

# SERVE YOUR EXPERIENCE ON A SILVER PLATTER

One would think that the more you're in contact with a customer, the deeper your relationship will grow. The opposite is true.

If a customer comes into contact with you directly, the likelihood of you retaining their business decreases four-fold, according to research by the Corporate Executive Board and presented by Matt Dixon, the best-selling author of "The Effortless Experience: Conquering the New Battleground for Customer Loyalty."

This is because a whopping 84 percent of customers value ease of use and low effort over channel choice. Dixon's research has left him with the overwhelming conclusion that excellent service is not delightful. In fact, it's a key driver behind disloyalty.

Reducing the customer's effort increases loyalty and reduces attrition. Low-effort means that they shouldn't be hearing scripted agents or having to repeat themselves. They shouldn't have to jump channels or endure countless transfers. The CEB conducted a series of surveys that found that 88 percent of low-effort customers increased their spending and 94 percent who had low-effort experiences were more likely to repurchase later on, Dixon says. So, how do you reduce customer effort?

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# THE THREE PILLARS OF EFFORTLESS EXPERIENCE

## ONE

### Channel Stickiness

Self-service is where it's at. Customers don't really want to talk. Agents are aware of this fact that holds true across ages and demographics. But because customers are still picking up the phone, senior executives are reluctant to acknowledge this shift in channel preference.

It's true that telephony yields the lion's share of first contacts, but this is unfortunately due to the lack of other viable options. Most callers (58 percent) first attempted resolution through self-service options and another 25 percent were online while also on the phone with the agent in an effort to learn how to resolve the issue themselves in the future. The customers want fast resolutions without having to jump channels.

*Delivering bad news in a positive way is at the cornerstone of reducing customer's perception of effort.*

## TWO

### Next Issue Avoidance

The worst question you can ask a customer is also one of the most common closers, "Have I fully resolved your issue today?" Dixon says this question sends two bad messages to the customer - that they are being rushed off the phone, or that the agent may be missing the deeper issue at hand.

Think of it this way - if you were measured by first-contact resolutions wouldn't you avoid asking other issues exist? When asked in the study whether a first-contact resolution had been achieved, 77 percent of companies believed that it had. Their customers didn't agree - only 40 percent felt their issue was entirely resolved.

Call backs for repeated issues are a byproduct of both explicit and implicit issue failures. Fifty-four percent of explicit failures are because the agent failed to resolve the issue in the first place. Implicit failures arise because the **agents failed to see the adjacent issues at hand, or the problem behind the problem.** Ask your tenured customer service professionals to help identify the chain of "problem events," so that you can think ahead of the customer, not alongside of them.

## THREE

### Mismatched Perception of Effort

Consider the behavioral economics of your organization. If the agents are advocating on behalf of the customers, then they are also empathetic to their upsets. One hotel chain told its front-desk workers to move out from behind the service counter to physically stand next to the upset client. This nonverbal communication led to a decrease of 77 percent in customer effort for the hotel.

The same goes for the spoken word. We're all aware that words hold weight, Dixon says, but are you aware of what you're saying? Delivering bad news in a positive way is at the cornerstone of customer effort perception. This is where Disney is exemplary. For example, when a park visitor asks a Disney employee when the park closes, they respond, "We're open until 9 p.m.," instead of "It closes at 9 p.m." This simple shift to positive language led to a decrease in customer effort by 73 percent.

Once upon a time, an executive had a spreadsheet of very interesting data

*"Humans are simply not moved to action by rational analysis, statistics or pie charts. They're moved by emotion,"*

says Jonathan Gottschall, author of "Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human."

Many business leaders today have found storytelling to be one of the most effective ways of relaying information. Without a good story to back up the data - both within and outside your organization - your brand, your idea, your initiative, are dead on arrival. Contact center executives need to find a way to translate numbers on an Excel spreadsheet to a story on a page.

Perhaps you're dealing with a data soup sandwich, as Darryl Michael Speach, the Chief Customer Officer at Greystone & Co., described it. Many customer care professionals are in possession of a lot of anecdotal performance data, but are unable to prove ROI using the hard data at hand. The story and the data need each other - both are integral to showing performance, but you run the risk of falling on deaf ears if you fail to provide context. **Grasp and keep your audience's attention - without it the product dies and revenue fades.**