Effectiveness vs. Efficiency: Embracing the New Customer Experience Paradigm

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A vital component of owning a product or consuming service is Customer Service. In fact, most often, the nature of the customer experience defines the outcome of a purchase process.

Most organizations that have customer support functions have been investing in adopting best practices, such as Six Sigma in order to measure the efficiency and productivity of customer service agents. They measure and evaluate metrics such as time taken to close a call, tickets closed in a given time, throughput and speed of transactions and calls being closed. The emphasis is on '*closure*'; the reflex action of customer service personnel is to '*respond and close*' and the organizational structure, processes, metrics, rewards and culture are built around this philosophy of '*efficiency*'. The focus continues to remain on efficiency and productivity irrespective of the nature of business or channel. Most customers complain that the customer care agents seem to lack "human-ness"—often wondering why agents who are responsible for delivering care and concern and fix customer problems have little empathy and speak like robots that have pre-programmed responses.

ENTER THE SOCIAL WORLD

With the growing importance of social media and organizations trying to engage with customers in social channels, they find themselves applying the same yardstick of "efficiency" from the traditional customer service model on social channels. Often organizations don't realize that the playing field has changed and the rules of engagement in the social channels are different from the closed, controlled environment of the existing channels.

In the social paradigm, organizations need to realize that the key is to have meaningful conversations that can lead to insights for actions. Customer service agents need to take time, think and actually hear people out before engaging in a dialogue with customers. This calls for a new way of thinking— where the organization and the customers speak a shared and common language. A

philosophy where the organization is part of the audience, where it is OK to accept mistakes, where it is OK to be 'human' and empathize with the customer, where it is OK to indulge in simple, small talk with customers and not just focusing on '*responding and closing the call at the earliest*'.

Such a philosophy will require organizations to a realign themselves to a new paradigm for evaluating customer service delivery – parameters such as the number of conversations, the depth of dialogue will be measured and valued. Customer care will not be limited to the customer service division in an organization. The organization will share and dialogue with customers as a whole – linking customers to specific teams within a company to address queries better. The Social World calls for organizations to be rewired with the right processes, metrics, training, coaching and ethos.

EMBRACING 'EFFECTIVENESS' OVER 'EFFICIENCY' TO SERVE THE NEW SOCIAL CUSTOMER

In the traditional model, customers and companies would have one-on-one conversations via phone, email, IVR, etc. where customer service agents would resolve issues and close individual call tickets. With the plethora of customer review sites such as mouthshut.com, yelp, consumercomplaints.in, community portals and popular social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, customers are voicing their concerns, issues and experiences outside the reach and realm of companies or customer service agents.

Social Monitoring and Analysis tools can provide organizations with a snapshot of what customers are talking about their brands and experiences in social channels. The key challenge for organizations will not be in acquiring this information but in finding a way to effectively respond and engage with customers armed with this information.

Forward-thinking, customer-centric organizations realize this and are creating specific roles such as "Community Manager" and "Customer Experience Officer" to interact with consumers in the social channels and humanize their brands.

A COMPARISION OF CORE COMPETENCIES

Customer service delivered in the new engagement model is fundamentally different from that delivered in the traditional model. The nature of the interactions determines the kind of core competencies required of the customer service agents. Below is a comparison of the type of conversations and the skill requirements:

Customer Services Using Engagement, Dialogue and Conversations	Customer Service Using Traditional Cookie Cutter Approaches
• Effectiveness • Each transaction is a new one • Customer of One • Extreme Personalization • Empathy • Human-centric • Autonomy	• Efficiency • Repeatability • Consistency • Productivity • Scalability • Mass Roll Out • Trainability

To understand the differences in the two approaches described above, go through these sample responses from customer service agents.

✔ "Thanks for sharing your problem. I've looked into it and have taken the dealer to task. The problem lies with the head gasket. Please take the car to the dealer and we'll sort it out ASAP."

✘ "Greetings from XYZ Company. Our cars are the most reliable and this is proven by 5,00,000 customer cars on the road today. We cannot be held responsible for the way you have used your car."

✔ "Looks like your low battery is due to bad sensor, or a loose connection. Please bring it to the service station and we would be happy to diagnose the problem and help resolve it."

✘ "The ABC battery has been officially certified for 35 hours backup by CERCI."

✔ "Yes, we realize that our dealers from the northern part of country need a better ramp-up and are in the process of enabling it. Existing dealers are being taken to task, and newer customer-focused dealers are being shortlisted"

✘ "XYZ Company prides itself on winning the No.1 position in customer satisfaction survey. Our dealerships provide industry-leading after-sales service"

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CONCLUSION

It is not difficult to spot the conversations that are more human, respectful, engaging and more customer-centric—and thereby, differentiated. What type of engagement would you like your company to have with customers?

If your organization is starting out on developing a Social Customer Care journey, understand and embrace the concept of effectiveness. The social customer demands experiences that are infused with care, empathy and human-ness.

Happiest Minds can help you on this journey by evaluating your current customer experience and brand imprint across channels and craft a road-map to enable your brand to succeed in the Social Web.

To learn more about the **Happiest Minds Customer Experience Offerings,** please write to us at **business@happiestminds.com**

About Happiest Minds Technologies:

Happiest Minds, the Mindful IT Company, applies agile methodologies to enable digital transformation for enterprises and technology providers by delivering seamless customer experience, business efficiency and actionable insights. We leverage a spectrum of disruptive technologies such as: Big Data Analytics, AI & Cognitive Computing, Internet of Things, Cloud, Security, SDN-NFV, RPA, Blockchain, etc. Positioned as "Born Digital . Born Agile", our capabilities spans across product engineering, digital business solutions, infrastructure management and security services. We deliver these services across industry sectors such as retail, consumer packaged goods, edutech, e-commerce, banking, insurance, hi-tech, engineering R&D, manufacturing, automotive and travel/transportation/hospitality.
Headquartered in Bangalore, India; Happiest Minds has operations in USA, UK, The Netherlands, Australia and Middle East.

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