

3 Ways to Enhance Your Digital Customer Service Strategy

Guide and Best Practices

Introduction

With the majority of businesses having to close down their in-person operations during the Coronavirus pandemic, they are trying to make decisive shifts to keep their customer service and support operations running. This crisis has revealed that a robust, digital-first customer service strategy is required in order to maintain long-term business resilience and success.

Use this guide to understand the elements of an effective digital strategy and how to implement them for your own organization.

Delivering Excellent Customer Service

In a customer-experience driven world, the role of the customer service and support team has grown more critical. Businesses that view their customer service and support simply as an expense rather than as an investment are missing an opportunity to develop long-term customer loyalty and—ultimately, a healthier bottom line. But providing a great customer experience isn't as simple as giving out free goodies or having friendly individuals at call centers. Business leaders must intentionally craft a customer experience strategy that leverages both traditional and digital elements.

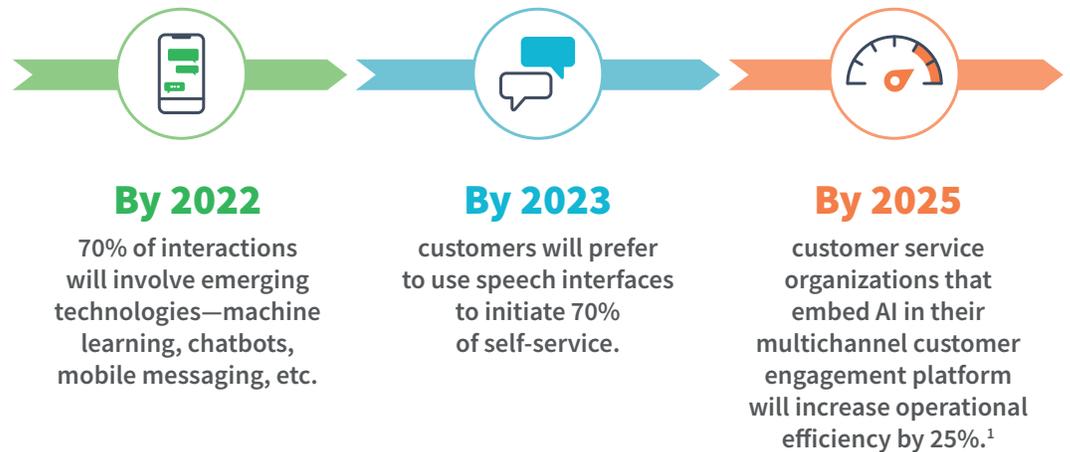
Serving Customers Digitally

Digital customer service cannot be independent from the overall customer experience strategy; **the digital channels that a business uses must not be siloed but, rather, leveraged as critical components of an overarching customer service strategy.**

Consumers are moving towards a fully connected world enabled by technology. They demand immediacy, connectivity, and simplicity in every interaction on their buying journey. Traditional means of customer service alone will no longer be sufficient for serving the needs of connected customers as these slow and reactive processes cannot effectively anticipate and deliver against fast-changing customer expectations.

Businesses are now at a crossroads of strongly considering how their companies are organized. Call center operations are being replaced by virtual ecosystems of digital tools, such as self-service portals, chatbots, and voice assistants. Companies that are able to provide relevant and agile customer service will be the ones that differentiate themselves from their competitors.

The Future of Customer Service



So, what does this all mean for the future of customer service? Whether or not businesses are ready, customer service as most professionals have known it is changing. As emerging channels and new technologies become more common in the customer journey, business leaders will need to determine how to integrate these into a customer service strategy. Otherwise, they will have to deal with a technology stack of disparate, overlapping systems in the coming years. As a result, they'll be at risk of creating a disjointed customer experience.

To avoid this, businesses need to consider how to build a customer service strategy that leverages both digital and traditional channels of engagement.

¹ Top CX Trends

By planning and executing a digital customer strategy that is integrated into an overall customer experience strategy, leaders will be better equipped to optimize business efficiencies, accommodate growing customer bases, and move quickly to meet future needs that arise.

Elements of an Effective Digital Strategy

Since a digital customer service strategy is one facet of an overarching customer experience strategy, it's critical to first determine the overall vision and strategy for the organization. This strategy should then dictate what digital and traditional channels should be used.

To make any digital customer service strategy a success, utilize individuals from IT and customer-facing teams to form an official committee that will be in charge of executing the digital component of the customer service strategy.

Do not forgo this step just to jump into actionable items, but rather, take the time to set aside a team that is responsible for not only setting overarching customer service goals and tactics, but also acquiring and implementing the technology needed to successfully bring that vision to life.

Once a committee is formed, there are three essential elements they must consider when crafting an excellent long-term strategy:

1. Understand Current Customer Journeys

Ultimately, every element of customer service needs to support the customer and make their experience better. This will require in-depth knowledge of how a typical customer interacts with the business.

To gain a deeper understanding of the typical customer journeys, ask the following questions:

- What channels are currently provided to customers, traditional and digital? Which of these are most popular?
- Where are the points of conflict during a typical customer journey when a customer will reach out for help? Remember to consider the entire journey, from first-touch, to purchase, and afterwards.
- Is it possible to streamline this journey?
- Are there commonly asked questions or processes that customer service teams spend a lot of time answering?

Emphasis on Omnichannel Experiences

Customers interact with a number of different channels and touchpoints in their journey; this can include customer portals, public websites, apps, etc. These interactions cannot be siloed, but rather, must deliver consistent information across every channel in order to provide a unified experience to customers. For example, if a company policy is updated, it may need to be updated across websites, messenger bots, live chat scripts, social media channels, call center scripts, and other available touchpoints; doing so efficiently and successfully will prove to be a powerful competitive advantage.

Assess the current channels being provided; do they all provide an engaging experience for customers? Are there channels that customers prefer to use that the business is not offering, or even are there channels that customers aren't using?

Note that not every channel will make sense to include; leaders must determine whether the new channel is worth the time needed to integrate and manage. Before considering any new channel, first evaluate to see if the customers requesting it are actually your core audience or if the channel will give you access to a new audience that is critical for your growth.

No matter what channels are used or being added, traditional or digital, strategize how all can work together to deliver an experience that will satisfy customer demands and establish a competitive advantage for the business.

2. Implement the Necessary Technology

With a more comprehensive understanding of typical customer behavior, assess and implement the technologies needed to execute the overall strategy.

Investments into these different technologies should not be made in isolation or simply to keep up with the latest trends, rather need to make sense for customers, within the context of the larger customer service strategy and business requirements.

There are many different emerging technology trends, but we will cover a few of the most important in this guide.

Self-Service

The first step to excellent digital customer experiences is self-service.

Empowering customers to find the content and information they need themselves is not only how customers prefer to interact with businesses but also brings immediate benefits such as cost-savings and productivity gains by reducing the amount of calls into the customer support center.



Source: Gartner²

Businesses should be working towards digital-first customer service, having a limited number of highly skilled service representatives that are able to tackle difficult situations, with the majority of customers being guided through self-service offerings.

Consider how to begin offering self-service channels; learn more about how to implement a self-service strategy by [reading our guide here](#).

By implementing self-service into different channels, such as websites and customer portals, it will be more scalable to deliver consistent experiences throughout. An investment into self-service will be an investment into building a better long-term digital strategy.

² Delivering on the Digital Promise

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

AI technologies will become more commonplace in enhancing existing applications and processes. Although many businesses want to seize the opportunity to use AI to enhance customer service, many are struggling to discover the right use case for AI.



By 2025, customer service organizations that embed AI in their multichannel customer engagement platforms will elevate operation efficiency by 25%.³

Like investments for any technology, businesses need to first identify how AI should fit into the customer service journey or what specific pain point it should resolve. Some popular use cases for AI so far include leveraging the technology for more personalized self-service, virtual assistants, or automated case management routing and workflow assignment.

The Role of Digital Experience Platforms

As the number of technologies used and digital channels added increases, customer service technology stacks will start to contain disparate, overlapping systems leading to disjointed customer experiences.

To combat this risk, digital experience platforms (DXP) can facilitate the integration of existing services into a one, unified user-friendly platform. Within a DXP, systems and applications can be easily connected to provide consistent omnichannel experiences.⁴

Additionally, DXPs are built to be flexible and extensible, so the platform not only can unite new systems and incorporate emerging technologies as they arise, but also can be extended for other future needs. For example, a robust DXP can build multiple customer-facing solutions, all on the same platform. Instead of separating every touchpoint onto different sites, businesses can build

³ Gartner 2019 Strategic Roadmap for Customer Service and Support Technologies

⁴ What is a Digital Experience Platform?

self-service customer portals, communication hubs, status update websites, and other solutions that can connect to third-party applications and legacy systems, all on one site.

This allows businesses to save resources by not only needing to manage fewer systems, but also reusing existing elements to build new sites and touchpoints much faster while also maintaining brand consistency, rather than having to start from scratch across a range of point solutions.

[Learn more about how digital experience platform are designed for digital transformation >](#)

3. Measure Success

Equally critical to implementing a strategy is measuring its effectiveness. Track metrics such as:

- How long it takes for customers to resolve their issues
- The volume of calls to customer support
- How many users log onto each of the digital channels provided
- Cost-savings from adding digital channels

It's also beneficial to have either customer support teams or a neutral third party reach out to customers to rate or review their experience. Make sure to incorporate a regular assessment of tactics and channels to implement improvements and build out an experience that will actually be beneficial for customers.

Putting Everything Together

Getting started on a digital-first customer service strategy may seem difficult and resource-intensive; however, the investment and commitment put into maturing a digital customer service strategy will be well worth the benefits of optimized business efficiencies, increased agility and scalability, and ultimately enhanced customer experiences.

Don't feel overwhelmed by the task ahead; start by determining overall customer experience goals and understanding how customer service fits into that overarching strategy. From there, it will be more clear what different traditional and digital channels can be leveraged to fulfill that vision. Then, adjust the strategy and tactics as more data is collected and customer satisfaction is measured.

Conclusion

There is no one-size-fits-all customer service strategy; every business will need to tailor the services and digital channels it provides in order to meet the unique demands of their customers and business. But regardless of what each strategy may look like, businesses with mature digital customer service strategies will be equipped to better serve their customers' needs, thus providing an experience that will retain customers for the long term.

Moving Forward

A critical aspect of digital customer service is self-service. Read more about how to effectively implement self-service in our [customer self-service implementation guide](#).

Learn more about the role of digital experience platforms in the creation of [personalized and connected experiences](#).



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