

Mobile Customer Care: New Paradigms and Practices

Mobile subscribers are using their smartphones and other mobile devices to take control of their interactions with the firms with whom they choose to do business. They've forced companies to form mobile strategies that must go far beyond simply offering a "mobile app" to providing the most effective, and natural, mobile user experience. Companies and their technology providers have responded in kind.

February 2012

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Key Findings

Whether people are out-and-about or simply lounging on a couch in their living rooms, a growing percentage of calls to customer care originate from mobile devices. Every airline, hotel chain, financial service company, healthcare provider and retailer must have a mobile strategy for customer care, but take these points into account:

- **Customer care and e-commerce must accommodate mobile** - There's nothing distinctively "mobile" about care but a significant percentage of interactions originate from mobile devices and that provides customers with more options and requires companies to support multiple channels.
- **Smartphones + the cloud = better user experience** - Downloadable smartphone apps offer a demonstration of the power of deep integration between mobile devices and the customer-care infrastructure. Smartphones coupled with cloud-based resources have also put more power into the hands of customers. This is serendipitous and a potential "win-win" for both sides -- if properly executed.
- **Customers often prefer self-service** - Contact centers have long sought to erect barriers to live agent access for reasons of call and cost avoidance. Many consumers, put off by rigid IVR, extended hold times, poorly trained CSRs and repeated transfers have come to prefer self-service in many situations. Moreover, the promotion of speech-enabled apps from Apple, Microsoft, Google and Nuance are conditioning the general public to expect to be able to use their voices to get results, not always with the help of live customer service representatives.
- **Customer control defines emerging best practices** - This moment creates an opportunity to combine the cost savings of online self service with selective access to live agents where truly needed to resolve more complex problems or provide a higher level of service. Not just a small-screen substitute for the Web, smartphone apps offer more functionality and a potentially better experience than websites or live agents can independently. As we've tried to document in this report, there are a number of emerging "best practices" examples: Groupama, Genesys, Nuance, Fonolo, Lucyphone, HoldFree and others.
- **Time to "Flip the Model" (from B2C to C2B)** - An app on smartphone that is tailored to help a person take control of the conversation is ideal. It provides mobile users with tools to indicate where they are, what they're looking for and how they want to be reached. Brands and enterprises should enthusiastically embrace smartphones (and tablets) as a primary customer service platform.

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