

3 Essential Elements to Improving the Customer Experience

Uncovering Hidden Network Issues with Best Practice Testing Services



AVAYA

INTELLIGENT COMMUNICATIONS

Has this ever happened to you?

You're in an airport and you need to modify your rental car reservation. You call the customer service number, and to expedite your service, you provide your account information through an automated service menu. Your call is then transferred to a service agent for assistance. The service agent is unable to access your previously keyed in information and asks you for it a second time.

Ultimately, modifying your reservation required nine minutes to navigate the automated service menu and another seven minutes to repeat your request and information with the agent.

How would you describe this experience? Would you be satisfied with the service you received? Did you feel your needs were quickly met? Would you recommend this car rental company to your friends and colleagues?



If you're like most, you've probably experienced a fair share of good and bad customer service. You can easily list the companies that have provided great customer service and most likely have a few examples that caused you enough frustration and aggravation that you moved to a competitor.

Customer satisfaction plays a significant role in the overall success of an organization, and more and more businesses are looking for ways to improve and ensure the quality and consistency of their customer service. Ensuring that customers have the best connection, the best information, and the best resources throughout the service experience greatly increases their confidence and satisfaction and positively

differentiates a business from the competition. Consistently delivering quality service requires all elements involved in a customer interaction to work together and deliver expected results. However, all interactions do not always function according to plan. Hidden network issues may arise in certain customer engagements and negatively affect the customer service experience.

Continue reading to learn more about the three essential elements of a quality service experience and how Avaya best practice testing strategies can help identify and mitigate the hidden network issues affecting customer satisfaction and service.

Meeting Customer Service Expectation

Customers are at the heart of every business, and the success of every organization directly depends on their satisfaction. They expect and should receive the highest quality service across every channel of communication at all times. The highest level of attention should be placed on meeting and exceeding customer service expectations with speed and convenience.

Research recently conducted by the American Management Association found that 68% of customers leave a business because of poor service.¹ Consequently, if a company fails to meet customer expectations and deliver quality service they lose both customers and money.

¹<http://www.customerservicecrossing.com/article/lcprintarticles.php?printerflag=P&id=460005>

Good versus Bad Customer Service

In reality, everyone has experienced both good and bad service. Good service ensures that customer needs are quickly met and easily resolved to their satisfaction. Satisfied customers are more likely to positively impact a business, encouraging future engagements and building profitable long term relationships. It is estimated that the average satisfied customer tells up to five people about his or her good service experience², increasing the likelihood of repeat business.

Poor service, on the other hand, can quickly generate frustration and discourage further business. We've all heard bad news travels fast, and it is estimated that the average dissatisfied customer tells up to ten other people of his or her poor service.³ It is easy for anyone to relate to a poor service experience, whether it is as simple as a drycleaner losing a favorite shirt or enduring endless loops of 'Your call is important to us. Please hold for the next available customer service agent.'

It can take up to twelve positive service experiences to counteract

just one negative experience.⁴ So, no matter how straightforward the communication, poor service immediately negates previous experiences and lessens the possibility of retaining the customer.

3 Essential Elements of Quality Customer Service

No one can afford frustrated, dissatisfied customers. It is estimated that businesses in the U.S. lose approximately \$83 billion each year due to a poor customer service experience⁵, and according to the White House Office of Consumer Affairs, a typical business will hear from only about 4% of their dissatisfied customers.⁶

To help ensure you provide optimal customer service, we've identified three key elements that enhance the customer service experience: ensuring the best voice connection, access to real-time information, and availability of appropriate resources.

The Best Connection

Research indicates that 79% of all customers have experienced poor quality service.⁷ One of the major contributing factors is a bad connection. Imagine you call the

customer service number on the back of your credit card to make a quick payment. Once connected, you have to keep asking the service agent to repeat their question, and in turn, you are asked to speak up. A variety of factors may have detrimentally affected this interaction, including broken speech, static, and poor audio. Regardless, you were most likely left feeling disappointed with the experience and may think twice before using the service again.

At other times, connection issues can contribute to faulty service. For example, let's say you receive a last minute request for a face-to-face meeting in New York at 8:00 a.m. the following morning, and you need to quickly arrange for a red-eye flight from Los Angeles. You immediately call the airline to make a last minute reservation only to have the line go dead after a few rings. The dropped call probably leaves you frustrated and wondering why you were disconnected.

Many times connection issues are intermittent and can vary for each customer engagement. Influencing factors include time of day, day of week, peak and off-peak calling

² <http://www.aunline.com/thirteencsfacts.htm>

³ <http://www.customerservicecrossing.com/article/lcprintarticles.php?printerflag=P&id=460005>

⁴ <http://www.ispeak.com/news.asp?newsid=10>

⁵ <http://www.cultivatingyourcustomers.com/2010/03/04/poor-customer-service-do-you-know-how-much-it-is-costing-you/>

⁶ <http://www.customerservicemanager.com/customer-service-facts.htm>

⁷ "The Hidden Cost of Technology Failure in the Contact Centre," Customer Experience Foundation, September 2009

hours, and network capacity. In our example, the airline call center network may have been experiencing an overload of calls and instead of correctly queuing your call, you were simply dropped – increasing the number of calls required to complete your request and placing additional strain on the call center network.

The Best Information

A smooth flow of communications between a customer and a business also requires real-time access to accurate customer data. Take for example, the earlier reference to modifying a rental car reservation. The information you entered during the automated portion of your call did not accompany you through the transfer to a live agent. Without historical knowledge and access to relevant data, the agent had to ask you to repeat your information, increasing the time both parties had to spend to complete the transaction.

Unnecessarily extending the time spent on a call can quickly lead to dissatisfaction. The delayed transfer of information impacts a service agent's ability to quickly help customers. Repetitive requests for information only generate frustration for customers and increase operating costs for businesses.

We all expect the elements involved with an interaction to function properly and deliver information at the right time. Determining why customer information is not readily accessible can be time consuming. Rather than prolonging a call and increasing a customer's frustration, agents will often complete the request and move on to the next customer without reporting the issue and identifying the cause.

The Best Resource

A service experience can also fall short of expectations when an organization is unable to quickly connect the customer to the best resource. Let's say you need to check your medical coverage for an upcoming doctor's appointment. You call your insurance service center and are connected to a self-service system. You verify your group number and account information by answering a few questions, but your call is transferred to an agent unaware of the unique attributes of your group policy.

Customers expect the first contact to effectively and swiftly complete their service request. On average, call center customer satisfaction drops an estimated 15% with each transferred call⁸, so the impact of not reaching the right resource the first

time can be harmful to your business, not to mention the added expenses tied to servicing further calls.

To help alleviate the effects of multiple call transfers, businesses are using self-service systems because they are specifically designed to expedite customer calls and improve customer satisfaction. However, at times a call may not follow the intended path. Discovering the cause of the misdirection can be difficult since it frequently depends on factors that are easily influenced by the correct routing and speed of incoming calls.

For many of us, these experiences sound all too familiar. Failure to meet these basic requirements means there is a significant opportunity to improve the service experience and business efficiency. Acquiring a new customer can cost a business up to five times more than satisfying their existing customers with quality service.⁹ Customers may consider competitive alternatives to your services when they experience poor voice connections, limited access to the right subject-matter experts, and additional delays due to inaccurate transfer of information.

Fortunately, through the adoption of best practice testing methodologies

⁸ <http://www.icmi.com/Resources/Articles/2008/October/Focusing-on-First-Call-Resolution>

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relationship_marketing#cite_note-kotler_3-7

ACQUIRING A NEW CUSTOMER CAN COST A BUSINESS UP TO FIVE TIMES MORE THAN SATISFYING THEIR EXISTING CUSTOMERS WITH QUALITY SERVICE

you can help ensure the best voice connection and access to the best information and resources – providing customers a consistent, high-quality service experience.

Best Practice Testing Strategies - Improving the Customer Service Experience

In today's interconnected world, our daily interactions are becoming more and more reliant on technology. Efficiently communicating with customers can be complicated and may depend on many different factors.

The variety of elements and detailed interactions between a customer, a business, and its supporting communications technologies all contribute to the service experience. In turn, these interdependencies often delay or even prevent an organizations' ability to find the root cause of poor customer service.

Unless you leverage best practice testing strategies, it's difficult to discover the underlying issues that impact real-life customer experiences. Issues often include, but are not limited to, network capacity, the number or volume of calls, and the speed of incoming and outgoing calls.

Rigorous testing of the solutions and applications involved in the daily communications between a customer and a business helps to identify the processes that take place at each touch point during a customer service experience.

Testing the elements involved from initial contact with an automated service menu to the audio quality of the communication, makes it easier to predict what possible issues may arise during a customer interaction - saving up to three to four times the cost of troubleshooting and repairing problems after the fact. For example, when a customer contact center

technology project is delayed due to the omission of best practices during the deployment, the business impact can be alarming, resulting in average project delays of 7 months and 90% project budget overruns.¹⁰

Differentiating the Customer Experience through Advanced Testing Services

A thorough understanding of the ins and outs of a customer experience allows you to quickly pinpoint issues when your customers are dissatisfied. When a customer complains about experiencing dropped calls, you can use advanced testing services to identify the source of the issue. After completing testing, you may realize your network is not configured to handle the number of incoming calls received every day from noon to five, resulting in multiple dropped calls.

Testing communications solutions and applications in advance can help

¹⁰ "The Hidden Cost of Technology Failure in the Contact Centre," Customer Experience Foundation, September 2009



Case Study

Situation: A global financial services enterprise was experiencing extreme static and dropped calls in their call center. They wrestled with this problem internally for some time, before engaging Avaya testing experts.

Solution: Avaya initiated testing and almost immediately pinpointed a number of critical problems in the way the call center performed under load. On the back-end database, too few inbound ports were open, and the system was configured to handle only four calls per second, causing serious capacity bottlenecks. In addition, if the load was exceeded and the database experienced a connection problem, the IVR would disconnect the caller.

Results: Once Avaya testing had identified the source of the problem, a technician was able to fix the capacity and connection problems in just ten minutes.

clearly define interdependencies and uncover areas that can improve the customer experience. Ultimately it can prevent hidden issues from affecting voice connection quality and access to the right information and resources.

Delivering Value with Avaya Services

Advanced testing services that have previously been used exclusively in the largest and most sophisticated projects are now widely available through Avaya. The market leading provider of collaborative solutions, Avaya, continuously strives to raise the bar on the level of customer satisfaction attainable through a wide range of communications technology deployments.

Avaya offers a portfolio of testing services specifically designed to provide confidence and assurance in each communications deployment. Through its expertise and leading-edge testing technologies, Avaya uses real-life scenarios to test an actual communications environment and identify hidden issues before they negatively impact customer satisfaction.

Stress Testing Services offered by Avaya provide diverse testing strategies reflecting both normal and extreme customer call situations,

allowing testing experts to discover how communications systems perform at maximum capacity. They generate thousands of test calls duplicating real-world operating conditions to validate the performance of communications applications and the underlying network infrastructure.

In the previous example describing a call to your medical insurance provider, all systems appeared to be working correctly. You were able to correctly enter your information and make a request through the self-service menu; however, your call was directed to the wrong agent.

To identify where the issue occurred, Avaya testing experts push traffic over the actual company network to determine the exact point in the call where the system failed. Avaya experts are able to test load functionality to identify and isolate capacity bottlenecks and configuration errors prior to deployment. This testing helps ensure the applications and communications infrastructure will scale to meet a company's performance goals and customer expectations.

Providing Control and Predictability

There are many times in life when



surprises, like winning the lottery, are positive and welcomed. However, when it comes to providing customer service, certainty is essential and surprises are unwelcome.

The key to good customer service is providing a consistent, high quality experience across all channels of communications at all times.

Businesses invest heavily in the communications solutions that support customer service to ensure quality and improve customer satisfaction.

Learn More

To learn more about Stress Testing Services, contact the Avaya Professional Services Team at engageaps@avaya.com.

About Avaya

Avaya is a global leader in business communications systems. The company provides unified communications, contact centers, data solutions and related services directly and through its channel partners to leading businesses and organizations around the world. Enterprises of all sizes depend on Avaya for state-of-the-art communications that improve efficiency, collaboration, customer service and competitiveness.

For more information please visit www.avaya.com.

Stress Testing Services help organizations maintain the control and predictability required of communications systems, reducing the risk of poor service and delivering expected results. Avaya advanced testing services allow you to better manage the capacity and performance of the technologies involved with every customer interaction - further improving customer satisfaction and differentiating your business with consistent high-quality customer service.

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