

Why knowledge is power in customer service

By [Wynand Smit](#)

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Fostering a culture of continuous learning is essential in today's business environment, but companies find this principle difficult to implement. Fortunately, recent business developments are making ongoing training and team development a reality. Today's workforce can access information, training and more using new learning tools such as an interactive knowledge base, and this feeds directly into a younger workforce's expectations for on-the-job skills development.



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A hunger for development

A recent Deloitte study found that millennial employees expect to be trained on the job, and yet their experience is that employers tend to prioritise the bottom line above workers, affecting employee motivation and loyalty. More than that, however, they feel ill-equipped to handle Industry 4.0, but want to succeed in this challenging environment. With this in mind, they're actively seeking out employment at companies that will help them develop the necessary skills to cope as business evolves and their desire for meaningful work becomes a more pertinent personal driver.

Younger workers need positive reasons to stay with your company; they need to be offered the realistic prospect that by staying loyal they will, in the long run, be professionally better off — and as individuals, develop faster and more fully than if they left. Currently, less than 36% of millennials and 29% of Gen Z currently in the workplace believe they are fully prepared and have all the skills and knowledge they currently need. This is a troubling statistic considering the potentially disruptive impact that Industry 4.0 could have in shaping future work environments.

This means that pro-active employee training and ongoing skills development must become an active objective within your company. Your young workforce demands it, and your customers expect it. In a customer service environment such as a contact centre, this could mean the difference between, for example, a widespread backlash on social media to a poorly managed response compared to a great customer experience that elevates your business above all others.

Employee focus

We've all heard the Richard Branson quote about the importance of employees and why they should come first, but how



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can this be practically applied in the day-to-day operations of your business? Moreover, what role does continuous development play in this?

In the contact centre, incoming customer service requests can be varied and dynamic; requiring agents who are adept at handling typical as well as anecdotal queries. While every new agent will undergo onboarding training, this knowledge is static and there isn't much time for on-the-job training. This is especially applicable when it comes to the pressing demands of day-to-day customer service.

Factor in the high staff turnover at contact centres (approximately 30% on average), the associated impact on customer service, and the costs of training, and this presents a compelling case for introducing a business tool to support and promote continuous on-the-job learning.

Getting up to speed

In a fast-paced environment such as your customer service centre, agents can assist your customers quickly by using a virtual assistant or chatbot to look up customer-specific and general product/service information from your knowledgebase while on the call, or even on topics they may not have had previous training on. Contact centre agents can type questions and access information directly without interrupting another agent/supervisor; reducing the burden on managers, and simultaneously providing valuable hands-on training.

A culture of learning

Onboarding new employees and training existing employees on new products or services can be time consuming, but with interactive learning tools (such as an assisted/interactive learning platform or knowledge base), the implementation of training is accelerated, leading to a culture of continuous learning and professional training. For example, if your contact centre agent wants to learn a task such as updating the CRM, they can simply type in "how to add a customer to the CRM" and then follow the directions (by being guided by a virtual assistant or the knowledge base itself).

Ultimately, enabling contact centre staff to be more efficient and motivated doesn't just enhance CX, but it also helps retain and attract employees too. Adopting an "inside out" approach, combined with a firm focus on continuously improving the knowledge and skills of your workforce is key to staying relevant to your customers and today's market.

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