

The rise of the multichannel consumer

Putting the contact centre in the driving seat
on customer engagement



In competitive markets, we know that companies must embrace customer interactions through any channel. To make customer experience seamless, they need a comprehensive multichannel engagement strategy.

To get a clearer picture of how, when and why consumers choose to interact with organisations, we commissioned Censuswide to carry out a UK-wide poll of 1,300 consumers.

The results make for interesting reading – as I’m sure you’ll agree.

Richard Farrell

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Got something to say? Share your reaction on Twitter - @Netcall

Executive summary – key findings

Executive summary

The Censuswide poll revealed important insights into why consumers use different channels of engagement.

The results showed that people expect good service every time. Otherwise, they are not afraid to take their business elsewhere. To outpace the competition, smart organisations will connect their communications channels and seize any opportunity to improve their service.

Key findings from our research include:

95% of consumers do not always get the resolution they are looking for – just **5%** say firms consistently get it right first time

One in **10** people will go to a competitor if firms fail to respond satisfactorily to an enquiry first time

26% will head to social media to express dissatisfaction and embarrass businesses into resolving a complaint



Contents

1. 'Media multi-tasking'
– the new norm
2. First impressions count
3. Agent knowledge is power
4. Faster resolution, lower costs
5. More ways to engage
6. Generation 'web chat'
7. Social media
8. Conclusion

‘Media multi-tasking’ – the new norm for UK consumers

Executive summary

In 2014 Ofcom published its Communications Market Report 2014 which shows the UK is a nation of media multi-taskers, otherwise referred to as ‘media-stacking’. Ofcom found that each week almost every adult (99%) conducted two or more media activities at the same time, such as watching TV while using a smartphone. This equated to an average of two hours and three minutes a day.

Ofcom also found that consumers’ relationship with technology varies by age. The highest levels of technical confidence is among 14-15 year-olds. As age increases, consumers’ Digital Confidence Score decreases.

99% of people spend two hours and three minutes a day conducting two or more media activities at the same time

61% of **over-55s** are less certain about using technology and have below average digital confidence
(Ofcom)

14-15 year-olds have the highest levels of technical knowledge and confidence





First impressions count

You never get a second chance to make a good first impression. In today's competitive landscape, the Censuswide research showed that this has never been more important.

Failure to get the right resolution has significant financial, as well as reputational, consequences: More than one in 10 consumers (11%) said if they don't get a satisfactory response to a complaint or query first time, they would take their business elsewhere. In other words, poor customer service translates to poor customer retention and lost revenue.

Rather than prioritising any one channel, the goal should be to grow satisfaction and loyalty by improving response times and reducing customer effort across all channels.

One in **10** consumers will go elsewhere if businesses fail to respond to a complaint or enquiry first time

95% of consumers do not always get the resolution they are looking for straight away

It costs between **4** and **10** times more to attract a new customer than to retain an existing one *[Chartered Institute of Marketing]*



Agent knowledge is power

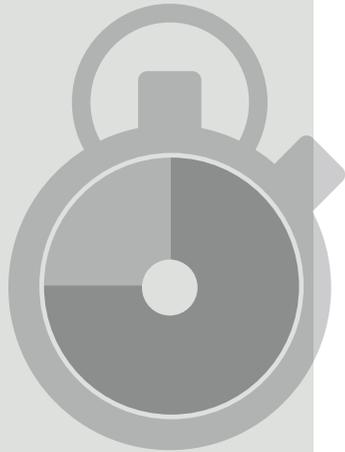
As with any relationship, interactions between consumers and organisations must be cultivated in order to develop closer ties and customer loyalty.

By equipping agents with a complete customer history, firms greatly improve their chances of resolving queries and complaints - reducing future service costs, making customers feel valued and increasing the likelihood of repeat business.

1 in 3 people (32%)
said agents lack sufficient
knowledge to help them
resolve their enquiry.

22% complained
about incorrect or
inconsistent information on
different systems.

44% of people that used
more than one method to make
contact complained that, each time
they made contact, the company
didn't really know who they were.



Faster resolutions, lower costs

By improving and simplifying the way interactions are managed, the survey highlighted a huge opportunity for organisations to increase brand loyalty and reduce the cost of call management.

If their query or complaint is not resolved, 50% will follow-up by telephone, the most expensive channel of communication. 43% will immediately escalate the issue to someone more senior, prolonging the interaction and adding further cost.

Only **5%** of UK consumers say customer service teams consistently deliver on service.

95% expect to make contact again.

Having to repeat information and being kept waiting on hold **(57%)** are callers' biggest irritations **(58%)**



More ways to engage

As they become more familiar with different types of communication channels, consumers will switch from one to another, depending on their objective. Across the board, the Censuswide survey showed how consumers make contact with organisations depends upon whether their query or complaint is resolved first time.

The fact that they will switch method reflects the increased effort and subsequent frustration many people feel in being forced to take the lead in resolving an issue. From a business perspective, failing to resolve an issue first time is also likely to involve more agents and more supervisors in achieving the resolution – adding more cost.

First time around:

50% of consumers prefer to email

29% will pick up the telephone

If they cannot get a resolution via their preferred method, the reverse is true:

50% will either switch to or continue to use the phone to escalate the issue

36% will use email

29% will write a letter – 25% more than the 4% who would have used this method first time around



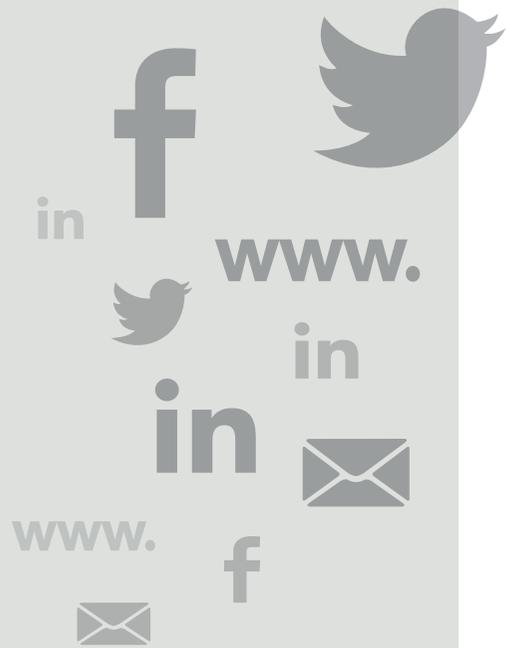
Generation 'web chat'

Confirming Ofcom's findings, Netcall's research also found that consumers' relationship with technology varies by age. Specifically, the younger the customers are, the more important web chat (*i.e. communicating in real-time using a simple web interface*) becomes as an engagement channel.

Consumers under **35** were twice as likely to engage with businesses using web chat than those aged **55+**.

33% use web chat because they find it easy when they're already on a website.

27% expect to get a quicker response using web chat.



Social media

The Censuswide research also highlighted the need for proactive customer service, especially in the age of social media where consumers have plenty of opportunity to speak out. Negative feedback spreads faster and further than ever and a single provocative customer tweet can end up causing major damage to a brand.

By integrating social media monitoring and engagement technology within customer-facing operations, businesses can deliver a multichannel experience and control customer interactions on a broader scale.

With the right training and the right monitoring capabilities, it is possible to turn even the toughest critics into advocates.

More than a quarter **26%** of people said they will use platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to express dissatisfaction and embarrass businesses into resolving a complaint.

25-34 year-olds are most prone to expressing their frustration online.

41% of this age group say a poor brand experience would make them want to shame businesses into action via social media, compared with just 19% aged over 55.



Conclusion

Instead of making customers work to get the right outcome or letting them slip through the net, the Censuswide research highlighted the requirement for organisations to make the most of technology to get the right customer responses. Firms not already taking this proactive approach must make this a priority.

In its latest analysis, **Gartner underlines the need for businesses to keep pace with changing consumer behaviour.** It says: *“Every industry is striving to improve the customer experience by simplifying, automating and making more intelligent end-to-end processes”*.

In making the journey to true multichannel customer engagement, the good news for organisations is that cutting-edge software will go a long way to transform customer engagement and satisfaction by improving response times and reducing customer effort. Satisfied customers that have a good relationship are more loyal and therefore more inclined to make repeat purchases – culminating in better turnover, success and growth for the business.

The message is clear: **Consistent, straightforward service is key – no matter how customers choose to engage.**



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