5 KEYS TO UNLOCKING THE OPTIMAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

What are the most important attributes for ensuring seamless customer service?
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Page 4
Regular, Genuine Touchpoints

Page 6
Specificity to Each Customer’s Needs

Page 8
Modern Processes for Modern Interactions

Page 10
Versatile and Knowledgeable Representatives

Page 12
Preparedness for Sudden Influxes
REGULAR, GENUINE TOUCHPOINTS

How often are you in touch with your policyholders? Do they think about you before renewal time? Do they realize you offer insurance across more than one vertical? Stay fresh in their minds and build positive customer experiences – from initial brand awareness through use of your product – with regular, sincere touchpoints. After someone takes out a new policy, consider sending a survey to ask about the experience. Was anything difficult to understand? Did customers feel well-informed, or were they struck with decision paralysis when realizing their coverage was about to expire?

Offering increased communication is especially beneficial for newly insured individuals. For instance, in the health insurance vertical, after the Affordable Care Act was implemented, the market was flooded with many individuals who had never dealt with health plans before. Many of these individuals did not know where to go with questions, making ongoing communication particularly helpful. By being proactive, insurers can keep customers engaged while obtaining useful feedback about the entire customer journey.

Additionally, having empathetic, sincere customer service managers and agents in place will help develop relationships with policyholders and promote positive associations with your organization. Each customer service agent represents your business in your customers’ minds, so every interaction counts. By continuing to communicate with customers, whether it be to confirm they understand the claims submittal process or to share new policy options, insurers can create positive connections at multiple stages of the customer journey.

86% of consumers say authenticity is important when deciding what brands they like and support.

Source: Stackla
Each customer has needs specific to their coverage, and many insurers are tailoring the customer experience to match. A key to increasing customer retention is making customers feel like a priority. Regular touchpoints such as reaching out about policy renewals are prime opportunities to show your customers you understand their needs and value their loyalty. Does a customer prefer email follow-up rather than a phone call? Ensure you’re able to capture this information, and encourage customer service representatives to take note of customers’ preferences. This enables your team to contact individuals in the way that makes them feel most comfortable.

Listen to the intel gleaned from your representatives and from customer surveys, and use it to improve your processes and products. Follow up when you make a change based on these recommendations, and use knowledge gained during your years with each customer to help ensure they’re exposed to relevant options. For example, if your customer lives in a large city with minimal parking and has never inquired about auto insurance, continually sending information about new auto options could come off as uninformed. Instead, calling about loyalty discounts around renewal time shows you value your customers and builds trust. When you take care of your customers, they will continue to invest in your business and may even provide referrals.

52% of people around the globe believe that companies need to take action on customer feedback.

50% of consumers felt insurance companies use their personal data to deliver a better experience.

Sources: Microsoft, [24]7.ai
MODERN PROCESSES FOR MODERN INTERACTIONS

Modernization is providing a wealth of opportunities within the customer service function. Policyholders have become accustomed to the smooth digital experiences they encounter across other industries, particularly retail and entertainment. They now expect convenience, transparency and personalization from their insurance providers, as well as 24/7 customer service through online chats and social media.

Modern systems augment your ability to respond to customer needs by quickly giving your representatives access to customer information. Additionally, providing reliable policy details in a secure online environment puts control directly into your customers’ hands, which can expedite processes and increase customer satisfaction. Some insurers are instituting artificial intelligence to anticipate policyholders’ needs and other companies have added website chatbots to answer basic policy questions, allowing customers to solve simple problems without human interaction. This is enabling organizations to leverage the benefits of both humans and technology to seamlessly assist customers.

While insurers are expected to deliver real-time data at the click of a button, avoid sacrificing accuracy for speed. If your organization does not have the resources to manage rapid technological improvements, now is not the time to invest in automated voice response software, for example. As you increase the use of automation and technology, don’t forget to also invest in the best resource you already have – your staff.

More than 60% of U.S. consumers say their go-to channel for simple inquiries is a digital self-serve tool.

Source: American Express
In this age of knowledge at our fingertips, customers demand straightforward, convenient service when working through policy questions. To meet these expectations, many insurers are working toward offering seamless customer support and maintaining a continuous-improvement mindset. While self-service systems are becoming more common, non-tech-savvy customers may not be able to navigate an online help system. In addition to being experts on your company’s plans and offerings, live agents must be comfortable with both front- and back-end systems and equipped to assist these individuals.

Hiring employees who are curious and willing to learn will set the foundation for a strong, cohesive customer service team. Offering holistic training on back-end systems, as well as creating an organization-wide communication strategy, will arm your people with the skills to quickly access necessary information while interacting with a variety of audiences.

Rather than passing a customer through multiple representatives, consider training employees to be a one-stop shop with regard to information from claims to renewals. For example, if an individual has recently added a child to their health plan, a well-prepared agent could seamlessly offer information about potential life insurance options to protect the insured’s growing family. In addition, if customers fill out a web form prior to calling in, they may become frustrated if they have to repeat those details to a live customer service representative. By making that information easily available to your entire customer service team, they can focus on helping customers quickly and effectively.

43% of consumers said having to repeat information to multiple agents was the top reason they dislike calling companies.

Source: New Voice Media
More and more insurance companies are turning to interim talent to ease workloads, especially during peak seasons, such as open enrollment for health insurers or CAT season for property and casualty organizations. Investing in the right talent is crucial to prepare for both anticipated and unexpected influxes. This includes devoting finances to ongoing training for full-time employees and potentially hiring temporary customer service representatives to take on the extra work during an increase in customer demands.

Your staff must be ready to handle a variety of customer needs at all times, from both a communication and product knowledge standpoint. This may mean ongoing soft skills training or cross-training to ensure individuals from other teams can step in to assist if necessary. When needed, the right temporary staffing firm can provide highly trained, specialized personnel to assist with workload fluctuations. By building these relationships ahead of time, organizations will be well-prepared to bring on experienced interim personnel as a complement to existing customer service teams, preventing service gaps. To gain an edge in today’s increasingly competitive market by developing a customer-centric experience, insurers must first invest in their talent resources.

33% of Americans say they’ll consider switching companies after just a single instance of poor service.

Excellence in customer service is ranked as the number one factor impacting vendor trust.

Sources: American Express, Dimensional Research
MORE INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

FIVE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

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The Jacobson Group is the leading provider of talent to the insurance industry. For nearly 50 years, Jacobson has been connecting organizations with insurance professionals at all levels across all industry verticals. We provide an array of services including executive search, professional recruiting, temporary staffing and subject matter experts. Regardless of the need or situation, Jacobson is the insurance talent solution.

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Jacobson provides executive search and selection consulting for insurance leadership positions in all disciplines. We offer a highly-methodical, performance-driven approach and a network of marketplace relationships necessary for a successful executive search.

PROFESSIONAL RECRUITING

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