

CONSISTENCY:

THE KEY TO MULTI-CHANNEL CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT

HOW A SEAMLESS, INTERCONNECTED, MULTI-CHANNEL
EXPERIENCE IS THE KEY TO ENGAGING TODAY'S CUSTOMER

A CMIQ WHITEPAPER

INTRODUCTION

Even the slowest of adopters have realized that multi-channel customer management is here to stay. While most organizations have multiple channels of communication, and almost every organization aspires to true multi-channel service, very few are doing so effectively. Instead of a seamless experience, these organizations are providing a disconnected experience.

WHO USES MULTI-CHANNEL?

According to Customer Management IQ's *Executive Report on Multi-Channel Customer Service*, nearly 88% of organizations are multi-channel. However, this number does not tell the full story. Very few organizations actually maintain a high level of service across each channel and only 30% of organizations consistently serve customers in their preferred channel.

Not surprisingly, studies show that most organizations still deliver the highest-quality service over the phone. However, contact center managers recognize that they'd provide better service by ramping up service in other channels.

DISCONNECTED CHANNELS

For multi-channel customer management to be fully realized, two things must happen: Customers must feel equally comfortable approaching an issue through every channel and organizations must provide equal service through every channel.

Customer management executives universally understand this need for consistent service across channels. 89% of executives feel that "cross-channel communication" is important. However, only 30% are actually capable of providing cross-channel communication. A big reason for this gap is that siloed, disconnected channels create barriers of communication.

THE HOLY GRAIL

Improving customer service while lowering costs. For years, this simple idea has been the Holy Grail of the customer management industry. These two seemingly simple goals were seen as mutually exclusive. The introduction of

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the internet and new means of communication teased at the idea of lowering costs: organizations thought that the new technologies would lead to smaller workforces and smaller facilities.

But the improper adoption of new technologies, particularly when done in a piecemeal, siloed manner, actually increased costs. New channels meant the adoption of new technology platforms, new tracking systems, and new agents and managers with expertise in these channels. For example, an organization may have a separate system for email, one for chat, and another for social media. These various platforms may work in the short term, but in the long run they become a burden and create a disconnected customer experience.

SEAMLESS MULTI-CHANNEL EXPERIENCE

Despite these setbacks, multi-channel communication may still be the industry's Holy Grail. The key is seamless integration of channels that builds a connected customer experience. Multi-channel can only fulfill its promise once silos are broken down, gaps are filled in, and the customer experience improves.

The first key to breaking down these walls is a change in mindset. Studies show that many executives see social networks as more relevant for marketing than service, while they see live chat and text as more valuable to service than sales. To create a seamless multi-channel experience, customer management executives need to change these narrow mindsets and adopt a holistic mindset that sees all channels working together.

The bigger key to a seamless multi-channel experience is the adoption of new unifying technology platforms. Channel adoption was formerly rolled out one-by-one, with separate platforms for each channel. Adopting unifying technologies that integrate processes and information will lower costs in the long run. Instead of investing in platforms for each channel, technologies now exist that allow for one unified cross-channel platform. Agents can access interfaces that not only show customer interactions across different channels, but different *types* of interactions as well (service, sales, marketing, etc). Once adopted, these new technologies can turn the old axioms on their heads.

IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

A seamless approach relies on a platform that tracks a customer's journey

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between channels. By understanding where the customer has been and where the customer wants to go, agents can do a better job of aiding their journeys.

In today's world, customers expect that agents will have knowledge of their interactions in all channels. Only by adopting a centralized, non-siloed approach can information flow freely so that nothing gets lost between channels.

One of the biggest customer frustrations is repetition. Customers don't like being asked the same questions repeatedly, or hearing from multiple agents unnecessarily. A customer may start an interaction using a live chat box, but the agent on the phone remains unaware of the initial conversation. With a better flow of information, agents won't have to look bad by asking repetitive questions.

Seamless multi-channel technology can also help improve First Call Resolution metrics, lower the average length of calls, and lower the total number of calls as well.

By seamlessly tracking and mapping customer interactions across channels, agents can go from reactivity to proactivity. In a sense, seamless multi-channel communication allows companies to *take control* of the customer experience.

CONCLUSION

From the customer's perspective, seamless multi-channel interaction leads to a consistent, enjoyable and *easy* experience. It's not enough to offer channels; customers want a consistent journey between those channels, one in which they can travel back and forth without sacrificing quality.

Consistency is not just a tangential issue that impacts lower-level agents and customers, but one of the highest-level importance. 86% of customers have already switched brands due to poor customer services. Simply put, an unhappy customer is no longer a future customer.

Multi-channel communication is only in its infancy. To reach full maturity, mindsets need to be changed and interconnected technologies adopted. Once these two measures are taken, seamless multi-channel communication can finally fulfill its promise as the industry's Holy Grail.

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