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Social Customer Service: The Pivotal Driver of the Social Enterprise

by Dr. Natalie Petouhoff

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> **"Today's savvy Customer Service groups are not only adopting social media, but are actively integrating interactions in social media with traditional channels."**

Executive Summary

While Customer Service and Contact Centers have always been important to a business' ability to handle customer questions, resolve problems and deal with issues, the adoption of social media by Customer Service positions them as the unique driver of the Social Enterprise.

It's long been known that when properly staffed and with the right technology, Customer Service can respond to inquiries, questions and issues more quickly and effectively and thereby optimize traditional interaction channels, while reducing costs. And today's savvy Customer Service groups are not only adopting social media, but are actively integrating interactions in social media with those traditional channels.

But that's not the big change. The big development is that Customer Services' role no longer ends at the boundaries of their department. As companies design their new Social Customer Service Departments, that role has expanded to include dynamic collaboration with PR, Communications, Marketing, Sales and other departments. Customer Service is now driving the voice of the customer (VOC) cross-functional collaboration and that integration and use of VOC data makes all departments more effective and efficient.

Companies pursuing this new paradigm in Social Customer Service include stronger brand preferences, greater brand loyalty and revenue preservation (churn reduction), higher customer lifetime values, lower costs and higher revenue, profits and margins. By acting as a collaborative partner to provide VOC data to all other departments in the company, Customer Service is the pivotal creator of the new Social Enterprise.

Introduction: What is a Social Customer?

The social customer is a radically new breed of consumer. They post online in e-review sites, in public forums, on blogs, on Facebook and Twitter. They don't hold back. And the unabashed posts are in the open for everyone to see—other potential and current customers, competitors, your board of directors, etc. It's become impossible to ignore. Imagine that they are reading other people's comments about your company, its products and services. As they read these comments, they are making buying decisions based on these online comments. And just like cave paintings are permanent etchings on cave walls, so are the social customer comments— they are permanent and inerasable stories about their opinion of their customer experience. With the rate of people adopting social media, it's clear that it's not a fad and it's here to stay. To provide some perspective on how prevalent social media has become, here are some statistics:

- eMarketer predicts there will be 1.43 billion social network users into 2012, an increase of 19.2% over 2011 figure
- Bain & Company say that more than 60% of Internet-connected individuals in the US now engage on social media platforms every day
- If Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest country in the world
- Pew Internet research study reports:
  - 65% of adult Internet users now say they use a social networking site like Facebook or LinkedIn
  - Social networking site usage by adults under the age of 30 is holding stable at 61%
  - Twitter's US growth is expected to be four times greater than Facebook's growth over the next four years

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- Twitter has 140+ million active accounts worldwide
- Facebook is still the predominant social networking site with over 900 million users worldwide

With the social customer communication channel here to stay, businesses can no longer rely on traditional PR, Marketing, Advertising and Customer Service strategies to engage this new group of consumers. So what strategies should companies use to engage these new customers?

> " **...businesses can no longer rely on traditional PR, Marketing, Advertising and Customer Service strategies to engage this new group of consumers.** "

The New Social Consumer Breeds the New Interaction Communication Age
Social customers are hyper-connected individuals (meaning they are "always on") who regularly broadcast their opinions over Twitter, Facebook, in blog posts and in online community forums, and are accustomed to having quick access to information. They expect to engage in real-time interactions with each other and with companies on social networks, resulting in higher expectations for quick and reliable support online.

When it comes to trusting information online, 78% of customers believe more in what their friends and family say about product recommendations and purchase information than they do the information coming from brands. With the reliance on each other's opinions, the ability to easily post permanent opinions online (without the brand's ability to filter the information) and the ability to add to and build on each other's comments, the balance of power has shifted from the company to the customer.

The very nature of Customer Service as a business function means that it has always been intimately involved with these social customer interactions. Most conversations about a company are about a customer's experience with the product or service— i.e., either they are seeking help, have a question or require an answer. That's what Customer Service has specialized in for many years.

If the Customer Service Department leads the social customer interactions, then a company can have more success:

- Fixing or establishing the brand's presence online
- Maintaining brand reputation
- Providing the necessary answers required in this new interaction communication age

While other departments like PR and Marketing are also good at social customer interactions, they are often at a loss for staff who are accustomed to interacting with customers who have issues, questions or need answers. They also don't have the technology to respond to customers and often lack the information (such as knowledge management databases that have the answers including specific, historical customer data). These tools and capabilities typically reside within Customer Service, and therefore make Customer Service the most likely group to be able to influence the customer experience as well as lead the social customer experience.

Demographics of the Social Customer
For several years people doubted that social media would stick around. Some thought it was something only college students used to interact with each other on campuses. But statistics show that social media isn't a fad and it isn't just for kids. With the average number of friends and followers being in the hundreds there


Facebook tops Google in weekly traffic in the U.S.

is massive potential for people within social networks to influence their peers' opinions about products and services and to change purchasing dynamics.

Spending Trends of the Social Customer

For a company to be effective at social media they need to understand the difference between just connecting with customers versus truly engaging with them. To this end, Bain & Company conducted a study with more than 3,000 consumers to identify what makes social media effective for them, see Figure 1 .
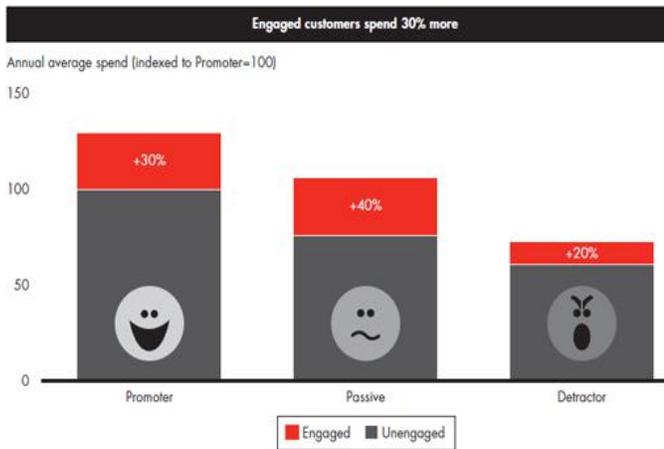
Figure 1. Bain & Company's study: Socially Engaged Customers Spend 30% more.

The survey revealed that customers who engage effectively with companies over social media spend 20-40% more money with those companies than other customers who were not engaged in social media. This means that your socially engaged customers spend 30% more on average.

Socially engaged customers also demonstrate a deeper emotional commitment to the companies, which results in higher Net Promoter Scores (NPS)—higher by 33 points. As a common measure of customer loyalty, NPS generally measures when a customer would recommend a company to their friends and family.

The social customer experience has evolved past the traditional notion of PR and Marketing, Sales, Customer Service and Call Centers. What's required is the ability to fully facilitate engaged customer experiences. To do this requires a focus on technologically enabling multichannel customer interactions where a company can interact via traditional customer communication channels, and add social channels too so they can establish, build and nurture online and offline customer interactions and

relationships. And that is the new role of Customer Service: to provide social customer interactions on behalf of all departments.

What Does This New Socially-Enabled Enterprise Look Like?

A social enterprise is made up of people, processes and technology that support a company's culture and capabilities to interact with customers in all channels – the new channels (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, SMS, mobile) and existing communication channels (e.g. voice, email, fax, chat) that the customer chooses to use. The social enterprise is also able to analyze and distribute the VOC information from all the interactions from all departments. And a social enterprise's decisions are driven by the collaborative use of this critical VOC data.

In the early days of CRM, the notion of crossing departmental boundaries (e.g Customer Service, Sales, Marketing) with the implementation of a software solution was talked about in theory, but few companies really deployed CRM this way. Reaching the holy grail of accessing consistent customer information across all departments is still an elusive idea for many companies. In fact, many of the early implementations of cross-functional CRM failed due to siloed departmental systems and the inability to connect systems so that the various departments could make business decisions with the data no matter which department or database it resided.

Other failure points? A strong corporate culture that allows things like finger pointing and blaming other departments for failures also discouraged sharing customer information across organizational boundaries. Many consulting organizations with change management skills thrived on trying to align cross-functional department's goals and objectives as well as the technology interfaces and exchanges. Why? In theory it was so companies have unified access and updates to customer master data to gain a single view of the customer which would provide deeper customer insight and make Marketing, Sales and Customer Service business decisions more accurate and beneficial to the company.

For some companies, that holy grail of a unified, single view of the customer via CRM was achieved for structured CRM data. On the other hand, social media as unstructured data is presenting new challenges in addition to aligning CRM data. Companies that have not mastered even the structured CRM data are at a loss for truly being able to understand what their target customer segments they want and need. And this leads to products that get launched and never see the light of day, or it results in campaigns that flop and revenues that don't materialize.

The Challenges in Managing Today's Socia Customer Service

Not only do companies need to provide better Customer Service, but they also are struggling with some unique challenges in a socially-networked world. Some of these challenges are:

- **The Struggle to Keep Pace With the Volume of Customer Interactions:**

  There are more and more customers participating and voicing their opinions in social networks and the volume is astounding. Companies have to monitor their brand and keep up with the volume because social customer interactions are public, meaning everyone can see what goes on. They require real-time analysis to keep up with the "always on" pace. The monitoring, if done well and with the right tools, can provide real-time insight into the customer habits, traits, wants, wishes and concerns. And even more importantly it can prevent a PR crisis. But Customer Service needs the right tools to make this process scalable.

- **The Difficulty of Choosing from the Plethora of Social Media Tools:**

  Today there are many social media tools to monitor and analyze social conversations across the many new interaction channels. Some tools are even free, and they all differ in their capabilities. Typically, Marketing and/ or PR have been the first departments with a company to pay attention to social media. But they are typically not as tool/technology oriented as Customer Service.

> **Marketing departments are typically not accustomed to responding to customer inquiries on a real-time basis."**

Generation Y and Z consider email passé; many opt to use Facebook messaging

Choosing tools that work for different types of tech savviness as well as capabilities is confusing at best. Looking at analyst reports, one finds listening tools, mixed with community tools and interaction applications. If departments don't collaborate on the choice of technology- whether its social monitoring or social interaction tools, it will lead to customer dissatisfaction, employee/customer service agent dissatisfaction, decreased customer loyalty and can impact the brand's equity. And it can be very costly at the enterprise level, because many companies end up having duplicate tools in various departments.

- **Lack of Coordination and Triaging of Who Should Answer the Social Customer:**

  In addition to Customer Service, other departments such as Marketing, Sales, PR, Product, or Business Development may be listening/monitoring social channels. But a customer isn't thinking about which department is monitoring or interacting with them. They just want to be heard and helped.

  But customers generally end up with the short end of the stick; they may start with one department and find that they have to restart the conversation as they try to get help. Customers often find themselves being shifted around to different channels (i.e. the social interaction is driven to customer service through email or voice) rather than being resolved within the original conversation channel. This can result in customers repeating background information and, in some cases when the interaction is transferred around, the request is unfulfilled, increasing customer dissatisfaction and even increasing the likelihood the customer will complain in an open forum such as Twitter, Facebook or post to a blog. This is dangerous territory and companies need to provide better coordination around interacting with, and answering social customers.

Is Your Company at Risk For Social Media Disasters?

As you read this, consider whether your company is at risk when you leave your brand unmonitored and customers to fend for themselves in a socially-networked world. In what ways is your company unprepared? Here's some food for thought:

- **Responding Rapidly:**

  Engaging with a customer in social media is more than just listening and engaging from a marketing or sales perspective. If a contact center is not enabled socially with the proper

tools it will not be able to respond rapidly to provide the nearly instant level of service social customers expect. Does your technology provide instant response capabilities?

If Wikipedia were made into a book, it would be over 2.25M pages and take 123 years to read.

- **Collecting VOC Data To Predict Customer Behavior/Sentiment:**
  If social media monitoring tools are not being used to check the current sentiment of a social community, especially before launching marketing campaigns or new product launches, there can be an outpouring of unexpected commentary via the very public social channels — and much of it may not be good. Knowing what customers think about your brand is paramount. Do you monitor the sentiment towards your brand? Do you know if its mostly negative or positive and why?

- **Preventing Customer Service Issues From Turning into PR Nightmares:**
  Not responding appropriately when a customer posts a request or a complaint on a public forum like

Social gamers will buy $6B in virtual goods by 2013 compared to movie goers who buy $2.5B in goods.

Twitter, which they do at any time of day or night, could cost your company money and impact your brand. Do you have the process and technology to enable and scale responses instantly?

- **Collaborating Cross-Functionally:**
  Social media interactions have broad, public exposure and commentary can be submitted by individuals or groups. These interactions are important for all departments to be able to access. Even more importantly, there needs to

be a plan and process to coordinate the response across all functional departments so that they are in alignment with each other. Without that coordination, the brand can suffer from inconsistent answers to customers as well as the press. What are your cross-functional technology collaboration capabilities?

“ **...customers who engage effectively with companies over social media spend 20 to 40% more money...”**

Examples of Brands Affected by Negative Social Media Interactions

In the previous section, we talked in generalities around social media disasters and being at risk. To bring this topic home, let's look at some examples of companies that were put at risk because of social media. The companies in the following examples sustained heavy brand damage which was greatly amplified in blogs, Twitter and other social media. Be forewarned that in a socially-networked world, Customer Service can become PR and PR is Customer Service. And these examples provide "lessons learned" on why your company might want to look at the people, process and technology to deliver the right type of social interactions.

Domino's Pizza
This is an example of something the brand didn't expect, but it happened. Malicious pizza makers, employed by Domino's, performed distasteful acts on a patron's food and then made videos of it and then posted the videos on YouTube unbeknownst to Domino's. A firestorm erupted and with the news

looking to social media for stories, this Domino's Disaster made its way to national news. Domino's had to quickly create a video statement from the CEO reassuring the public that this behavior was unacceptable and that the company had taken steps to make corrections within the company. This incident also resulted in many calls to Customer Service.

Kryptonite Locks
This is an example of a company that was not monitoring their brand and thus did not know about the mischievous content that was being posted about their brand. Because they didn't know what was being posted, they never responded to the content and this ultimately damaged the brand. Here's what happened:

For many years, Kryptonite's bike locks had been considered the gold standard of lock security. One day by accident, a marketing manager who did a Google search on the company found a YouTube video produced by a youngster that showed how to break into a Kryptonite Lock with a 50 cent ballpoint pen. Imagine the horror they felt when they saw this. And imagine how upset they were when they looked further and found video after video was posted online of people who had picked the lock open in seconds. Later Wired magazine wrote an article, further condemning the brand. Because Kryptonite failed to respond in a timely manner, the PR crisis cost them millions in brand equity. As you read this story, what effect does it have on your opinion of the brand?

Take these examples as a forewarning that your company needs to be monitoring for social media interactions and to

understand their influence in the social world. Having a Social Media PR Crisis Plan in place is prudent. But not having a Social Media PR Crisis Plan connected to interactions in Customer Service will result in a lack of collaboration between departments, mixed messages with the public and even more of a firestorm. It's important to train all employees, in all departments, how to respond to malicious or negative postings. The bottom line is: if you are not monitoring the social channels 24/7, you cannot know what is being said. And left unmonitored, brand and revenue damage will result.

YouTube is the second largest search engine

The Value of a Contact Center-Marketing/PR Partnership

Marketing wears many hats. The major functions of marketing are numerous: content development, message creation, market segmentation, campaign creation and launches, corporate branding, product positioning, collateral creation, marketing budgeting & scheduling management, agency management, lead generation, event management, media planning, advertising, pricing, offers and promotions, website creation/maintenance, search engine optimization, social media engagement planning, interaction development, distribution and measurement.

Marketing departments, immersed in the above activities, are typically not accustomed to responding to customer inquiries on a real-time basis. Because of all their other responsibilities they should consider leveraging an "always on" organization such as Customer Service to assist with social media marketing functions. The socially-enabled contact center can be a proactive and real-time response team for the marketing departments to assist in protecting the company and the brand.

Here's a short list of why Marketing Departments should consider partnering with a socially-enabled contact center:

- **Creating One Central Hub for Servicing Social Customer Interactions:**

  Interactions that start in social media often end up in traditional channels of communication being handled by contact center agents. If a social media interaction was started in Twitter with the marketing department and then the customer initiated an online chat with a contact center agent, the agent may have no knowledge of the prior Marketing interaction. This can cause customer and agent frustration as well as wasted time on the chat, causing the average handle time to go up.

  Agent-assisted interactions are some of the most expensive for a company and all efforts are made to make them more effective and efficient. By having the social interactions start

with a Customer Service agent, who has integrated access to all channels and existing customer information via CRM, Social Customer Service becomes more ef fective and customer satisfaction can increase.

- **Providing the Best Support For Both Social Media and Traditional Channels:**

  The Aberdeen Group surveyed 180 respondents to learn which customer interaction channels are predicted to show the most significant uptick in the next 12 months.
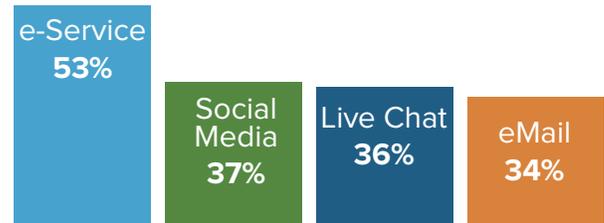
While the social media channel is continuing to grow , traditional communication channels still need to be supported concurrently by the contact center. Companies that have a central hub for interactions will be providing the most up-to-date type of customer interactions, in more consistent and valuable ways. Marketing can integrate marketing objectives associated with social customer engagement into the contact center operations/process to deliver an always-on, high quality, single voice to the customer.

- **Enabling the Most Highly Trained People to Interact with Customers:**

  Contact center agents are trained to deal with customer satisfaction issues and emotionally-charged customers. Marketing's objectives are not designed to include emotionally charged customer firestorms. They don't staff their departments with customer marketing agents to interact with customer issues. Customer questions are best left to Customer Service agents who have many hours of experience and training on how to resolve or escalate a hot situation.

If Wikipedia were made into a book, it would be over 2.25M pages and take 123 years to read.

- **Providing Consistent and High Quality Customer Interactions:**

  Contact center agents are monitored and recorded across all channels of communication including social media to meet certain performance metrics for high quality and timely responses. Recordings are reviewed and additional training is provided as needed. If the customer interactions need improvement or market offers/promotions change, agents receive additional training. Because of this focus, they are highly skilled to provide high quality customer interactions.

- **Using the Skills of the Most Appropriate Employees for Customer Interactions:**
  Most contact center agents are typically already part of online communities and are social consumers too. They are already using existing skills such as texting, emailing, chatting, tweeting and posting via social and mobile communications. And, they are personally accustomed to researching, interacting, shopping and purchasing online. Again, Marketing doesn't have customer interaction agents that are at the ready to respond.

- **Providing Integrated Social Customer Data/System to Other Systems:**
  Some contact centers already rely on socially-enabled tools to integrate with CRM systems which are equipped to measure and participate in monitoring/engaging via social and mobile channels with customers. These systems also provide updated customer records in one system and forward relevant information to other departments.

Women between the ages of 35 and 45+ were edging out the men in worldwide Facebook usage (68%) and Twitter usage (59%) in 2011.

Many contact centers or CRM solutions claim they use social media, however it may not be tightly integrated into a total solution. Socially-enabled in this context means a contact center that integrates multiple CRM databases with multiple channels including social, such as Twitter, into its customer service dashboard.

An example of tight integration is where tweets are displayed in real-time, stock ticker style at the top of the agent's console. The Twitter feed is automatically searched for keywords such as product names or certain hashtags. Those tweets can be routed to a specific agent for a real-time response. That agent can accept ownership, provide a response from the agent console via a direct message (DM), or retweet with a template and then categorize the tweet for future analytical purposes. At the same time the agent can view all past interactions with the customer regardless of the communication channel.

> " **If departments don't collaborate on the choice of technology—whether it's social monitoring or social interaction tools—it will lead to customer dissatisfaction, employee/customer service agent dissatisfaction, decreased customer loyalty and can impact the brand's equity.**"

- **Providing the Ability to Pivot to the Required Channel to Service The Customer:**
  Whether the channel is Twitter, SMS, voice, chat or email, the power of a solution that allows the customer to use whatever channel they prefer to interact with the company and allows the agent the ability to pivot between channels and, most importantly, to pivot while still providing great service is imperative. It's also important that the agent can see their customer data regardless of all prior interaction channel used. This ability can increase brand loyalty, increase customer satisfaction and show others on a public channel, such as Twitter, that your company is responsive.

- **Responding in Real-time with Real Answers:**
  Research shows that customers using Twitter are often searching for something using a non-traditional channel of communication and they are looking for a response in realtime from a knowledgeable person at the company. Customers prefer an experienced representative who can handle the communication quickly and properly. Doing so can help to alleviate online complaints that can ensue from social customers. Rapid response to Twitter can help protect a brand from being damaged as complaints sent on Twitter can spread like wildfire as other customers see them, and join in on the conversation and retweet the comment.

How a Socially-Enabled Cloud Contact Center Enables a Social Enterprise

While each department has a different reason for interacting with the customer, the ultimate outcome of every interaction should be the same: ensure that the customer has a great experience with your company upon every interaction. Various studies have shown over the years that the cost of obtaining a new customer is 7-10 times greater than that of retaining an existing customer, further underscoring the importance of maintaining a high quality, consistent customer experience in a social world.

Many departments can benefit from understanding the nature of interactions from the social customer as aggregated by a cross-functional social contact center in the cloud. Having a cloud-based contact center/social customer interaction hub inherently drives cross-functional sharing of information between departments. Below are

Average number of friends on Facebook is 130; Average number of followers on Twitter is 126

some specific benefits that Customer Service, Marketing, Sales, Product Development, PR, and back-office functions can achieve to increase brand reputation, customer loyalty and revenue.

Service: Aggregate and Analyze Cross-Channel Interactions to Enhance Customer Service

A socially-enabled contact center focused on cross-channel interactions can spot customer complaints and brewing trends in all channels and take real-time action to correct them before they become a PR nightmare. Providing agents with special coupons, increased loyalty points, rewards or special offers can often turn a dissatisfied customer into a loyal one. And because dissatisfied customers who have been made "whole" tell hundreds (if not thousands) of people about their positive experience with your business in social networks, its important to provide agents with everything they need to do their job well. The end result is positive brand building, less customer churn, lower Customer Service costs and a higher customer lifetime value.

Marketing: Aggregate and Analyze Cross-Channel Interactions to Increase Marketing Conversion Rates

Women follow 2% more people on Twitter & post 12% more tweets compared to men.

Examining interactions from across all channels, including social media, helps Marketing to understand which marketing campaigns are successful and which are not resulting in the return on the investment. This type of analysis allows marketers to improve offers, messaging, positioning, etc.

And while Customer Service is often the center for problems and fixes, many questions are about products and services offered by the company. It's not unusual that when a campaign launches, Customer Service is the department customers call to get a better understanding of the marketing offer. How well those questions are answered determines whether customers buy the products and services.

In addition, during those interactions, customers will provide feedback about offers that don't meet their expectations. The offers, in collaboration with Marketing, can be adjusted in real-time in the socially-enabled contact center. Coupons, rewards and loyalty points can help to adjust a customer's

perception. And all of these capabilities will increase campaign uplift, lead conversion rates, customer loyalty and decrease brand damage.

Sales: Aggregate and Analyze Cross-Channel Interactions to Close More Sales

Often a contact center is a Sales Center. Sales, working through a socially-enable contact center can identify sales opportunities more easily and quickly via social interactions. By following the conversation in any channel, the sales person can learn what customers are saying and how a solution adds value to the particular customer and close more sales. They can also use social channels to see when a customer is frustrated by a competitor and offer support and help. This can endear the customer to the helpful company and in the end result in higher loyalty.

In addition, it can be nearly impossible for someone to market or close a sale for customers who are upset by their existing service experience. Using the socially-enabled contact center model, salespeople can be informed, in real-time, of the issues customers are facing. With that information, Sales can collaborate with Customer Service to get the problem handled. And studies show that when customers who have an issue, get it

Average time spent of Facebook is 23.2 minutes/day with an average of 40 visits/month.

resolved, they are even more loyal than customers who never had a problem. This is because the customer has gained confidence that when they have problems in the future, the company will solve them. And this type of customer service resolution is essentially what differentiates many companies in a customer's mind. And it is what keeps customers coming

back and buying more over a longer period of time. Enabling Sales with Customer Service interactions results in higher sales and fewer returns.

Product Development: Aggregate and Analyze Cross-Channel Interactions to Launch More Products that Customers Buy

Through cross-channel analysis, there are thousands of products launched each year that don't make it. However, with a socially-enabled contact center, Product Development can build products based on analyzing customer requests and feedback. The Product Development team can examine interactions to create new functionality and develop new products that customers want and are ready to buy.

Average time spent on Twitter is 11.5 minutes/day and 36% tweet once a day.

And listening to what customers want makes customers feel honored, respected and appreciated. It also drives their continued interaction and feedback, which is essential in continuing to create products that are adopted. Combining the Product Development process with Customer Service results in better products, better product launches and more favorable comments by customers on review sites and other social networks.

Back-Office Functions: Aggregate and Analyze Cross-Channel Interactions to Reduce Costs

All businesses need to be mindful of back-office costs. An example of back office functions that results in many interactions in Customer Service

are billing and pricing. Customers complain about pricing and billing via social media and to contact center agents. And unfortunately, complaints in social media influence other potential customers' buying decisions. Agents are able to spot billing or pricing trends and work with these functions to provide feedback to them so they can make changes to things that drive high call volumes. In addition they can collaborate so that the agents can take remedial action. This type of collaboration, which is often needed in companies but rarely enabled by technology, can go a long way to satisfying the customer and protecting the brand.

> " **If a Customer Service department leads the social customer interactions, then a company can have more success.**"

PR: Aggregate and Analyze Cross-Channel Interactions to Increase Brand Awareness and Spot Trends and Potential Disasters Before They Go Haywire

Because customers are so used to reaching to a company via the contact centers, they are often the first to hear product launch or a press release feedback. Agents can proactively monitor and document PR events and alert PR to activate a proactive crisis management plan when needed. Agents can also pass along customer feedback and customer trend data to guide corporate messaging to shift customer perceptions quickly.

What's the Value of Becoming a Social Enterprise?

Based on the exponential growth of social media interactions, the power of the social customer is rapidly increasing as well. Online communities are banding together to make an impact on political groups and governments as well as brands. Individuals now have a voice and leverage it in social networks. Contact centers are obvious choices for efficient and effective engagement with social customers.

With that said, often an argument still resonates, can a business really profit from becoming a social enterprise? Bain has documented the many benefits Social Enterprises are achieving:

37% of Twitter users tweet from their mobile device.

- » Ford achieved some level of brand recognition with a Fiesta social media campaign at 10% of traditional TV ad cost

- » Virgin America drove a 15% increase in overall bookings attributed to Facebook

- » Wet Seal reports the social shoppers have a 2.5 times greater conversion rate than the average customer

- » Nike+ product and social community credited with increasing Nike running shoe market share from 48% to 61%

- » eBay community users spend 54% more than other customers

- » LEGO credits customer idea sourcing with its decision to launch more expensive and customer-innovated sets, such as 500-piece Star Wars products

Conclusion

In the time it took you to read this paper, any number of social customers have been discussing your brand over social media or over the Internet. Do you know:

- How many of those consumers are your current or prospective customers?

- How many of those customers are talking about good or bad experiences they've had with your company?

- How many are influencing others? And what's their reach?

- How many of your competitors are listening and are responding to your customers?

- How many customers have you lost because you are not a Social Enterprise?

The contact center landscape is changing from traditional communication channels and private infrastructure management to cloud-based management. Since social media is now a major channel of communication, it is only fitting that the contact center, mobile and voice support all move together toward a cloudbased utilization model and enable businesses to become Social Enterprises. This is a new model for the new era of CRM or social CRM, where businesses are integrating PR/Marketing, Sales, Service and back-office functions, making the whole company more effective, efficient and competitive. The only way many businesses will be able to do this quickly and cost effectively will be to consider a socially-enabled contact center in the cloud. If you hesitate, your competition may beat you to it.

> " **The socially-enabled contact center can be a proactive and real-time response team for the marketing department to assist in protecting the company and the brand.** "

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