



# 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 are all set. Despite the simplicity involved, providing high-quality customer care and support is a challenge for most companies, in part because it is not seen as a primary concern of key decision makers.

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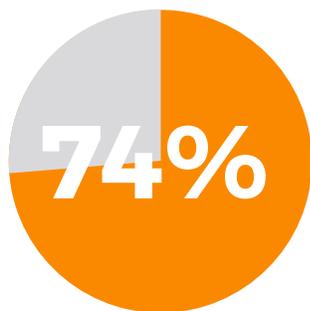
## THE CRITICAL IMPACT OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

As new challenges develop due to the uncertainties surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic, customer service continues to emerge as a critical component to your business model. Slowly, companies have woken 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. As customers endure unforeseen hardships from the pinch of COVID-19, how they are treated during this difficult time will determine their loyalty to different companies.

With the uncertainties of COVID-19 continuing to loom, customers may “tighten their financial belt,” increasing the importance of customer service.<sup>1</sup> As our communities are looking for ways to spend less and have little human-to-human contact, how they purchase goods and services will change dramatically. This natural lack of trust is a troublesome challenge that companies will need to face. Customer retention becomes increasingly vital as that loyalty brings increased revenue, as much as five percent for every ten percent customer increase.<sup>2</sup>

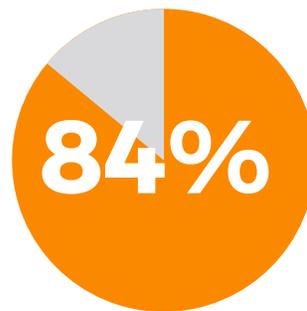
Regardless of whether you would like to slash budgets or catapult sales, combating poor customer service reputations and fortifying good ones may be critical to your strategy. Research is increasingly showing that customer service is linked with sales performance and the bottom line. While there are many statistics that illustrate this point, we'll examine the following below.

1. According to the 2019 Gladly Customer Service Expectations Survey, 74 percent of customers base their purchase decisions on customer service.<sup>2</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 suggest that 95 percent of all cognition occurs subconsciously, meaning that it's ultimately emotions that influence actions and buying behaviors.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, cultivating a robust reputation for good customer service is essential in today's environment. The new challenge is to transform and innovate the customer experience to combat the changing consumer dynamics due to COVID-19.<sup>4</sup>
2. Did you know that 84 percent of customers switch after three poor customer service experiences?<sup>2</sup> As it relates to end-user technical assistance, this means that consumers are less likely to purchase additional 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 28 percent of consumers said they'd pay more for a product or service with good customer service.<sup>2</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. Recently, organizations that are dedicated to the Customer Experience (CX) are investing in methods to centralize analytics and decision-making approaches to benefit the customer. CX leaders are investing in customer data platforms (53 percent).<sup>4</sup>



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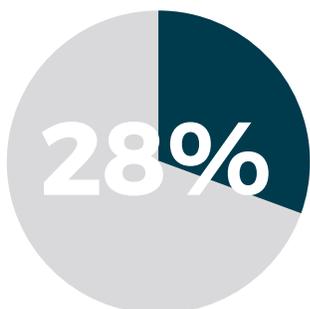
(Gladly)

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## 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. In the current volatile environment, the need for flexibility and responsiveness has grown exponentially and is worth addressing. 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.



**of consumers would pay more for products or services from a company with good customer service.**

(Gladly)

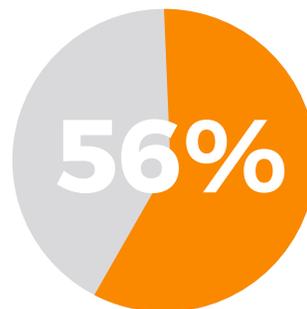
## MAKE IT

### 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 customers feel more loyal to companies that show a deep understanding of their needs.**

(Wunderman)

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



According to a Wunderman survey, 56 percent of customers said they feel more loyal to companies who show a deep understanding for their priorities and preferences.<sup>5</sup> Training your customer service team on how to interact and satisfy the emotional concerns of a customer can reduce repeat calls tremendously and pay off dividends in the long-term.<sup>6</sup>

Customer service during the COVID-19 crisis is about one thing: empathetic engagement.<sup>6</sup> This means that companies need to make time to anticipate the consumer's needs before they even have a chance to express them. By reevaluating current customer service programs, companies can "meet their consumer where they are" and provide them the service they need most – with the personal, human touch.

A Deloitte Digital survey backs that up, saying that it is emotional connections that drive brand loyalty. In addition, 60 percent of long-term customers use emotional language to describe their connection to favored brands.<sup>7</sup> By mirroring the qualities of positive human relationships, companies can cultivate the kind of emotion that convert customers into loyalists.<sup>7</sup>

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## 3. 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.

## 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.



**A diversified or remote workforce allows for 24/7 support regardless of unexpected disruptions.**

## 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 can 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 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.

By having an outsourced partner with remote staff, your customers can be supported 24/7 regardless of unexpected disruptions. This nimble and diversified workforce allows businesses to maintain their focus on their customer to facilitate growth and retention when competitors may be struggling.

## 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

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sometimes a component of a partnership that is overlooked but can be a core piece of the value equation over time.

Meeting consumer needs with good customer service has the potential to increase revenue and generate a sense of loyalty that will positively impact your

business for years to come. Whether your company makes internal adjustments or outsources customer care to a dedicated, reliable third-party, investing in your customer's experience is paramount amid the unforeseen challenges of a post-pandemic world.

- <sup>1</sup> Smith, Charmayne. "About Customer Service in a Bad Economy." HoustonChronicle.com. <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/customer-service-bad-economy-740.html>
- <sup>2</sup> "2019 Customer Experience Survey." Hubspot, Gladly, 2019, <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2771217/2019%20Customer%20Expectations%20Reports/2019%20Customer%20Expectations%20Report.pdf>
- <sup>3</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>4</sup> Morgan, Blake. "Customer Experience Mindset In A Post COVID-19 World: An Infograph." Forbes, 27 April 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2020/04/27/customer-experience-mindset-in-a-post-covid-19-world-an-infograph/#5691af93d0ed>
- <sup>5</sup> Abramovich, Gisele. "Study: Majority of People More Loyal To Brands That Care About Them." Jan 2017. <https://cmo.adobe.com/articles/2017/1/wunderman-tlp-wantedness-study.html#gs.70I3mt>
- <sup>6</sup> Newman, Daniel. "3 Key Considerations For Managing Customer Experience During COVID-19." 19 April 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielnewman/2020/04/19/3-key-considerations-for-managing-customer-experience-during-covid-19/#41820c895995>
- <sup>7</sup> "Exploring The Value Of Emotion-Driven Engagement: The Dynamics Of Customer Loyalty." Deloitte Digital. May 2019. <https://www.deloittedigital.com/content/dam/deloittedigital/us/documents/offerings/offerings-20190521-exploring-the-value-of-emotion-driven-engagement-2.pdf>



**Aureon Contact Center** provides U.S.-based contact center services from three 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.

**If you are interested in outsourcing customer support for your end users, give Aureon Contact Center a call at 888-387-5670 or visit [www.Aureon.com/ContactCenter](http://www.Aureon.com/ContactCenter).**