

## It's all about the who and the woo

"Did you know that it costs more to gain a new customer than to have a devoted one? So, why then are budgets, in general, spent more on attaining new customers' attention than offering attention to its current customers?" asks Ebrahim Dinat, COO at contact centre solutions provider, Ocular Technologies.



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Jim Freeze, the senior vice president and CMO at Aspect, a partner company of Ocular Technologies, states in a blog that customer service experiences are a universal frustration. "Chances are most of us can rattle off a bad customer service experience without a moment's hesitation."

"A quick survey around the office confirms this. Everyone has a story to tell, and it is not a happy one," continues Dinat. "Another quick office survey shows that getting a customer's attention is easy, 'yeah, I saw that ad', is the general response. However, wooing your customer to remain loyal to a brand by giving them the best possible engagement with the brand is not: 'no way, been there, done that, hello'd Peter and left', is another retort by a colleague."

Freeze confirms that "most brands today place far more budget and attention into getting customer attention versus giving consumers attention, even when it is becoming more and more apparent that the customer experience can make or break a brand."

As a solution, he offers the following **important issues marketers need to consider about the customer experience.**

Freeze says:

- **People love to share bad customer service:** Thanks to the rise of social media and the always-on experience, consumers today are empowered to be brand evangelists or antagonists to their legions of friends, families and professional contacts. A bad experience can instantaneously ignite like wildfire via a social network and potentially spread to mainstream media - creating a new negative hurdle for marketers to overcome. Good customer service not only minimises the existence of brand antagonists, it creates advocates that make marketers' jobs a *helluva* lot easier.
- **Exceptional customer service can make a bigger financial impact on your business than you think:** Consumers overwhelmingly show appreciation for great customer service with their wallets. This runs counter to the perception five to six years ago where customer service was seen as an expense and not as an investment in growing the business. In many ways, exceptional customer experiences can be exceptional marketing. The service touchpoint provides another opportunity to reinforce the brand message. A great experience can become an organic and viral response that the customer will evangelise on behalf of the brand.
- **Personalise the customer experience and your business will attract and sustain customers:** Consumers want to engage with the companies they do business with, but on their own terms. No longer are customers reaching out directly to agents via phone - they are looking to contact companies via websites, live chat social media and text. Marketers who recognise this can take advantage of the opportunity to build customer loyalty by giving customers personalised care, including the channels of communications they want.
- **Customer interactions provide invaluable insight and fuel new feature development:** Through personalisation of the customer experience, marketers are provided critical data for developing new insights. Whenever customers contact customer service, companies are hearing what the brand perception is and what challenges they are facing. Marketers can use this knowledge to draft new insights for future marketing efforts and tailor existing offers to better meet customers' needs. People today, especially millennials, value customer experience more than the functions and features in a product and as a result experience can engender brand loyalty.
- **Understand, learn and drive action from the customer journey:** It is time for marketers to recognise the insight the customer journey can provide. If you follow your customers' experiences across all touch points you'll be amazed at the wealth of information you'll acquire. Do they have a satisfactory experience on each channel and are able to move effortlessly between them? Understanding the journey can give insight into how their experience effects their loyalty to you and their future business with you. Pick up the phone and call, tweet or text customers you service. You'll be surprised what you learn.

"Wooing a customer has a direct impact on the bottom line. Spending budgets versus spending attentiveness should, therefore, become a serious consideration in any customer retention strategy," adds Dinat.

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