Making customer feedback pay off

By Wynand Smit

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The entire customer journey, whether in sales or customer service, must be as seamless as possible and working with feedback from your customers is the best place to start.

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'Feedback'- in music, it is what you get if you are playing guitar in front of the amplifier with the volume turned up – pure noise – but in business, feedback is designed to remove noise and isolate clear messages about your company.

This year, 59% of companies polled by the International Customer Management Institute stated that their number one priority is to improve customer experience (CX). The different tools and means of obtaining feedback provide different levels of information.

A digital in-branch device can allow the customer to select options such as 'great service' or 'most disappointed' but this information is limited – it gives no insights into your customer or your company or even the exact incident or experience that led to the specific rating.

Since CX is about the quality of an interaction or a series of interactions, it is not simply a case of improving efficiencies and productivity to reach operational or service level targets. Rather, it is about ensuring that the engagement with each contact, for whatever reason, is conducted well, and to the level of expectation as determined by the customer. Well-

trained, skilled and readily available staff also play a pivotal role in dictating service levels and customer satisfaction – a consideration that should never be ignored.

There are many touch points in interactions between customers and companies, so a better solution is to have a feedback tool that is linked to the customer journey across as many channels as necessary – voice, email, social media, chat and online.

Step one – rate this service

Extensive 'rate this service' questionnaires supply vital information, from identifying problem areas to highlighting where you are doing things right. The quality of this information depends on your requirements and the questions used to get feedback that can be used responsively.

For example, a hotel group could ask all sorts of questions about ease of booking and check-in procedures, quality of services offered, pricing, friendliness/competence of staff – almost anything the hotel management team chooses. The responses to questions can be linked to all the data stored by the hotel, so a bigger picture can then be formed, analysed and fed back into the business to drive improvements.

Step two – deal with pain points

Addressing issues is essential on the road to excellent customer experience. Find out where the customers feel that they are not getting the service they want, and why. The contact centre team should also have the opportunity to proactively give feedback if they pick up patterns or insights – are they properly equipped to deliver on customer expectations? Agents may need access to more product, customer or interaction information, for example, so that they do not have to refer customers to another department and can deal with the inquiry efficiently.

Step three – personalisation

In step one, we saw how accumulated customer intelligence could reveal when guests prefer to travel, how frequently they do so, how they prefer to pay and at what times of the month, and what they prefer at the hotels themselves.

That is invaluable for loyal customers – say members of a loyalty programme – but also in developing profiles that assist in setting up campaigns, such as marketing long weekends to those most likely to respond, or offering special rates for business travellers – the kind of personalisation customers enjoy because it is relevant to them. This example can be rolled out across many sectors and is especially useful in a retail environment.

Using feedback intelligently is of immense value to sales, support and marketing departments. It provides access to more focused efforts that target customers more likely to engage and, ultimately purchase, as well as improve service levels and the overall customer experience.

While not all customer feedback is valuable (there may be a lot of noise), collecting your customers' compliments, praise, complaints, and survey data, and turning this into actionable insight can only benefit your business.

ABOUT WYNAND SMIT

Wynand Smit is CEO at INOVO, a leading contact centre business solutions provider.
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