



# Managing the customer experience across channels -- a manager's guide

With numerous customer touchpoints -- including email, customer communities and other social media, text and chat -- it's crucial for companies to provide a consistent and satisfying customer experience across all channels. Meanwhile, it's also important to be cost effective in this multi-channel approach. Key to this is choosing the best metrics for each touchpoint to assess how well each channel fulfils the expected customer experience. In this eBook, find out how to optimize and analyze data collected from each channel and how to apply the findings to a customer experience management (CEM) strategy. Readers will also see how collecting data from each channel helps develop a single view of the customer for consistent delivery of messages across channels.

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## **Measure contact center analytics across channels, have happy customers**

By Lynn Hunsaker, Contributor

Customers view the company as a whole, whether communication is with service, marketing, sales, billing or any other part of the organization. Accordingly, best-practice service metrics and contact center analytics enable holistic views of the company and the customer.

With the rapid expansion of multichannel service, the importance of end-to-end customer experience visibility cannot be overstated. End-to-end customer experience transcends product lines, geographies, functional areas, channels and time. According to recent research from Ovum, 74% of consumers use at least three contact center channels for customer service-related issues, and 44% of consumers prefer non-voice channels.

First call resolution (FCR) is often measured in the call center and sometimes separately for self-service. However, overall FCR—regardless of service channel—may be the ultimate measure of customer experience success. Customers prefer not needing service in the first place, but when they do reach out for help, they want to feel confident they've received an effective answer right away and move on to other endeavors.

According to *eBusiness Customer Service and Support Benchmarks* by Forrester Research Inc., only 23% of self-service Web pages ask customers whether the answer provided by a customer service channel solved their problem. By not measuring customer feedback, companies are ignoring an important aspect of customer experience management (CEM) technology.

Emotion analysis through text and speech analytics can paint a more complete picture when combined with the overall FCR metric, indicating the level of confidence customers feel about whether the answer they received has resolved the issue at hand.

Text mining applications can help companies analyze data within written records of customer interactions. For audio recordings, speech analytics applications can automate analysis of call samples using a wide range of filters.

The following metrics assess the customer experience in order of customer-centricity within each of these service channels: chat, communities, email, social media and text messaging.

*Chat:*

- Percentage of chat participants acknowledging that a provided solution is successful
- Customer wait time during chat
- Customer requests for re-phrasing of questions and solutions

Ensuring a positive customer experience requires a blend of effectiveness and efficiency, catering to the customer's circumstances. These metrics assess the agent's ability to quickly assess customer context and access the needed information to the customer's satisfaction. Text-mining applications can tabulate these metrics from recorded chat logs.

*Communities:*

- Content rating
- Endorsements (such as "Tell a Friend" or "Like" links)
- Percentage of questions for which the question originator acknowledged the answer
- Percentage of visitors who post additional questions (unrelated to their first questions)
- Time from question post to answer post
- Repeat visits

Customers access communities to enhance their experience through others' knowledge. High-quality, timely content and answers to customers' questions determine whether customers will have a positive experience and whether they will trust the community as a useful resource in the future. Most community platforms enable content ratings and endorsements; it may be necessary to request additional functionality from the community platform vendor to track answer acknowledgment, answer timeliness and repeat usage of question features.

*Email:*

- Success acknowledgement from the question originator
- Incident turnaround time, by severity level and by customer-specified timing
- Longest delay in queue

Customers send emails to companies for a number of reasons. Some are too busy to call, while others have the extra time to wait for an answer. Still others want to receive lengthier instructions in writing. Although their response-time expectations are relatively lower, they may have a specific window of opportunity to receive a company's reply to fulfill their needs. Automation of these metrics may require a request for additional functionality from the email platform vendor.

*Social media:*

- Percentage of solutions acknowledged by recipient as successful
- Endorsement of solutions (such as number of shares, embeds, "Like" ratings, @replies, direct messages, comments, wall posts, third-party blog mentions)
- Time from originator's post to solution post
- Increased usage of self-service referenced by a solution post
- Sentiment changes after solution post

Customers use social media to express themselves, learn from others, and help others avoid or gain experiences they've had. Prompt company response can engage the customer positively and have a far-reaching impact on other customers and prospects.

*Text messaging:*

- Percentage of text message requests by repeat users
- Percentage of customers acting on text message account alerts
- Percentage of text message participants acknowledging solution as successful

Customers like text messages for timely updates and accessing information remotely. The flexibility and spontaneity that is unique to text messaging can have a great effect on the customer experience. SMS texting applications enable text mining to tabulate these customer experience metrics.

To effectively use customer experience metrics, organizations should research what prompts customers to use each channel and their specific expectations for that channel. Segment the customer experience metrics by what causes customers to use each channel rather than demographics.

The customer's perspective is the key to excelling in CEM technology. Holistic views of customers, and measurement of multichannel performance as the customer sees it, will reveal substantial opportunities to differentiate organizations for superior customer experience.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Lynn Hunsaker** leads ClearAction customer experience management (CEM) consulting, and has led CEM programs in Fortune 250 companies since 1989. She is on the Advisory Boards of CustomerThink, The Customer Care Network, Marketing Operations Partners and Customer Experience One.

## **Customer experience management gives Dell, AmEx an edge**

By Lynn Hunsaker, Contributor

To be truly successful in customer experience management (CEM), companies must know what their customers care about and design their business to deliver. First call resolution is widely accepted as the ultimate service metric. More important than measuring customer service is managing what enables it.

Regardless of the channels they use, customers expect companies to acknowledge a full history of interactions, readily understand the context of their plight and provide a prompt solution. Companies following CEM technology best practices regularly test their assumptions about their customers' perceptions and expectations and orchestrate their strategies accordingly.

### **American Express 'hires the will, teaches the skill'**

American Express Co. reinvented its customer service by focusing on what the customer thinks. A Net Promoter Score metric, along with satisfaction ratings, is tied to compensation for everyone from front-line employees to senior executives. These tools replaced traditional service metrics and internal quality monitoring.

The credit card provider applies positive customer feedback to future calls, which are viewed as opportunities to build relationships and create lasting emotional connections with customers. These calls help customers access unused benefits from their existing credit card (but it's not necessarily an up-sell to a different card).

Negative customer feedback is used to follow up with customers to learn how to better understand and address their concerns. This feedback acts as a teaching tool that customer care professionals can learn from. Integrated customer data and contextual cues eliminate the need to access multiple screens during a call, and the virtual service center is continuously improving customer-centric navigation and ease of use.

American Express shifted from hiring people with call center experience to “hiring the will and teaching the skill,” with a professional development path to advance employees’ careers in the company. Training focus is 30% technical and 70% on active listening. The ideal interaction involves an assessment of the customer’s mood, understanding the reason behind the call, unscripted conversation and a description of existing features that the customer might be unaware of or unsure how to use. The customer decides how long she wants to spend on the call and agents determine their own schedules.

These practices led to an average increase of more than 10% in “Recommend to a Friend” scores and an 8%-10% lift in customer spend, as well as a 50% drop in employee attrition and a 10% increase in service margins. Since adopting these methods, American Express has topped the J.D. Power and Forrester rankings for credit card providers, and it has been listed among the BusinessWeek Customer Service Champs.

### **Dell revamps its CEM technology strategy**

Dell also reinvented its customer service with an unrelenting focus on the customer. The company had invested in technologies during the 1990s to listen to and communicate with customers. However, it found that technology is necessary but insufficient, as negative customer sentiment peaked in 2005. The Direct2Dell blog and IdeaStorm suggestion system opened dialogue between customers and senior management.

Executives also asked front-line employees to notify them of “dumb things we do” and involved employees companywide in focusing on customers. To help customers find the right content at the right time, Dell.com workflow was transformed across 13 billion Web pages in 26 languages.

For the 150 countries serving Dell customers, content can be readily coordinated with product launch delays and other changes. Content is rapidly deployed within the context of the website, using rich content editing and review tools and system-based workflows for collaboration and approval.

User experience has greatly improved, with easier browsing, minimal broken links and dynamic search. In redesigning workflow, Dell conducted extensive customer studies to ensure effectiveness of the site and its benefits from the customer perspective.

### **Focus on customer service expectations**

Knowing what customers expect from their support experiences is essential. One leading software maker directed customers to request refunds through self-service on its website. It discovered that this was actually escalating customer dissatisfaction, as the majority of customers really wanted verbal confirmation from a live person for refund situations.

Now in the process of retooling its workflow, the company learned the expensive way that assumptions should always be tested across the customer's end-to-end experience. Testing all channels from a customer's point of view may provide valuable insights and empathy, but remember that different types of customers have different perspectives as well.

Customer experience leaders such as American Express and Dell view service as an opportunity center rather than a cost center.

"It's easy to make the case that large call centers have customer influence on par with, if not greater than, that of mass advertising campaigns," said Kerry Bodine, principal analyst at Forrester Research Inc. "Assuming a call center with 3,000 agents and an average of only 50 calls per agent per day, a company has the opportunity to make 1.05 million personal connections each week—and 54.6 million each year."

Expanding those figures to all multichannel service touchpoints provides organizations with a more accurate estimate of personal connection opportunities. Remember that only a fraction of the people exposed to an ad campaign eventually produce revenue for the company, whereas the vast majority of people accessing its services are already producing revenue.

Customer experience stands out when technology, people and processes cater to what customers are trying to accomplish in the larger context of using a product or service. There's no substitute for a deep understanding of the customer's world and the reasons behind her viewpoints in a company's quest to optimize the customer experience.

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## Resources from Oracle Corporation



[Reinventing the Web Channel to Maximize B2B Sales and Customer Satisfaction](#)

[Cross-Channel Commerce: A Consumer Research Study](#)

[Commerce Anywhere: A Business and Technology Strategy to Maximize Cross-Channel Commerce Growth](#)

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