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7 Signs of an Industry Leading Customer Service Centre

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It's practically unthinkable that only a few years ago, customer service was viewed by the majority as little more than back-office business administration. Thankfully, times have changed.



The internet, social media and sharing platforms like TripAdvisor mean customer experiences, whether good, bad or indifferent, are now broadcast to millions, while extremes of service can generate mainstream media coverage.

Yet, despite the prevalence in analysis and monitoring technology, there are still huge variables when it comes to levels of service quality, regardless of geography or sector.

For example, a customer can call their bank one day and experience a seamless service transaction, while a subsequent call to a utilities provider can have them tearing their hair out with frustration. So what separates the wheat from the chaff, and how can businesses tell if they have an industry leading customer service centre?

Here are seven signs to look out for:

1. Hit staff in the guts:

Not literally of course. But this is about making an impression on the customer service centre staff and using verbatim customer feedback to create a self-correcting organisation. It helps provide a clear understanding of what is making customers happy and others furious, whether it's due to the advisor, branch or website. It will not only reduce avoidable conflicts further down the line but also uncover any negative feedback beyond the control of the customer service team that needs addressing.

2. Only take the right type of calls:

Utilisation remains something most contact centres struggle with. Many work with several systems increasing their after call work time, while others have processes that slow things down resulting in problems with engagement. The trick is to ensure that time is being spent handling calls that need to be handled by people.

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Let simple queries be handled by IVR and web solutions, so that feedback incidents and problems can be directed to the relevant department, which frees up time to handle incidents and problems in a more thorough way.

3. 90 seconds max:

Everybody is busy and nobody likes to be kept waiting, so contact centre teams should be tasked with answering customer calls within 90 seconds.

Of course, this is easier said than done and there will always be times when call volume is higher than anticipated. But, by filtering only the queries that require a human response, call volume can be reduced, meaning connect time can be much lower. In some instances, there are target waiting times of as low as 20 seconds but, while ambitious, only serves to skew the internal measurements of how calls are handled.

4. No retain, no gain:

Staff turnover in contact centre work can be notoriously high. Traditionally low-paid and with high-stress and low recognition, perhaps this is hardly surprising. Thankfully, more money is now being invested in training, staff salary and team perks as businesses realise the value of having a high-quality contact centre.

All this means that employees are staying longer, learning more and becoming better equipped to handle customer issues in a more efficient manner.

5. Power to the leaders:

Putting customer feedback analysis tools in the hands of your team leaders is hugely powerful. Instead of spending time analysing and scoring advisor contacts, they can act on feedback that comes direct from the customer.

Combining this with insight into what actually drives targets, leaders can greatly improve efficiencies by focussing their time on any underperforming staff.

6. 24/7 response time:

When things go wrong, social media can be like word of mouth on steroids. It therefore needs to be monitored and managed around the clock. And, despite the majority of customers still preferring traditional communications channels such as phone and email, businesses do need to ensure that customers who do opt for social media comms are able to engage with them in this way 24/7.

7. Hit the bench:

Benchmarking is a great operational tool to highlight areas of improvement. Before you start looking at customer experience from the outside, you need to know if the basics of your internal operations performance is up to scratch. Only then can customer experience feedback be used to tweak performance levels.

The best tool for making sure these structural building blocks are performing at the right level is robust and reliable benchmarking analysis.

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