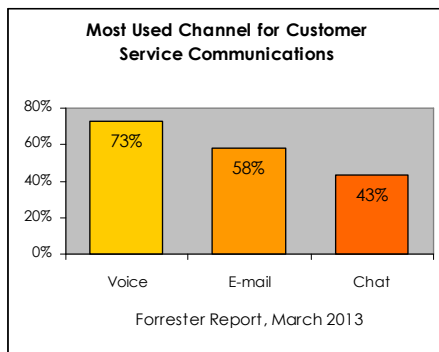


New interaction channels create opportunities and risks for customer service operations, but one thing remains: the primacy of the phone.

Recently, there's been small deluge of research in the area of customer service channels. Mobile, social media and instant messaging are disruptive technologies in the industry.

From a consumer perspective, more choice is not always a good thing. When they engage with an organization via multiple channels, the experience is far from seamless. Organisations are struggling to stitch together these channels under the banner of "Unified Communications" or the "Omnichannel". While it's certainly important to develop engagement using mobile apps and social media, it should not be at the expense of the most important channel: voice.



Forrester's research finds that, while the choice of channel is linked with the "complexity and time-sensitivity" of the inquiry, voice is customers' preferred method.

Social media use is growing but Forrester finds that "satisfaction remains low for these channels, as companies have not invested in best practices for managing interactions."

Meanwhile, an ICMI poll showed that 71% of customers pick up the phone when a social media contact goes unanswered¹ while a survey for Zendesk says that "phone based customer service isn't declining, even as text-based and social channel usage have increased".² So, even when social media is the customer's first choice, they revert to the trusted method, and that's a phone call.

*Across all demographics, **voice** is still the primary communication channel used.³*

¹ International Customer Management poll, Feb 2014

² Zendesk Omnichannel Customer Service Gap Survey, 2013

³ Forrester's Top Trends For Customer Service In 2014, Jan 2014

Got a problem? Get tweeting

Engaging with customers via social media is vital. Research by Accenture found that 26% of respondents posted negative comments about a bad customer service or support experience in the past year.⁴ It can't be ignored... but often it is.

A commonly quoted statistic is that a dissatisfied customer will tell between 9-15 people about their experience, and around 13% of dissatisfied customers tell more than 20 people⁵. Social media is the perfect outlet for complaint, and you may never even see it. The lesson here is clear: give your customer a feedback channel before they take to ranting in public on social media.

Can I speak to a real person please?

So, we know the voice channel is critical, but what's happening there? More automation, more frustration. Badly design IVR systems, long queue times.

Customers want companies to value their time. 71% of consumers say that valuing their time is the most important thing a company can do to provide them with good service.⁶

Traditionally, money was the answer to these sorts of problem: More staff, more training, higher remuneration. Even "in-sourcing", or bringing the contact centre back in-house.

Customers have clearly expressed their preference to speak to a real person, with one major survey showing almost 67% picking this over other channels like Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and live chat.⁷ New technology such as Conversational IVR and improved Voice Biometrics address the limitations of IVR, but these are not cheap either.

Companies need to stop looking at phone-based communications as a cost, and see the possibilities: a phone call is an opportunity to demonstrate quality, to develop trust, to capture feedback, to cross-sell and up-sell. The ServeMeBest suite is a toolkit designed to take these opportunities.

⁴ 2013 Global Consumer Pulse Research

⁵ White House Office of Consumer Affairs

⁶ Understand Communication Channel Needs To Craft Your Customer Service Strategy, Forrester, Mar 2013

⁷ Interactions/NYU Online Survey (2011)

Introducing the Voice Channel toolkit

Each ServeMeBest product recognizes the primacy of the voice channel and plays a role in adding value to telephone interactions. Most importantly, they utilize SMS, the mobile web and social media, acting as bridge between voice and emerging channels.

As cloud services, ServeMeBest products are highly cost effective – you only use what you need. Pick the one that addresses your business needs, or use the products in combination.

What do you need?	Product		
	Trust+	Survey+	Promotion+
Solution for IVR	✓	✓	✓
Build mobile engagement	✓	✓	✓
Increase trust and quality	✓	✓	
Gather instant feedback		✓	
Convert on-hold time to multi-media marketing			✓

Trust+ is a patented recording service designed to enhance trust and transparency, as well as acting to increase the overall quality of phone interactions.

Survey+ is a tool that enables instant call performance feedback. It is designed to offer concise post-call surveys via SMS and the mobile web.

Promotion+ is an interactive solution for targeted, opt-in marketing campaigns. Designed for integration with IVR systems, it replaces one-way audio marketing with interactive multi-media marketing via SMS and the mobile web.

With innovative, patent-protected technology developed in Germany, ServeMeBest is delivering solutions for call centres, digital marketing organisations and customer service organisations of all sizes. Contact us for a demo today.

info@servemebest.com

+353 76 622 3224



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