



DIRECTORS' CLUB
NEWSWIRE

GLOBAL

Why you need to make the right call over quality assurance

MAY 4, 2018 SAM HEGGIE-COLLINS

Call centres have a bad reputation among customers, but it doesn't have to be that way. Martin Ellingham, Senior Product Manager for Aptean Respond, explains how Quality Assurance (QA) can make a major difference to call centre performance...

There's no such thing as an average day in a call centre. For starters, no two customer queries are the same. This makes resolving complaints and improving customer satisfaction an ongoing challenge – and the key to success is how organisations invest in overcoming this challenge.

When good is no longer good enough

The call centre might not be at the core of a business, but it will always have a major impact on the firm's overall success. A negative call centre experience can affect a company's brand reputation, its customer retention and its bottom line.

Customer expectations have never been higher; we're a nation of consumers who are more likely to complain if a service doesn't meet the high quality that has come to be expected. The best call centres aim for more than 'satisfactory'; they are looking to provide exceptional customer experience. Unfortunately, for companies and customers alike, high-quality experiences are the exception, despite six in ten organisations seeing customer experience as a key point of difference between them and their competitors.

The problem is that companies are failing to act on their own aims. While 92% of companies cite their customer experience as a top priority, more than half of call centre customers rate their experiences from "very poor" to just "okay".

Why change has to be more than skin deep

As shown above, a well-run call centre can make a big difference to both a business and its customers. So, how do companies go about achieving the high-quality interactions they need? How do they improve their existing customer experience?

It's tempting to start with the frontline staff as they're the people who actually engage with the customers. However, this ignores the underlying problems with how the company works. Any analysis carried out by the leaders on the actions of their staff has to spark real change throughout the business. If not, what's the point?

Another problem is assuming that call centre workers have the right tools for the job in the first place. If the case complaints management system is not fit for purpose, there's no chance of even the best employees being able to deliver high-quality customer experience.

Bringing the conversation together

Many call centres struggle with their customer experience because they still work in the past. They still operate on a business model built around a time when voice calls were almost the only way to contact a company.

Today, tech-savvy people who communicate in different ways dominate the workforce (and customer base). Customers now expect to have access to companies via many different channels (including social media), while employees expect to use systems that facilitate (and link) these multi-channel conversations.

Customers can have more than one interaction with a company's call centre – often with many agents and sometimes across more than one channel. If the call centre team can't bring individual interactions together then customers could become frustrated, which could in turn threaten your brand reputation.

Even the right tools might not do the job

Many companies believe their call centres have the right tools and systems in place to support their teams, but there's no guarantee of actually making the most of this. How can they be sure their people have access to the right information at the right time (while also restricting sensitive data)? How do they know that their customers are happy with their experiences? How do they know reports are creating insights that make the business more competitive?

The answer to this is that companies can never do too much when it comes to checking their processes and assuring quality. Focusing on QA in a call centre is vital. It reveals where teams can improve and gives leaders an accurate overview of how the business is operating. Effectively, it tells companies everything they need to know.

Quality is the assurance customers need

The benefits of effective QA are clear. Accurate information and transparent processes improve loyalty among both customers and employees, which becomes easier to achieve because QA encourages businesses to become more data-driven. It reduces the instances of mishandled interactions and provides useful insight to avoid a recurrence.

Similarly, the real-time nature of QA information means companies can spot costly mistakes before they have an impact, with employees also being more likely to buy into the process, knowing it has a clear framework based on up-to-date metrics. Even better is the fact that QA works alongside existing case management solutions. Rather than requiring a costly replacement, QA improves both the use and analysis of the systems in place, allowing companies to take a step back and gain a clearer picture of how their call centre works (or doesn't, in the worst-case scenario).

Assuring a high-quality customer experience

There's little doubt that QA will have an immediate effect on a business. While the long-term plan would be to completely reshape the way the company works, leaders and employees alike will most

definitely notice results straightaway. They'll soon see the difference it has on customer interactions and, eventually, they'll see the positive impact it has on brand reputation.

The changes don't have to end there, though. With responsive, insightful tools, companies will have the ability to go even further, changing existing call centre practices and even the entire business culture to provide the best customer service. The key is to create a call centre experience that exceeds customer needs; a business that keeps its goal in mind will undoubtedly find it easier to achieve, with the difference being between knowing exactly how to improve customer satisfaction and having almost no idea at all.

So, what's the plan for your business? Do you want to learn from your mistakes and create a better customer experience, or would you prefer to stay in the dark about your performance?

The choice is yours...