Columbus® | Once you know how...

4 Most Common Customer Service Demands and How to Solve Them

THE CHANGING ROLE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN BUSINESS

Customer experience is one trend that isn't going away. An evolution of new disruptive business ventures has made sure of that, from those at the start like Zappos, to today's frontrunners like Amazon and Uber.

Organisations now are struggling to "walk the customer talk." There are those bound to legacy, a burden the Amazons and Ubers of the world didn't have when they hit the ground running and offered us an entirely new way of doing business, of shopping, and of getting what we want. But how do you balance the expectations of a current customer base who you have done business with historically, while reinventing an entire new way to productise and servitise your offering to cater to new expectations and a new customer journey?

And there are those that invest, catching the trend wave early, understanding that customer service and the overarching customer experience is something that isn't going away. But often, even these organisations struggle, as the new technologies they invest in are not unified, do not leverage data correctly, or merely do not follow a strategy that will ensure success.

In the end, it all points to the customer. The most successful organisations proactively listen to their customers and let their feedback drive the business's customer service strategy. This guide will walk you through four of the most common customer service demands and advise you on how your business should be approaching and catering to them.

Temkin Group reported that customer experience ratings are actually DECLINING. 45% of companies in 2017 were rated as having a good or excellent customer experience, where as only 38% were in 2018.

Just a few reminders:

1. Customer experience (CX) is defined by interactions between a customer and an organisation throughout their business relationship, and how we service our customers is a key part of the overall customer experience puzzle.

   For instance, if a customer has easily found and bought the perfect treadmill from your online store without interacting with anyone, this is part of the customer EXPERIENCE. When the friendly, helpful technician arrives on time to deliver and install the treadmill at the customer's house, this is customer SERVICE.

2. No one person or process can "own" the entire customer experience, and whilst addressing the most common demands of customer service, it is important to remember that the overall customer experience must encompass every touchpoint a customer has with your brand, and your entire organisation needs to buy-in. The most successful customer-centric brands make every employee a customer ambassador.

3. There is a delicate balance between practicing good data ethics and delivering a superior customer experience. While 55% of customers feel sharing some information is a price they're willing to pay for those expectations to be met, new data regulations and cyber security risks mean brands must take precautions to stay compliant, ethical, and secure when it comes to processing and storing customer data.

   As more organisations attempt to differentiate with artificial intelligence and other self-service options, having the right processes and systems in place to protect data will be essential. It is important for organisations to ensure that customers are in full control of their "data destiny," and this trust is not broken.

According to Bain & Company, 80% of organisations believe they are delivering a superior customer experience, but only 8% of customers report receiving a great customer experience.

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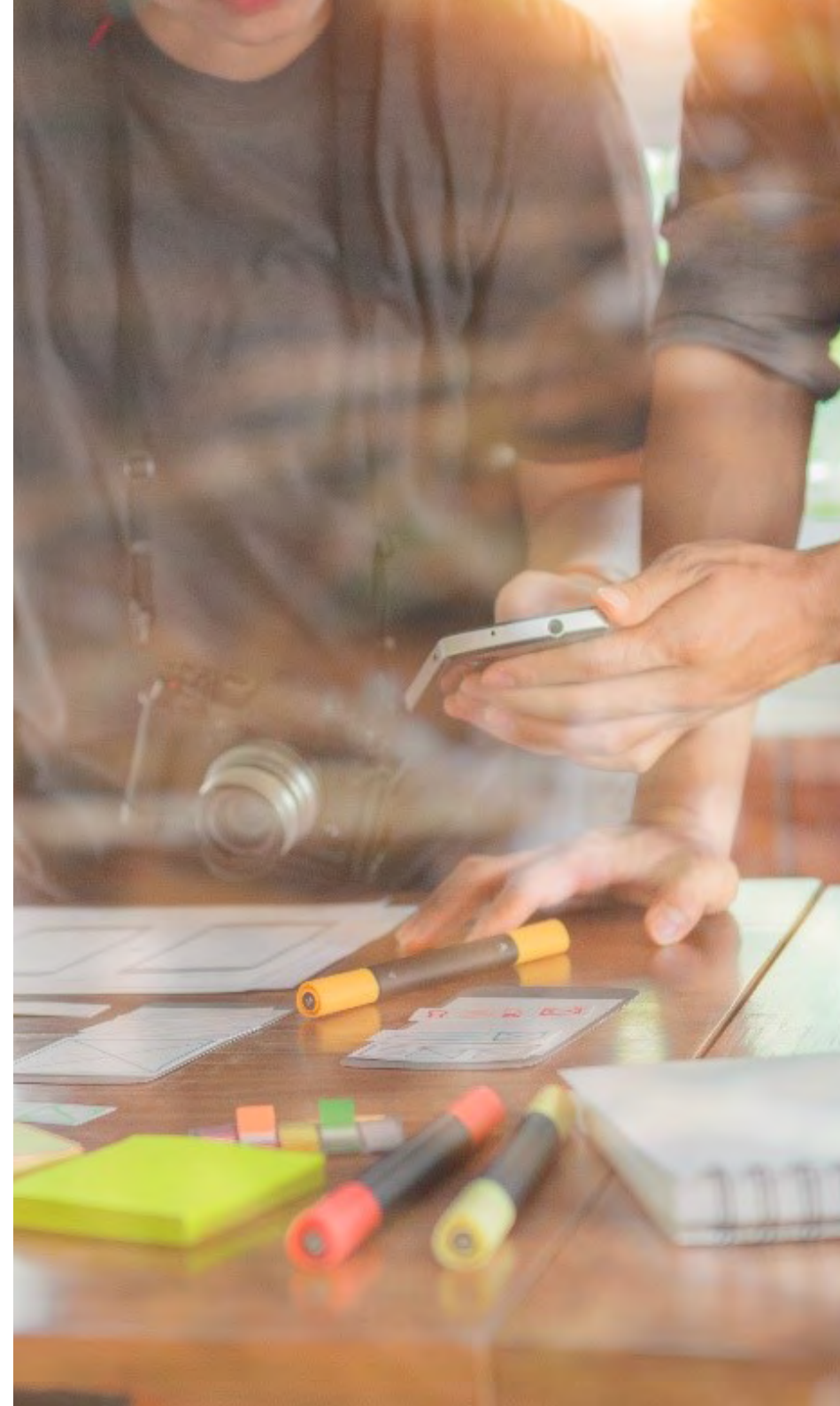
Customer Demand #1: I want a seamless unified experience with your company, no matter the touchpoint.

This demand is derived from a historic complaint… the horror story of the customer who is passed from department to department, having to repeat their story over and over, only to end up wasting precious time on the phone without a result. It is the very reason that CRM systems were built and became popular; to give organisations one version of the customer's truth.

But this now goes further as the number of touchpoints a customer has with a brand has increased. A seamless experience needs to be engineered from the ground up; but how?

1. Each customer engagement needs to be tracked and recorded throughout the customer engagement lifecycle, so your employees can understand the journey each individual customer has taken.

2. Unify the customer data you record from every touchpoint and every channel so that you have a single 360-degree view of each customer. Such data may be aggregated into your CRM Customer Service platform or often it may include data from other key business systems in your organisation.

3. The information needs to be visible, accessible, and actionable throughout the customer's lifecycle by the Customer Service team. The use of dashboards, knowledge bases, office productivity tools and automated workflows can greatly expedite this need.

Accenture found that 89% of customers get frustrated because they need to repeat their issues to multiple representatives and 87% of customers think brands need to put more effort into providing a consistent experience.

Customer Demand #2: I want a unique, personal experience with your brand.

Are price and product still key differentiators in a market place with a high degree of competition, that is easily accessible by your customers? Not according to a recent study where it expected that by 2020, customer experience will overtake price and product as the key brand differentiator.

The second demand is therefore driven by this shift in expectations where your customer wants to feel individual and important to you as a business; but how?

1. Identification of your customer is key. No-one wants to explain who they are again each time they interact with your business. The deployment of simple telephony integration with integrated caller id could have your customer dashboard loaded before you even take the call.

2. Providing your customer with a personalised window into your organisation can improve the customer experience and make it easier for them to do business with you. The implementation of Customer Portals can provide such tailored interactions and are as important as providing a 360-degree view to your own teams. Information including products purchased, the status of product warranties, open services cases and relevant 'hot topic' FAQs specific to that customer can be easily presented in a multi-channel format.

3. Customer Satisfaction (CAST) is a key indicator of Customer Experience and Customer Service. When you start to record information against each customer service interaction, you can also record CSAT. Using Artificial Intelligence (AI), you can surface common topics that damage your overall CSAT rating and implement remedial actions, but more importantly you can quickly react to negative customer experiences. Negative experiences can and need to be quickly understood, and separate cases and alerts created for personalised follow up.

"Customer Experience will overtake price and product as the key brand differentiator by the year 2020"

- Walker

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Customer Demand #3: I want your business to proactively anticipate my wants and needs.

Whether your business model is predominantly business to business or business to consumer, everybody faces increasing time pressures. The boundaries between our work and personal lives have become more blurred with technology creating an 'always on', 'always connected' world, meaning we all exist in a 'time poor society'.

It is for this reason that our third demand is created where the customer (be it a business or consumer) wants us to predict their wants and needs; but how?

1. Thinking about how you can move to a servitised business model, can not only take away the pain and complexity for your customer, but can also increase customer stickiness and recurring (predictable) revenue. We already consume many goods on a servitised model from music and movies to more significant leased 'assets' like cars and heavy machinery. Thinking about and planning how you can servitise your business model will increase customer satisfaction.

2. Implementing Connected Field Service solutions. From when a customer first purchases a product requiring installation, to the use of predictive AI and IoT to identify cases where your customers' equipment may fail, field service solutions can help you automatically schedule engineers to meet your customers' needs. Further use of AI Insights can not only help you prevent failures but identify patterns and root causes for corrective action. Ultimately such initiatives drive real increases in Overall Equipment Efficiency and ROI.

3. Contract renewal discussions can easily be triggered with automated workflows that drive improvements in customer retention. Depending on value, campaigns can be sent automatically or specific leads in your CRM sales system can be created for personalised follow up.

Increase customer satisfaction by thinking about and planning how you can servitise your business model.

Customer Demand #4: I want you to deliver better service than your competitors, in every way.

Businesses endeavour to create a competitive advantage from the time they start their operations. This is mainly because a competitive advantage is what sets one offering apart from the others. Customer service is one of the most prominent ways that your business can create a competitive benefit.

So, after conquering the 'Unification', 'Personalisation' and 'Anticipation' demands of your customers, what's left? To unify, personalise and anticipate faster than your competitors when your customer demands it; but how?

1. Be 'Always On' any time of day on any channel (or most channels at least). Your Customer Service team doesn't need to be fully staffed 24x7, but customers expect to be able to engage with your business outside of working hours. Chat bots, virtual assistants and an accessible knowledge base allow customers to engage with your brand when you can't be readily available, providing self-service opportunities and passing on required information.

2. Optimise the routing of your mobile field service engineers though advanced route scheduling, allowing you to not only service more cases with the same workforce whilst providing a greater degree of certainty to your customers as to your arrival time. In highly optimised scheduling models you may even allow your customers to select specific delivery times based on location of 'nearby' field service engineers.

3. Energise your Customer Service team through Gamification - the application of game-design elements and game principles in a non-game environment - to improve employee engagement, organizational productivity and learning. These modern approaches and plug-in technologies have been proven to keep your employees motivated to deliver their best performance, by awarding points to individuals or teams based on key business KPIs like call closure time, number of calls closed, and CSAT score. Participants win awards, prizes, and bragging rights, whilst driving real impact on your business results.

Personalise and anticipate faster than your competitors when your customer demands.

About Columbus

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We offer a comprehensive solution portfolio with deep industry knowledge, extensive technology expertise and profound customer insight. We have proven this through 29 years of experience serving more than 5,000 customers worldwide.
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