

In our omnichannel retail world where consumers expect to be able to buy anything on any device and at any time, it's no wonder that they expect a similar experience when they need support as well. Whether they contact you via phone, email, chat, social media, or use self-service, today's consumers expect their service experiences to be seamless, consistent, and personalized. This requires you to eliminate siloed systems and integrate all of your channels so you can achieve a unified view of the customer.

Unfortunately, many retailers have been slow to adopt this approach. In fact, Forrester reports that only 3 percent of all companies have the systems in place to enable customers to seamlessly move from channel to channel without losing the context of previous interactions. Meanwhile, 91 percent of consumers expect to be able to pick up where they left off when they contact customer care, according to an Aspect Omnibus survey.<sup>2</sup> These are startling statistics that highlight the disparity between retailers' capabilities and consumers' expectations, especially when you consider that a Gartner survey found that 89 percent of businesses believe customer experience is their primary competitive advantage this year.<sup>3</sup>

With consumers' expectations at an all-time high, retailers simply can't afford not to compete on experience-especially when it comes to service:

- 76% of consumers view customer care as the true test of how much a company values them<sup>4</sup>
- Customers who have the best experiences spend 140% more than those who have poor
- 66% of U.S. consumers are willing to spend more money with a business that delivers excellent customer service6
- Shoppers are 4x more likely to buy from a competitor if you provide poor service<sup>7</sup>

In survey after survey, consumers have made it abundantly clear that you're going to get left behind if you don't step-up your customer care to meet their needs. By developing a comprehensive omnichannel strategy, you can keep your customers satisfied and loyal, increase revenues, and more profitably grow your business.

In this white paper, we're going to explore what consumers really want from their service experiences, and take a deep dive into the four key areas of omnichannel customer care that can make or break these experiences. By the end of our analysis, you'll have the insights you need to start providing customers with the types of support experiences they expect so you can keep them happy and coming back for more.

## What Customers Want

It should come as no surprise that customers have high expectations for receiving prompt and convenient support across all of the channels they use. In today's retail environment, it's not enough to only provide great phone support or to only respond quickly to email inquiries. Customers expect the same high-quality support regardless of channel, and will not hesitate to move to another channel if they encounter problems or are frustrated with their omnichannel experiences. This can end up costing retailers millions of dollars, not to mention the revenue that can be lost when unhappy customers switch to a competitor.

<u>Ultimately, customers</u> want a frictionless experience when they need support, which requires you to integrate all of the touchpoints they use. By gaining a 360-degree view of each customer across channels, you can equip agents with a complete history of their previous transactions and interactions on every channel. Armed with relevant and timely information, agents can deliver the type of contextual support that resolves issues quickly and provide a personalized interaction that leads to a satisfying experience that strengthens brand loyalty.

# **Meeting Your Customers' Expectations**

There are four key components of omnichannel customer care that you need to master if you expect to improve satisfaction, loyalty, and revenue: personalization, self-service, mobile, and social media.

# **Deliver a Personalized Experience**

Times have changed. Remember when you thought it was creepy when a website remembered your name, let alone your shopping preferences? Now, if a retailer's website doesn't recommend your favorite products and know your preferred payment method, you're likely to visit a competitor's site that does.

Personalization has become an essential part of the entire customer experience in recent years, and it is especially important for retail customer service. Having a 360-degree view of the customer is the secret to personalizing your support experiences, and to achieve this level of insight your contact center can't operate as a silo. Comprehensive customer data needs to be shared across your organization so you can provide more engaging, effective, and proactive support when your customers need it. Whether it's online or with a live agent over the phone, they expect you to know their history, preferences, engagement habits, and recent activity so you can resolve their issues quickly and easily-and without any repetition.

With a single view of the customer and the right data on hand to personalize every interaction, you can dramatically increase the odds of a positive experience. And every interaction counts when you consider that even one negative experience can cause a consumer to shop elsewhere. In fact, 60 percent of U.S. consumers say that a poor service experience has made them decide to not complete an intended purchase.8

There are several tactics you can use to help personalize omnichannel service so you can be sure to provide consumers with memorable experiences. Here are two that can make a major impact:

Personality-based call routing: While most companies use some form of skillsbased routing in their contact centers, some have taken this idea even further and are now routing calls to agents based on a customer's personality. Speech analytics technology and customer data can be used to quickly identify the best agent to handle a call based on the agent's personal attributes and past performance, along with the customer's personality and other behavioral characteristics such as his reactions to questions. Personality-based call routing can improve the quality of every interaction and the likelihood of a good rapport between your agent and customer, which typically leads to higher first call resolution rates, increased customer satisfaction, and more sales.

Geolocation: Many retailers use geolocation to identify customers based on their proximity to a store so they can send highly targeted offers at the right time to drive purchases. But geolocation is also very effective for omnichannel customer care as well. For example, while an agent is answering a customer's questions about a product she is interested in buying, the agent can use geolocation to see how far away she is from the closest store that carries the item and then give her the option of picking it up or having it shipped to her home. This type of personalized service can drive sales and strengthen loyalty.

Having a 360-degree view of the customer is the secret to personalizing your support experiences, and to achieve this level of insight your contact center can't operate as a silo





# **Empower Customers to Self-Serve**

As today's consumers increasingly turn to self-service to resolve straightforward service issues, they expect retailers to have the systems in place to help them find their own answers. In fact, according to an Aspect Software report, 73 percent of consumers want to be able to solve product or service issues on their own.9 Moreover, a Microsoft survey found that more than 90 percent of consumers expect brands to have a self-service offering. 10 By creating an extensive knowledge base or FAQ, you can help customers help themselves far more efficiently than interacting with an agent in your contact center. Customers save time and encounter zero friction while you reduce operational costs and keep them satisfied in the process.

The key to a successful self-service offering is having a robust and up-to-date knowledge base. To do that, you need to have the technology and processes in place to easily add, edit, and deliver information across channels. Your knowledge base should be updated regularly with insights gathered from customer feedback, agent knowledge of customers' frequently asked questions, frequent call requests, and keyword search data so you can consistently provide the answers your customers are seeking.

Walgreens is a great example of a retailer that has an extensive online knowledge base. The company's help center lets consumers quickly search through its database by keyword or browse topics by category to find information about the retailers' rewards program, health services, pharmacy resources, shipping, returns, payment methods, and more. For instance, Walgreens' customers can learn how to earn points on their pharmacy prescriptions and how they can redeem their points either in-store or online.

A well-developed knowledge base that enables customers to self-serve lets your agents spend time with other customers that need assistance with more complex questions and issues. However, since customers who do attempt to self-serve may need to escalate their issue to a live agent, your knowledge base should include an easy way to ask a question if they can't find the answer they're looking for. Whether it's interacting with an agent via live chat or using a click-to-call feature in your mobile app to speak with a live agent, moving from self-service to assisted service should be seamless.

Once customers are connected with a live agent, the agent should have key insights into what the customer has already tried to do through self-service (e.g., viewing an article about assembling a product) so that the customer doesn't have to repeat his previous experience. With the knowledge of the customer's recent self-service activity and his history of prior interactions at an agent's fingertips, the agent has the information needed to achieve a fast and effective resolution to his issue.

You can also empower customers to self-serve by promoting online customer communities. In addition to being a fan forum for customers to engage with your brand and one another, online customer communities enable customers to find answers to their questions on their own. They can interact with their peers to

A welldeveloped knowledge base that enables customers to self-serve lets your agents spend time with other customers that need assistance with more complex questions and issues





# Integrate Mobile Into Your Customer Care Strategy

With the ubiquity of smartphones in today's world, it should come as no surprise that mobile is one of the fastest growing customer care channels. Young consumers, in particular, turn to their smartphones to do everything from researching products and making purchases to checking the status of an order and seeking help when something goes wrong. A Software Advice survey revealed that 77 percent of millennials use mobile devices at least once a month to receive support. 12

Although we reached the mobile tipping point where mobile users surpassed desktop users two years ago, 13 many retailers still haven't fully integrated mobile into a comprehensive omnichannel customer care strategy. This is due to the fact that many created their mobile strategies in isolation, separate from their contact centers, and often with a focus on marketing and sales rather than customer care. As a result, when a customer using a retailer's mobile app wants to connect with a live agent, he has to leave the app and start a separate conversation on a different channel. This approach frustrates the customer, creates a poor mobile experience, and prolongs the time it takes to resolve his issue.

To provide customers with a seamless and consistent customer care experience, it's important that you design your mobile strategy within the context of the contact center. Fortunately, integrating mobile into your overall service strategy doesn't have to be complicated. You can embed a widget into an existing mobile app that sends phone calls or texts into your contact center over the channels you're already using and without impacting your existing infrastructure or operations.

As with all omnichannel initiatives, having a single view of the customer is essential to your ability to provide the unified experiences customers are seeking. Many service interactions increasingly begin on smartphones because customers want immediate answers to questions while they're on the go or need assistance in a situation where a phone conversation is not ideal. If their attempt at self-service fails and they want to speak with an agent, the transition needs to be seamless and agents should have access to both historical and real-time data regarding the self-service activities the customer already performed. If the customer has already shared information within a retailer's app, for example, he shouldn't have to repeat that information when he's connected with a live agent.

When they seek support via mobile, consumers expect retailers to offer a variety of interaction options, including:

Visual IVR: Instead of listening to lengthy menus, you can enable on-the-go customers to quickly scan visually guided menus on their smartphone. With visual IVR, customers can easily tap their way through your IVR system without having to listen to each option and possibly encounter issues with voice recognition. Visual IVR typically reduces friction, improves call times, and boosts satisfaction.

To provide customers with a seamless and consistent customer care experience, it's important that you design your mobile strategy within the context of the contact center

• Self-service: As more and more consumers attempt to help themselves before contacting customer care, having a dynamic self-service offering has become extremely important. A Microsoft survey found that 60 percent of consumers have a more favorable view of brands that offer a mobile-responsive support portal.<sup>14</sup>

• Text messaging: Texting allows your agents to interact with customers on a channel they're very familiar with and prefer to use. In fact, a Harris Interactive survey found that 64 percent of customers prefer texting over voice when they seek support, and 44 percent prefer to text with a live agent immediately rather than wait on hold.<sup>15</sup>

- Live chat: It's easy to see why online chat is so popular with retailers and consumers alike. Retailers can quickly connect customers to agents with the right skills to answer their questions without having to navigate an IVR, agents can leverage previous customer behavior to more easily resolve issues in real-time, and they can even increase sales. According to an eDigital Customer Service Benchmark survey, live chat has the highest satisfaction levels for any customer care channel (73 percent), 16 and Business Insider reports that retailers can see between a 100 and 300 percent increase in order size when customers speak to a live chat agent before making a purchase. 17
- Video chat: The ultimate way to personalize a mobile customer care experience is to offer video chat. With live video, agents can see a customer's environment and situation to provide more tailored assistance—a major benefit for technical support issues. Video chats can take place within a retailer's app so customers don't have to access another program, and agents can view customers' actions so they don't have to start from the beginning and explain an issue. Video chats are the next best thing to real human interaction, and are very effective for building customer relationships.

Indeed, there are many ways retailers can engage customers on their mobile devices. For example, JackThreads, a retail website for men, receives nearly 60 percent of its traffic from mobile and delivers most of its support on this channel. JackThread's mobile app enables customers to seamlessly connect with the retailer when they need assistance via voice, live chat, and social media. The company is especially fond of live chat since discovering that customers who use this channel spend 80 percent more and report higher satisfaction.

Retailers that integrate mobile into their omnichannel customer care strategy can expect to see impressive results. Aberdeen Group research found that retailers that implement a best-in-class mobile program improve customer satisfaction and retention rates, increase agent utilization rates, and boost agent productivity. <sup>19</sup> Considering the fact that most service interactions begin on a mobile device, delivering a seamless and engaging experience on this channel is crucial if you expect to keep customers happy.

# **Be Omnipresent on Social Media**

Although many retailers have difficultly quantifying social media's direct impact on sales, there's no doubt that this channel plays a critical role in customer care. In fact, a recent Sprout Social survey found that social media beats out phone, email, and live chat as consumers' favorite channel when they have issues with products or services.<sup>20</sup> The same survey found that while 90 percent of consumers have used social media in some way to communicate directly with a brand and that 70 percent of them are more likely to use a product or service when a company responds on social media, brands only reply to 11 percent of the interactions consumers start on this channel.

This highlights the primary challenge and disconnect many retailers have with social media. Too many retailers view their social channels as outlets for broadcasting promotional content, rather than recognizing that consumers want social media to be a forum for two-way communication—a place where they can have meaningful interactions with a brand, get their questions answered, and have their problems solved.

Failing to meet consumers' engagement expectations on social media can have a devastating impact on retailers. According to Sprout Social's survey, 36 percent of consumers have used social media to shame a brand for their poor service and 30 percent will switch to a competitor if a brand fails to respond to their inquiries. Conversely, if you're quick to provide helpful answers to customers' queries, you can see beneficial results as well. Seventy-five percent of consumers are likely to share positive reviews on social media, 65 percent will have more brand loyalty, and 25 percent are less likely to take their business elsewhere.

But what does great customer care look like on social media-especially in the context of omnichannel? First, it's important to understand that developing a customer support experience on social media begins and ends with the customer and success hinges on quick and effective engagement. With 42 percent of consumers expecting to receive a response to their social media inquiries within one hour,<sup>21</sup> providing the type of support they desire requires you to have the right people, processes, and technology in place. Agents must recognize that by solving issues publicly, they become brand advocates who are the face of your business with every interaction they have with a customer. To provide more personalized, timely support, agents need a 360-degree view of the customer so they have a complete understanding of shoppers' past interactions. They also need to be trained to interact within each social channel you support. Whether it's initiating a live chat on Facebook or using Twitter "at" replies and direct messages to communicate with customers, they need to be adept at resolving product questions and providing detailed purchasing guidance without directing customers to another channel.

When a social media interaction does need to move to another channel, conversations need to be able to continue over time and travel across devices without losing their context. Doing so ensures that customers receive the kind of seamless support they're seeking, and enables you to create positive, memorable experiences that keep them coming back.

Too many retailers view their social channels as outlets for broadcasting promotional content. rather than recognizing that consumers want social media to be a forum for two-way communication



### **Empower Agents and Automate Customer Care**

Investing in technology that improves the way agents interact with customers is essential to your customer care operations. But having the technological capabilities in place to support customers across all channels and devices is one thing. Having agents in your contact center that can leverage the technology to deliver exceptional customer care is another. By implementing the right tools, training, and continuous improvement practices, you can be sure your agents are equipped to handle the complex and demanding nature of omnichannel customer care.

One of the main challenges agents face is having fast and easy access to all of the information they need to resolve a customer's issue. In fact, in some organizations, agents interact with more than a dozen different systems to do their jobs effectively. Jumping from system to system in order to find and process information can lead to longer average handling time, lower first contact resolution, and an unsatisfied customer.

Automation can help improve your customer care experiences by helping agents more efficiently assist customers. In many cases, you can leverage automation to quickly build connectivity across disparate technologies to eliminate time-consuming manual tasks. You can also improve agent productivity by using machine learning and artificial intelligence to automate the most repetitive parts of customer care. Ultimately, by automating certain processes, you can reduce costs while empowering agents to deliver exceptional experiences on more complex situations that build loyalty and increase revenues.

However you leverage your agents and automation tools, make sure you're constantly monitoring their performance so you can make the necessary adjustments that will improve the quality of your customer care. By targeting issues such as skill deficiencies in systems or individual agents, you can implement upgrades or training programs to ensure a seamless and consistent service experience across all channels.

### **Deliver World-Class Customer Care**

More than ever, retailers are competing on the quality of their customer experience. When customers seek support, they expect you to know their interaction history and preferences, provide personalized service, and resolve their issues quickly and easily-regardless of the channel or device they use to contact you. With 95 percent of consumers using more than one way to contact customer care<sup>23</sup> and 65 percent feeling frustrated by inconsistent experiences across channels, 24 meeting their expectations and keeping them loyal to your brand requires you to unify your customer care operations.

As the abundance of connected devices puts an even stronger emphasis on building customer relationships, you need to be ready to provide a seamless, consistent, frictionless service experience whether your customers engage you via phone, email, text, live chat, video chat, social media, or online self-service. Doing so can enable you to forge the long-lasting relationships that are essential for increasing customer value, improving revenues, and boosting profits.

If you need assistance developing a complete omnichannel customer care strategy, Radial can help. Our fully outsourced, 100% commerce-focused solution provides the expertise necessary to drive satisfaction, lovalty, and efficiency across all channels. We deliver a comprehensive set of capabilities that enable you to unify the entire customer experience so you can meet your customers' rising expectations, outperform your competitors, and grow your business more effectively. Learn more about Radial Customer Care at radial.com/customer-care.

### References

 Klie, Leonard. "CSE Day 3 Speakers Say Omnichannel Customer Service Remains Elusive," SmartCustomerService.com. May 26, 2016. http://www.smartcustomerservice.com/Articles/News-Features/CSE-Day-3-Speakers-Say-Omnichannel-Customer-Service-Remains-Elusive-111336.aspx

2. "Creating Trust in a Digital, Omni-channel World," Aspect Software. 2015.

http://www.aspect.com/globalassets/landing-pages/verify-uk/wp-verify-new-version-4-a4-to-print-final.pdf

3. McCall, Tom. "Gartner Predicts a Customer Experience Battlefield," Gartner, Inc. February 18, 2015.

4. Loechner, Jack. "Millennials Want It Now, And They Want It Right," MediaPost. April 27, 2015.

http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/248453/millennials-want-it-now-and-they-want-it-right.html? print the print of the prin

 Kriss, Peter. "The Value of Customer Experience, Quantified," Harvard Business Review. August 1, 2015. https://hbr.org/2014/08/the-value-of-customer-experience-quantified/

6. Meola, Andrew. "Online shoppers are returning products in droves because of this one reason," Business Insider. June 1, 2016. http://www.businessinsider.com/online-shoppers-are-returning-products-in-droves-because-of-this-one-reason-2016-6

7. Jarski, Veronica. "Why Bad Customer Service Is Burning Your Bottom Line," MarketingProfs. May 28, 2016. http://www.marketingprofs.com/chirp/2016/30011/why-bad-customer-service-is-burning-your-bottom-line-infographic

8. "Meola, Andrew. "Online shoppers are returning products in droves because of this one reason," Business Insider. June 1, 2016. http://www.businessinsider.com/online-shoppers-are-returning-products-in-droves-because-of-this-one-reason-2016-6

 Knight, Kristina. "Report: Poor customer service pushes consumers away," BizReport. April 6, 2015. http://www.bizreport.com/2015/04/report-poor-customer-service-pushes-consumers-away.html

 "Global State of Multichannel Customer Service Report," Microsoft. 2015. https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/dynamics/omnichannel-trends-report

 Manusama, Brian. "Why You Need to Rethink Your Customer Self-Service Strategy," Gartner. March 17, 2015. https://www.gartner.com/doc/3008317/need-rethink-customer-selfservice-strategy

12. Eddy, Nathan. "Use of Mobile Devices for Customer Support Grows, Despite Hiccups," eWeek. April 30, 2015. http://www.eweek.com/small-business/mobile-customer-support-usage-grows-despite-hiccups.html

13. Perez, Sarah. "Majority Of Digital Media Consumption Now Takes Place In Mobile Apps," TechCrunch. August 21, 2014. https://techcrunch.com/2014/08/21/majority-of-digital-media-consumption-now-takes-place-in-mobile-apps/

14. "Global State of Multichannel Customer Service Report," Microsoft. 2015.

15. "The High Demand for Customer Service via Text Message," OneReach. 2014.

http://onereachcontactcenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/High-Demand-for-Customer-Service-via-Text-Message-2014-Report.pdf

 Charlton, Graham. "Consumers prefer live chat for customer service: stats," Econsultancy. November 25, 2013. https://econsultancy.com/blog/63867-consumers-prefer-live-chat-for-customer-service-stats/

17. Meola, Andrew. "Here's why e-commerce retailers are embracing live chat customer service," Business Insider. March 21, 2016. http://www.businessinsider.com/e-commerce-retailers-using-live-chat-to-improve-sales-2016-3

18. D'Uva, Matthew and Rosser, Jason. "Mobile Technology: Changing the Landscape of Customer Care," ConsumerAffairs. March 25, 2015. https://www.consumeraffairs.com/news/mobile-technology-changing-the-landscape-of-customer-care-032515.html

 Minkara, Omer, "Mobile Customer Care: It's More Than Hype," Aberdeen. February 27, 2014. http://aberdeen.com/research/8842/ai-mobile-customer-care/content.aspx

20. "The Q2 2016 Sprout Social Index," Sprout Social. 2016.

http://sproutsocial.com/insights/index/g2-2016/

21. "The State of Customer Service Experience 2015," Northridge Group. 2015.

http://www.northridgegroup.com/The-State-of-Customer-Service-Experience

22. Haines, Bryan. "14 Amazing Social Media Customer Service Examples (And What You Can Learn From Them)," Buffer. December 29, 2015. https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-customer-service

"10 Customer Service Trends for 2016," Talkdesk, Inc. January 4, 2016.
http://www.slideshare.net/TalkdeskInc/10-customer-service-trends-for-2016-56661306

24. Golkar, Golriz. "Omnichannel Drives Seamless Customer Experience," Vocalcom. January 1, 2016.

http://www.vocalcom.com/en/blog/customer-experience/omnichannel-drives-seamless-customer-experience/



# **About Radial**

Radial is the leader in omnichannel commerce technology and operations, enabling brands and retailers to profitably exceed retail customer expectations. Radial's technical, powerful omnichannel solutions connect supply and demand through efficient fulfillment and transportation options, intelligent fraud, payments, and tax systems and personalized customer care services.

Hundreds of retailers and brands confidently partner with Radial to simplify their post-click commerce and improve their customer experiences. Radial brings flexibility and scalability to their supply chains and optimizes how, when and where orders go from desire to delivery. Learn how we work with you at www.radial.com.