

The Human Touch Is Key For the Ideal Customer Experience



Introduction

The customer experience has gained importance across every industry, with companies competing no longer just on product and price, but on factors like personalization and the ability to anticipate customer needs. Against this backdrop, there have been new technological developments that allow companies to address a wide variety of customer requests with automated tools powered by artificial intelligence.

For many companies, the key is finding the right balance between efficiency, cost savings and the

immeasurable value of building relationships with customers. The customer experience, while often driven by data and tracking customer behaviors, is also somewhat void of meaning when it loses human connection.

Determining the right mix of technology with human interaction is a challenge every company must grapple with, but with the right solutions any company can optimize cost savings while maintaining meaningful connections with customers.

The Pressure is On: The Idealized Customer Experience

Companies have traditionally competed in areas like value, price, customer service and quality. Today, there has been a new set of expectations placed on companies that, in many cases, trumps other factors like price or value. The customer experience is a broader element than customer satisfaction or customer loyalty; it encompasses the entire exposure a customer has to a brand, with factors like personalization at each touchpoint elevating the total experience.

According to Superoffice.com, 86% of customers are willing to pay more for a good customer experience. An excellent customer experience translates to spending, with 13% of consumers saying that they will pay a premium price for a luxury customer experience, and Intrado Globe Newswire reports that 49% of buyers have indulged in an impulse purchase simply because they were enjoying a great customer experience.

Executives guiding some companies wonder whether customer experience has overtaken price or product quality in their industry, but Gartner reports that over two-thirds of companies compete primarily on customer experience.

The challenge for many companies is elevating the customer experience without exceeding their budgets. Creating immersive, personalized experiences for customers usually requires an investment, and companies want to meet customer needs in the most cost-effective ways.

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An Artificial Customer Experience

To meet this challenge, some companies turn to customer-focused solutions based in artificial intelligence. While automated calls are one of the well-known uses for AI in customer service, it also provides insights through reporting and analysis, better equipping companies to anticipate customer needs.

AI-powered tools can also offer decision-making support for customers when it is offered at the right time. At its best, AI fuels proactive customer self-service, offering customers convenient and efficient ways to resolve inquiries.

Customer service is being significantly impacted by AI tools, with Oracle reporting that eight out of ten businesses are utilizing AI as a customer service solution. This can take several forms, including determining the intent of the call from asking a few initial questions to producing call analytics to better equip agents for service.

There are more advanced options emerging in AI customer service, such as voice recognition as

an authentication tool and natural language processing to gain insights into customer priorities.

Even as AI continues to push into customer service interactions, it doesn't mean that growth in this area is always beneficial. More AI isn't necessarily better if it compromises the customer experience. Forbes.com reports that only 33% of customers indicated that the use of AI tools had made it easier for them to get service issues resolved.

When AI is applied to the right areas, there are benefits to be gained by companies. Accenture predicts that by 2035, AI will improve business productivity by up to 40%. But those gains only occur when the right aspects of customer service can be improved by AI.

AI technology can help when it empowers the relationships and connection that happen between your company and your customers. When it attempts to act as a replacement for those relationships, customer experiences suffer.

The Importance of a Great Experience

When companies choose the wrong mix of personal interaction versus using AI tools, the impact can be monumental. Companies must consider the influence their commitment to service has on their ability to do business:

- Zendesk reports that about 50% of customers say that they would switch to a competitor's brand following a single bad experience. The likelihood of a switch only grows with additional bad experiences, with 80% saying they would try out a competitor after more than one poor outcome.
- Zendesk also reports that more than half of all consumers will reach out via voice call when they need assistance from a service representative. And 40% prefer other service options over using a chatbot. A Forrester survey found that 83% of consumers would rather speak to a person than an automated agent.
- According to Salesforce Research, three out of five consumers will give a company another chance after a mistake if their service was excellent.

Combining AI and Human Interactions for Optimal Customer Experiences



When AI has the ability to augment the quality of a company's customer service, it may be a good investment. One example is when AI can gather relevant, introductory details before the call is turned over to a live customer service agent. The AI tool may even be able to assess the sentiment of the caller in real time, providing the agent with critical insights according to a sentiment analysis, equipping them to address the customer in the best possible approach. AI assistants can also offer relief to agents by categorizing and tagging the questions that customers post via chat or email, offering insights into the types of inquiries that are most likely to occur. AI assistants can also present an agent with a list of potential responses for commonly asked questions, that the agent can then tailor to the customer's particular request.

Better than Bots: Why Outsourcing to Nearshore Contact Center Trumps AI

Companies looking for a way to outpace competitors in customer experiences must consider the benefits of utilizing a nearshore contact center. Rather than being forced to choose between live agents or AI-powered bots for customer experiences, companies have the option to serve their customers with an outsourced contact center solution. There are several benefits to using a nearshore contact center:

Scalability:

When a company has seasonal variances in call volume, an outsourced contact center is able to assist them in managing the overflow. As call volume goes up, additional agents can be seamlessly added to provide consistent customer experiences.

Flexibility:

Whether a business requires a customized script or the ability to use a contact center only during certain hours, outsourcing can allow a brand to be faithfully represented in every interaction with customers.

Cost Savings:

When a nearshore contact center is utilized, companies do not need to choose between an excellent customer experience and staying with a budget. A nearshore contact center offers the same warm, relationship-building conversations that in-house agents engage in, but with the pricing of an offshore contact center.

Quality and Human Touch:

Nothing replaces the human touch when it comes to meaningful connections and insights into the customers' true needs. When the customers' needs are met — especially to be heard and understood — they will associate that experience with quality and build a higher level of loyalty.

A company may be tempted to invest in an AI-driven customer experience to save resources, but it is important to ask what this decision costs the company in other areas. If customers go elsewhere because they have lost the relationship element with a company, it's not truly a cost savings.

It's also a good idea to consider the reasons why it makes sense to outsource to a particular location, such as Belize. Only a few hours from major U.S. airports, Belize is uniquely situated and also mirrors the Central and Mountain time zones in the U.S.

- Belize is the only country in Central America with English as its official language. 51% of the population is bilingual and also speaks Spanish.
- Belize is stable in areas like political, social and professional environments.
- The BPO industry in Belize is the third largest career opportunity, with contact center companies helping to stabilize retention and prevent job hopping.



The Warmth of Human Interaction:

While the above are each measurable, valuable benefits, the true advantage over an AI-driven customer experience is the interaction between two people. A customer being served by a live agent will have a more meaningful connection with the company. The contact center agent can read emotions and ask insightful questions in ways that an AI tool can never match.

In addition, the choice of a nearshore contact center services provider rather than an offshore provider is critical. The same frustration a customer experiences in trying to tell a computer that they want to know more about “sales,” not “emails,” is the frustration they feel when trying to communicate with a service agent that doesn't speak English as their first language.

A nearshore contact center not only shares English as a first language with U.S.-based customers, but they also share a culture. When warmth, friendliness and building relationships are important to a company, they will find far more value in a nearshore contact center than in an automated system.

Many companies are investing in AI-powered tools to assist with customer service, and they do have their value, in areas like providing insights gathered from natural language processing or asking initial questions before engaging a live agent. But in order to differentiate their brand for its excellent customer experiences, a company must invest in the best person-to-person interactions. No technology can match the warmth that comes through the phone when a customer requires assistance.



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Conclusion

Technology, and AI technology in particular, is driving advances in business, but there is one area in which AI technology will never be able to compete. When it comes to offering the ideal customer experience, it is difficult to imagine one based on chatbots and automated agents. Customers still prefer to talk with a live person when they require assistance with an order or an invoice, or if they need explanations around how a product works. A nearshore contact center offers the cost savings option that often leads companies to look into AI technology, while still offering the relationship-building interactions that customers want. For companies looking to compete on more than simply price, product quality or overall value, the stakes are high. They need to invest in resources that optimize the customer experience, and the ideal way to do that is through live agents trained to seamlessly represent their organization through a nearshore contact center.

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About Protel BPO

Protel BPO is a nearshore contact center offering unparalleled customer service solutions for prices associated more closely with offshore contact centers.

While Protel BPO specializes in competitive costs and high-quality service, what truly sets this company apart is its “Belize Warmth.”

Only Protel BPO offers agents with a shared American culture and English as their first language, but with an added friendliness and warmth associated with Belize.

The Protel BPO team claims more than 50 years of combined contact center management experience.

Companies that prioritize customer experiences choose Protel BPO as their nearshore contact center services provider.



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