performance and profitability.