7 INNOVATIVE WAYS

TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE

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INTRODUCTION

Exceptional customer service has virtually always been one of the key principles of successful business — but today, customers expect more from you than ever before. Factors such as social media, online reviews, and the ever-evolving digital world have made it incredibly easy for stories of sub-par service to spread like wildfire. So, regardless of what industry you're in, consistently improving your customer service systems is a critical step in staying ahead of your competition. With outdated systems, you run the risk of losing customers to competitors and being labeled as a brand that's out of touch with the times.

But for businesses who are ready to step into the future of customer service, there is a wealth of opportunity available. At PTP, we specialize in helping our clients redefine the concept of the customer experience, as well as the tools and systems they use to deliver services. And in our experience, there are a handful of particularly innovative, high-impact ways to improve your approach — and we can help you tackle them all.

REFINE YOUR SERVICE APPROACH WITH CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING

BENEFITS OF CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING

Creating a customer journey map can offer many benefits, including:

- **Highlighting** the differences between the ideal customer experience and the one actually provided

- **Illustrating** how, when, and why customers interact with your brand

- **Refining** the focus on specific customer needs at each stage of the purchasing funnel

- **Determining** whether the customer journey follows a logical route

- **Providing** a new perspective on the sales process

- **Allowing** you to target improvement efforts for measurable growth

- **Targeting** discrepancies between your brand image and the true customer experience

Imagine being able to reference a visual representation of a customer's complete experience with your brand, beginning with their very first point of engagement.

Customer journey mapping makes this concept a reality, allowing you to craft a detailed analysis of each and every time the customer interacts with your business.

Although it might seem that the average customer has a relatively simple journey (finding your product or service, then purchasing it), the bigger picture is actually very complex. The starting point of your customers' journeys can occur via marketing, social media, referrals, online search, and many other ways. From there, their engagement with your brand can take a multitude of paths and use a variety of channels. Along the way, customers may experience different issues at different times or through specific channels. Understanding these routes can help you pinpoint the pain points (and strengths) of your overall customer service approach.

Journey mapping also takes into consideration not only the customer's experience, but also the employee's. Your key asset to great service is your agent, followed by your technology. You'll want to know their challenges, what they need to work at the top of their skill level, and even their emotional experiences along the way. Accounting for all parties engaged during the interactions helps ensure you have the right process in place, as well as lets you be nimble and proactive enough to meet or exceed customer expectations.

By utilizing customer journey mapping, your team can ensure that there is next to no potential for a specific customer interaction to fall by the wayside. Because journey mapping allows you to step into the customers' perspective, it becomes far easier to determine where improvements should be made — and exactly how to do it.

EMPOWER YOUR CUSTOMERS
WITH SELF-SERVICE CAPABILITIES

BENEFITS OF SELF-SERVICE

Like most effective improvements to your customer service approach, self-service can provide advantages to both your business and your customers, including:

- **Cutting** service costs without sacrificing the quality of customers' experiences

- **Offering** 24/7 support with no need for around-the-clock representatives

- **Accumulating** useful data about your customers and their experiences with your products or services

- **Increasing** customer service representative productivity potential

- **Building** customer knowledge surrounding your brand, products, and services

- **Fostering** a sense of community among customers through forums, social media, and more

Implementing self-service options is a move that benefits not just your customers, but also your business as a whole.

With the right self-service technology in place, you can save considerably on service costs, exceed customer expectations, and even build long-term loyalty. And with more than 90 percent of customers expecting self-service options, this is one boat your brand won't want to miss.

Self-service can take many different forms, including customer-managed account actions, customer support portals, and even customer message forums. No matter how you opt to provide self-service, if done correctly, your customers will be empowered to find answers and solve issues without requiring a service representative.

Usually, customer self-service taps into established knowledge bases, combining them with the automation of simple administrative tasks. With a knowledge base acting as a vast resource library, customers can ask product questions and receive instantaneous answers, browse troubleshooting guides, and even download step-by-step directions. On the administrative side, customers can easily navigate tasks such as updating personal information, adding billing details, and resetting passwords. Together, these self-service capabilities can boost customer satisfaction and satisfy those who prefer locating answers on their own, rather than contacting support.

A clear understanding of the design and implementation of self-service options will enable your organization to approach the model construction process in a way that suits your business's unique needs. By using the information gathered from your existing systems, it's possible to craft a self-service support platform that works exactly how your customers want it to.

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ELIMINATE SERVICE STRUGGLES
WITH VISUAL IVR

BENEFITS OF VISUAL IVR

A professionally-built and implemented Visual IVR system can support your goals in a myriad of ways:

- **Providing** a more positive service experience for customers

- **Adding** a personalized aspect to the larger customer service experience

- **Incorporating** innovative technology to adapt to changing customer needs

- **Building** off of your existing IVR system to eliminate costly redesigns

- **Allowing** for self-service in a smarter, more effective way

Visual IVR is an aspect of customer self-service worth highlighting all on its own, particularly because it sets the stage for an efficient, highly-innovative solution to an age-old problem.

Virtually every one of us has experienced the frustration of feeling trapped in the endless loop of an IVR, also known as an Interactive Voice Response System. Long menus, faulty responses, and other factors often lead customers to simply request a live agent — which completely defeats the purpose of an IVR.

But with a Visual IVR platform, you can satisfy customers' preference for self-service in a more effective way. Visual IVR utilizes a customer's smartphone (or a web platform) as the medium for a visual menu, presenting all self-service options in an easy-to-see format. From there, customers can independently navigate according to their individual needs. And for your business, the expense of paying for service can drop significantly.

By utilizing your current IVR system as a foundation, you can efficiently incorporate Visual IVR as a key feature, expanding customer choice and improving the success of the platform as a whole. And once your organization joins the ranks of businesses providing their customers with the best in cutting-edge service options, you'll discover the true difference that technology can make.

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INVEST IN INNOVATION WITH A CENTER OF EXCELLENCE (CoE)

BENEFITS OF A CENTER OF EXCELLENCE:

Establishing a center of excellence within your organization can offer an impressive range of benefits, such as:

- **Demonstrating** your business's commitment to excellence and innovation, both to the public and staff

- **Dedicating** concerted efforts to expand upon a certain capability, explore a topic, master a process or procedure, and achieve other highly specific goals

- **Communicating** best practices and modeling leadership for the organization as a whole

- **Charting** a path for the future based off of the best ROIs and targeted outcomes

- **Targeting** specific challenges or inefficiencies

- **Resolving** gaps in knowledge or a deficit in skills within the organization

A center of excellence (CoE) is an internal process based on the core concept that competency and specialized expertise are the building blocks of excellence, regardless of the type or size of your organization

While the exact scope of a center of excellence can vary, depending largely on the context in which the phrase is being used, the basic idea remains the same: a CoE is a team or entity that serves as a source of knowledge, leadership, and support.

Sometimes called a capability or competency center, a center of excellence can consist of a small team of individual staff or a full-scale department. You can elect to create a temporary CoE, or make it an ongoing project that adapts as your focus shifts.

Developing a center of excellence within your organization is a process that should be tailored specific for your business. You'll want to consider your organizational goals, as well as the best structure for pursuing innovation in a way that serves your business and customers. For example, a technology company might utilize the CoE concept for software development, diving into how to better support customers with at-home troubleshooting options. Or, a company that has been struggling with customer complaints may create a temporary CoE designed to resolve inefficiencies in current procedures.

Ultimately, a center of excellence will improve your business's ability to implement a smarter, more effective approach to virtually any goal. By creating a space to think more intentionally about the customer and their experience, a CoE gives your organization a serious advantage when it comes to measuring up to your customers' needs and expectations.

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UNIFY YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE EFFORTS WITH CRM AND CONTACT CENTER INTEGRATION

BENEFITS OF CRM AND CONTACT CENTER INTEGRATION

Merge your CRM and contact center successfully, and you'll unlock a number of outstanding benefits, including:

- **A holistic** view of your customers

- **An improved** ability to sell to, service, and retain customers

- **The elimination** of silo operations and the unification of teams with common goals

- **A consistent**, highly-personalized customer experience across a variety of channels

- **Simple management** of agent-customer interactions

- **Increased** efficiency and reduced service times

Your customer relationship management (CRM) and your contact center solutions are two unique systems with a shared goal: to know your customers and provide an optimal experience for each and every one. By integrating the two, you not only boost efficacy, but unlock a wider range of capabilities.

Typically, CRM solutions are run by sales and marketing, whereas contact center solutions are run by the customer service organization. They are obviously built for different intents, but in the long run, having a holistic view of every interaction with a customer — from them receiving a marketing email, to speaking with a sales person, to calling in about a service-related issue — empowers the entire organization to proactively communicate with customers in a personalized manner.

Combining the two into a single software solution allows your employees to access customer history, account information, and other details in real time, delivering a completely tailored customer experience across all support channels. Whether the interaction takes place over the phone, online, or social media, your reps will have the advantage of a detailed picture of the customer as an individual, as well as their journey with your organization. Additionally, your business will gain a veritable treasure trove of information about your customers' activity, likely next steps, pain points, and more.

Uniting your contact center with CRM is a no-brainer, but actually integrating the two systems is often easier said than done. Statistics from Forrester Research show that nearly half of all CRM projects fail, even when businesses have the best of intentions. But when successful, CRM and contact center integration can be a game-changer for both your customers and your business. For this task, it's recommended that you tap into the expertise of professionals. As a result, your business will be able to effectively integrate contact center operations with your existing CRM system, ensuring that valuable data doesn't fall through the cracks.

UNDERSTAND YOUR CUSTOMERS BETTER THROUGH INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

BENEFITS OF CUSTOMER INTELLIGENCE

Customer intelligence is an invaluable way to enhance customer service, and delivers benefits that include:

- **An effective** collection of data from many different channels, unifying information into a usable form

- **An understanding** of shifts in customer needs, expectations, and the market as a whole

- **Stronger** relationships with customers

- **A boost** to sales efficiency and customer service quality, as well as improvements to overall strategy

- **A distinct** advantage over competitors who fail to effectively utilize data

Understanding your customers is a non-negotiable if you want to be well-prepared to serve them, but without the right information, you'll be left in the dark.

Customer intelligence is the practice of collecting data about both existing and prospective customers, then analyzing that data to develop a clearer view of who your customers are and what they want.

As important as the data itself is, even more critical to customer intelligence is the actual process of analysis. You might have the right information, but if you don't know what to do with it, it becomes useless.

An excellent customer intelligence process is engineered to unify data from a variety of sources, pulling from your CRM, contact center, social media, and everyday interactions between employees and customers. With a holistic perspective of the customer, you can then move forward and make educated efforts to engage with customers, solve issues, and detect imperative patterns.

Ideally, your approach to customer intelligence gathering should employ experiential data sourced from both your contact center and CRM. With a closer look at your current environment, your organization can unite various systems (such as IVR) to get a "big picture" view of who your customers truly are — and what that means for your business's next steps.

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LEVERAGE THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY TO ACHIEVE ACCESSIBILITY

BENEFITS OF ACCESSIBILITY

Integrating accessibility into the design of all digital content is more than just a legal necessity, it's an ethical decision that provides more than its fair share of benefits, including:

- **Demonstrating** a care and respect for all customers

- **Nurturing** long-lasting relationships with customers with all types of needs

- **Guaranteeing** every customer has an exceptional experience

- **Avoiding** the expense and hassle of litigation

- **Blending** automation and human expertise to solve accessibility issues and evaluate compliance

- **Pinpointing** necessary changes and effectively implementing accessibility efforts

- **Improving** accessibility for all users, including those using smartphones, slow networks, etc.

On our list of ways to improve customer service, accessibility is the one that's not simply a suggestion — it's an absolute must.

Ensuring that all of your digital content is ADA-accessible is not just a smart business decision, it's a legal requirement that you're obligated to fulfill. Failing to provide accessible content lets down new and existing customers, and puts you at serious risk of an expensive and lengthy lawsuit — not to mention serious repercussions for your public image.

Putting the concept of accessibility into practice can be a complex process, especially because ADA guidelines are consistently evolving. Ultimately, the goal is to design digital content that everyone, regardless of ability, can easily access and use. Being in compliance with ADA guidelines means not just designing a website that considers all aspects of accessibility, but also constantly reviewing new content to confirm that it follows all regulations.

But despite the unique challenges of crafting accessible content, it's a process that's more than worth the effort. And the good news is that with the right software solutions, you can successfully bring current content into compliance and adhere to all guidelines moving forward. There are a select few software programs that can be used to locate all areas of present noncompliance, as well as also develop and implement smart strategies for both issue resolution and future compliance in all newly-created content.

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MAKE TARGETED IMPROVEMENTS TO YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE SOLUTIONS WITH PTP

After more than 15 years of working with a diverse range of clients, the team at PTP can confidently say that when it comes to return on investment, nothing pays off quite like an upgraded customer experience. You already know that your customers are vital to your business's success, but are you truly doing everything you can to serve them? There's only one way to find out: join forces with the professionals at PTP.

PTP will conduct a detailed evaluation of your current customer service channels, providing expert-level feedback for improvement. When you're ready to move forward, we'll serve as your knowledgeable partner in the process, designing and implementing service solutions that suit your needs.

Contact PTP today to schedule your assessment and take the first steps towards delivering the type of customer experience that your customers deserve.