

Social media as a critical customer service tool

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Not too long ago, social media was primarily used by businesses as a marketing tool, designed for outbound posts and lead generation. Over time, however, social communication has become a two-way street.



Source: www.unsplash.com

This development has proven invaluable during the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdowns. While this development has also opened up a whole new customer service channel for businesses, it requires a major shift in the way business social platforms are managed and the resources employed to do this.

Traditionally, community management meant posting content and building a business's brand with engagement on social media. This job has gradually transformed into a customer service role as more customers began directing their complaints to the social handles of companies.



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The expected level of customer service has also steadily increased as people seek to publicly point out the bad service they've received or demand to speak directly with the brand in private messaging on Facebook, Twitter, and more recently, on WhatsApp.

The reality today is that younger consumers are more likely to use brands' social media channels for customer service than reach out to a call centre. Research in the social service space shows that 40% of consumers expect brands to respond within the first hour of reaching out on social media, while 79% expect a response in the first 24 hours.

Invest in tools your community managers need

Unfortunately, local businesses – especially bigger corporations – have generally been slow to adapt in this regard, and social customer service lags as a result. Many of these large organisations are still relying on external social agents to

respond to customer queries, which automatically increases turnaround time, especially when replying to service-related queries.

This is because the agency typically needs to escalate the query back to the business. Third-party social agents would not have a line of sight of internal customer relationship management (CRM) systems to be able to answer their queries, resulting in multiple contacts for the customer. This also highlights an additional issue of needing a clean-cut routing system to ensure that no queries get lost down the line.



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The solution, however, is not as simple as switching to an in-house social service team. Many community managers are still limited in their ability to resolve a customer service query, as they do not have access to the necessary internal systems. This delays the customers from receiving an answer as, once again, it needs to go through multiple contacts.

Organisations, therefore, need to invest in this critical area of providing their community managers with better tools to understand the experiences their customers are having - and the tools to categorise and prioritise the queries they are faced with. By equipping agents with the tools and permissions required to deal with customer service complaints at scale, the community manager role can expand towards a social customer care role.

In today's digital-first world, companies must understand that social media is no longer about likes and reshares. It has evolved into a powerful customer service portal and, as such, social media agents need to be empowered to service customers timeously and assist with resolving their queries with minimum turnaround time.

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