



White Paper

# Are you prepared for the new battleground of **customer service?**

**Customer care and support seems straight-forward:** be ready to answer questions and solve situations for customers when they call about your product. Have a thick skin to deal with frustrated people and you're all set. Despite the simplicity involved, providing high-quality customer care and support is a challenge for most companies, in part because it's not seen as a primary concern of key decision makers.

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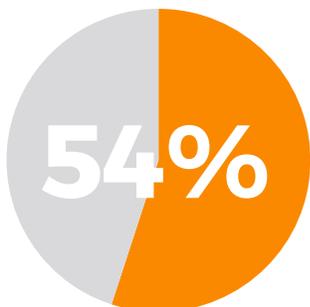
## WHY SHOULD YOU CARE

There is little glory for customer service representatives; and for C-suite executives, those positions are seen as concentrations of cost — large red numbers hovering over the whole department. Even when customer experience is prioritized, the emphasis falls on “making the product intuitive” or “idiot-proofing.” Slowly, companies are waking up to find a profound change has occurred in customer service requirements. Executives that can adjust their ships quickly will have a definitive competitive advantage. Last year, Gartner — the technology sector consulting firm — declared customer service “the new battleground”<sup>i</sup> Regardless of whether you’d like to slash budgets or catapult sales, combating poor customer service reputations and fortifying good ones may be critical to your strategy. Research is increasingly showing that customer service is linked with sales performance and the bottom line. While there are many statistics that illustrate this point, we’ll examine three below.

1. According to the 2018 Gladly Customer Service Expectations Survey, 54 percent of consumers make their purchasing decisions based on customer service.<sup>ii</sup> Now, many savvy product executives recognize that what customers say often differs from what they actually do — humans routinely act first and justify their actions after. Nevertheless, research from the Harvard Business School suggests that 95 percent of all cognition occurs subconsciously, meaning that it’s ultimately emotions that influence actions and buying behaviors.<sup>iii</sup> Therefore, cultivating a robust reputation for good customer service is essential.
2. According to New Voice Media’s 2018 Serial Switchers report, 67 percent of customers are willing to switch brands because of a poor customer experience.<sup>iv</sup> As it relates to end-user technical assistance, this means that consumers are less likely to purchase additional

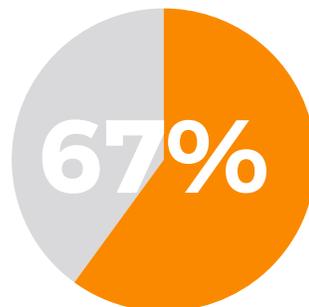
or add-on products from your company. This is particularly challenging to those companies where initial software or hardware is viewed as a loss-leader and additional sales make the most profit.

3. The Gladly report also points out the potential for customer loyalty that comes with exceptional customer service, indicating that 68 percent of consumers would pay more for products or services from a company with good customer service.<sup>v</sup> Most businesses would welcome an increase in sales, more repeat customers and add-on sales and additional profit on the products they sell. These can be achieved by having a clear strategy for making the customer experience better.



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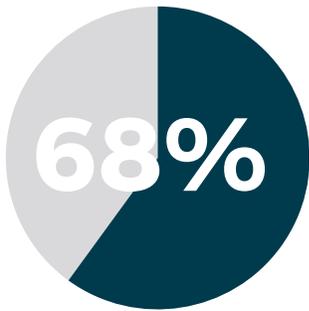
(New Voice Media)

# Are you prepared for the new battleground of **Customer Service**?

## DEVELOPING HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SUPPORT AND CARE



Companies interested in capitalizing on the shift towards customer experience as a key differentiator in the marketplace have a few options when it comes to developing the tools and strategies to keep confused and frustrated end-users happy. Companies can choose either to build these resources internally, or they can find a business solutions provider that supports call center capabilities. For many companies, the natural strategy will be to build customer support internally. After all, who knows your products and services better than you? Here are some key considerations as you explore beginning or expanding customer support services in your company.



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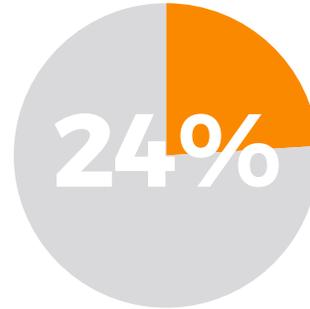
### MAKE IT

#### 1. REMEMBER YOU GET WHAT YOU MEASURE



There are legions of common metrics related to customer service support. But over-reliance on some of these metrics can lead to bad behaviors by your customer service representatives. For example, measuring call length is sometimes a useful metric to examine whether staff needs additional training to handle customer concerns. Using this benchmark

too rigorously will push staff to resolve the immediate problem and disregard their instinct that the customer will experience a different but related problem down the road. And while your metrics will look good, customer satisfaction will erode if they have to call back several times – even if it's regarding different problems.



**of repeat calls stemmed from emotional disconnects between customers and representatives.**

(Harvard Business Review)

#### 2. AVOID EMOTIONAL DISCONNECTS BY TRAINING FOR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



The Harvard Business Review found that 24 percent of repeat calls (read: those calls that raise the frustration level of the client, reduce loyalty and lose sales) stemmed from emotional disconnects between customers and representatives.<sup>vi</sup> These were situations in which the customer didn't trust the information they were given or felt the representatives they were speaking to were "hiding" behind company policy. Training your customer service team on how to interact and satisfy the emotional concerns of a customer can reduce repeat calls tremendously.

Findings from the Serial Switcher report back that up, indicating that 86 percent of customers surveyed would be willing to continue doing business with a company if there was an emotional connection with a customer service representative.<sup>vii</sup>

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## 3. DEVELOP A “SELF-SERVICE” CHANNEL



Customers do not always want to pick up the phone, and a vast majority of consumers will use a search engine to find the answers they need before they make a call. Having resources available on your website to resolve issues will improve satisfaction among customers. It simultaneously gives customers a sense that they are “not alone” in experiencing the current technical challenge and reduces the chance that an interaction with staff or your telephone system leaves a bad taste in their mouth.

An omnichannel solution can offer those multiple customer touch points and businesses are catching on. In fact, in their Retailing 2020 report, PWC found that number of companies investing in an omnichannel experience has increased – from 20 percent to more than 80 percent.<sup>viii</sup>

## 4. KNOW YOUR BUSINESS CYCLE

For some companies, there are specific seasons that spark an increased number of calls to customer service. If your product sales are cyclical, chances are so are your customer service demands. Knowing how this cycle affects support calls will help you “right size” your support services – avoiding both an overwhelming demand on too few customer service representatives and having too many representatives eating away at the bottom line.



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## OR MANAGE IT

For many other companies, even after identifying customer experience as a key differentiator of their product in the market, providing customer service is not a comparative advantage. Companies may lack the necessary experience to know where to start. Every student of macroeconomics knows that the smart strategy is to double down on those things that are your competitive advantage and to trade with someone for the other things you need. When it comes to customer service, this is called “outsourcing” and you need to find a business solutions provider. As you look for a business to partner with, include three key items in your search.

**Pay attention to value and ask potential partners to show you the results they expect to bring to your company.**

## 1. THINK VALUE, NOT COST



Companies may look to find a partner at the lowest price point to reduce cost. While this is understandable, it can lead to some serious missteps. You can wind up partnering with a company whose representatives are not suited to speaking to your customer base – either because they lack the technical knowledge or there are cultural and social considerations. You may also wind up finding a company that is so reliant on productivity metrics, particularly in reducing call time, that customer service seems abrupt or incomplete. Instead, pay attention to value and ask potential partners to show you the results they expect to bring to your company.

## 2. SCALABILITY CAN MAKE OR BREAK YOU



Like when you build a team internally, the business cycle can dictate the number of “seats” you need at any one time. Be sure that your partner has the ability to both optimize staffing plans and allocate resources based on demand for customer service. One of the key reasons an outsourced partner can be good for a company is that some seats can float between

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companies at different times of the year. This flexibility provides unique access to qualified staff without the complexities and cost of recruiting, hiring and reducing staff when needed.

## 3. ACCESS TO CROSS INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE



When you work with an outsourcing provider, it gives you automatic access to thought leadership around best practices within your industry and, sometimes

more importantly, other industries. Keeping up on the latest trends in your space and the customer care world at large is critical to maintaining competitive advantage. Access to this thought leadership is sometimes a component of a partnership that is overlooked but can be a core piece of the value equation over time.

**If you're interested in outsourcing customer support for your endusers, give Aureon Contact Center a call at: 1 800-588-4082 or visit [www.Aureon.com/ContactCenter](http://www.Aureon.com/ContactCenter).**

<sup>i</sup>Thompson, Ed, and Jake Sorofman. "Customer Experience Is the New Competitive Battlefield." Gartner (n.d.): n. pag. 04 June 2015. Web. 12 May 2016.

<sup>ii</sup>"2018 Customer Expectations Survey." Hubspot, Gladly, 2018, [cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2771217/Content/2018%20Customer%20Service%20Expectations%20Gladly.pdf](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2771217/Content/2018%20Customer%20Service%20Expectations%20Gladly.pdf).

<sup>iii</sup>Chierotti, Logan. "Harvard Professor Says 95% of Purchasing Decisions Are Subconscious." Inc.com, Inc., 26 Mar. 2018, [www.inc.com/logan-chierotti/harvard-professor-says-95-of-purchasing-decisions-are-subconscious.html](http://www.inc.com/logan-chierotti/harvard-professor-says-95-of-purchasing-decisions-are-subconscious.html).

<sup>iv</sup>Serial Switchers Swayed by Sentiment: How Bad Emotive Customer Experiences Are Costing Brands Billions." NewVoiceMedia, 17 May 2018, [www.newvoicemedia.com/en-us/resources/serial-switchers-swayed-by-sentiment-how-bad-emotive-customer-experiences-are-costing-brands-billions](http://www.newvoicemedia.com/en-us/resources/serial-switchers-swayed-by-sentiment-how-bad-emotive-customer-experiences-are-costing-brands-billions).

<sup>v</sup>"2018 Customer Expectations Survey." Hubspot, Gladly, 2018, [cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2771217/Content/2018%20Customer%20Service%20Expectations%20Gladly.pdf](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2771217/Content/2018%20Customer%20Service%20Expectations%20Gladly.pdf).

<sup>vi</sup>Toman, Matthew DixonKaren FreemanNicholas. "Stop Trying to Delight Your Customers." Harvard Business Review, 14 May 2015, [hbr.org/2010/07/stop-trying-to-delight-your-customers](http://hbr.org/2010/07/stop-trying-to-delight-your-customers).

<sup>vii</sup>Serial Switchers Swayed by Sentiment: How Bad Emotive Customer Experiences Are Costing Brands Billions." NewVoiceMedia, 17 May 2018, [www.newvoicemedia.com/en-us/resources/serial-switchers-swayed-by-sentiment-how-bad-emotive-customer-experiences-are-costing-brands-billions](http://www.newvoicemedia.com/en-us/resources/serial-switchers-swayed-by-sentiment-how-bad-emotive-customer-experiences-are-costing-brands-billions).

<sup>viii</sup>Gildenberg, Bryan, et al. "Retailing 2020: Winning in a Polarized World." PWC, 2012, [www.pwc.com/us/en/retail-consumer/publications/assets/pwc-retailing-2020.pdf](http://www.pwc.com/us/en/retail-consumer/publications/assets/pwc-retailing-2020.pdf).



**Aureon Contact Center** provides U.S.-based contact center services from four customer support centers in Iowa. Our experienced, highly educated associates work to build a partnership based upon a deep understanding of your product or service. From there, our team anticipates end-user issues to provide valuable customer insights that help drive your business. We help our partners enhance customer relationships and build brand loyalty, one call at a time.

Our Contact Center Services include Technical Support, Customer Care, IT Service Desk and Social Media Moderation. Located in America's heartland and powered by that famous work ethic, we offer a neutral dialect, high first-call resolution and consistency between centers. Because of our low turnover and overhead costs, we provide consistent, excellent and cost-effective customer service.