

Self-Support Automation: The New Strategy Powering Customer Service

Enable your customers to Self-Support on the web and their mobile device through Interactive Tutorials, Guides, FAQs, and Videos.



Overview

Years ago, or perhaps even decades, service for everyday tasks was handled by someone else. An attendant pumped your gas; a banker handled financial transactions; a travel agent helped you decide on your next vacation. People liked the idea that others could help with everyday tasks.

Today, the service industry has evolved partly because businesses are realizing that technology is enabling a more do-it-yourself approach to many services. When's the last time you dialed up a telephone operator to help you identify a location, rather than logging onto Google or opening a maps app on a smartphone? Especially driven by the search engine-era, people today enjoy and even prefer to log online or pull out their smartphone device to find answers for virtually everything. And the smart companies that have realized this transition are making all those answers available to their customers.

This technology and DIY approach to customer service, technical support, and the overall customer experience is actually labeled as one of the "next big things" in 2017 according to Forbes¹ magazine.

This white paper will discuss the trend of businesses moving their customer service strategies to a DIY approach, as well as an explanation of the technologies that are enabling this shift for organizations and their customers.

Personalization Holds the Key

Marketers and businesses are putting all their eggs into the personalization basket when it comes to customer experience. And you don't need to look very far for this evidence. Sears, which for nearly half a century was looked upon as a retail giant led by its annual wish book catalog, recently announced it will shutter 150 stores² (along with its now sister, Kmart). The approach to a singular catalog appealing to everyone is no longer desirable.

Instead, brands such as Stitch Fix are emerging, where individuals can go online, pick out their unique styles, and have outfits catered just for them³ sent to their doorstep.

Driving much of this desire and ability to personalize more of a consumer shopping experience is the omnichannel retail strategy. Customers now have several ways to research and shop for goods and services. In-store, email, online, mobile, social, telephone, and a host of other channels now enable customers a bevy of options when researching, shopping, ordering, pickup, and customer service.

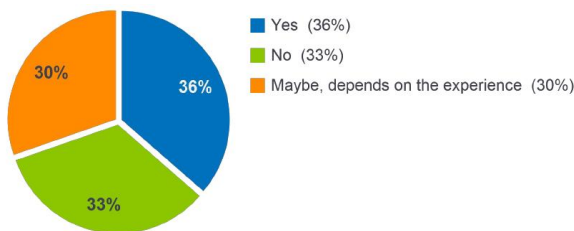
Businesses and their marketing teams have responded, and personalization is high on their radar for 2017. Here are a few key stats on personalization, as quoted from recent surveys and published in 1to1media⁴, an online news outlet focused on customer experience trends:

- While 37 percent of marketers think effective personalization requires the ability to draw from one single source of customer truth, 29 percent believe an omnichannel approach that's ready to engage customers with the right content via the right channel at the right time holds the key to successful personalization.
- Forty-nine percent of respondents are 'hopefully optimistic' and 26 percent are 'totally confident' that an omnichannel, personalized experience will deliver the impact and yield that marketing has anticipated.

Where Do Customers Want to Take Customer Support?

Consumers want changes made to the customer service experience. A DeviceBits survey presented to 2,400 consumers across the U.S. found that two-thirds (66%) would be interested in utilizing a self-service format for customer service, available on their favorite brands' website or mobile environment. In fact, only six percent said they're concerned with how difficult such a format would be.

Perhaps the survey had this type of outcome because of two primary reasons: Customers are frustrated with the current methods of customer service; and they're already pre-conditioned to log onto their preferred search engine to find answers to a variety of queries. In fact, in the survey, the fewest number of customers (less than five percent) said in-store customer service offered the fastest way to obtain a satisfactory customer service answer.



Would you prefer to use a self-service customer support experience on a company's website that would answer your questions and save time?

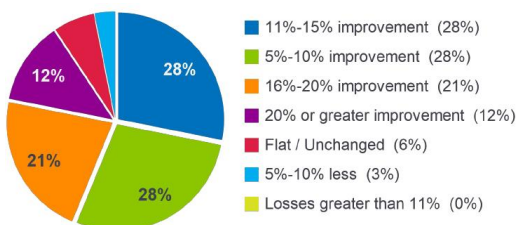
Source: DeviceBits Consumer Survey
January 2017

Customer Support Growing in Volume

The need for advanced customer support solutions goes above and beyond the fact that consumers want a better way. Brands admit that the volume of customer support requests continue to grow. DeviceBits also presented an industry survey to roughly 550 brand marketers around the U.S., with 28 percent saying their support requests volume increased between 11 – 15 percent last year; with another 28 percent saying the volume jumped between five – ten percent.

Beyond customer support, brands acknowledge that their digital business channels continue to grow in importance. 37 percent of brands said their change in digital-driven revenue versus in-store revenue from 2015 to 2016 saw between a 11 – 15 percent improvement year-over-year.

Clearly, digital channels are growing, customer support requests are growing, and consumers are saying they want more digital customer service options.



What was your change in customer support requests volume from 2015 to 2016?

Source: DeviceBits Brand Survey
January 2017

Predicting What the Customer Needs

Superior customer service in the digital age is more than just answering a customer's question when they seek information. The need to provide consumers a way to self-serve their needs in channels they naturally use provides the desired state for most organizations. However, these consumers require a system that treats them as a unique individual; one with specific technical IQ, understanding of their behavioral pattern and demographic characteristics; one that considers their individual history and unique learning styles; and one which automates the process directly in to the support workflow, allowing organizations more time to spend resolving complex issues or acquiring additional consumers.

Growth Prospects for Customer Service Automation

The opportunity for an automated environment where businesses can acquire customers leveraging software technologies has experienced rapid growth over the last five years. These technologies are a leading reason why organizations have been able to reduce their costs and increase customer service levels, in addition to an overall increase in sales activity. In fact, Transparency Market Research believes the predictive analytics market will hit \$6.5 billion by 2019 but can be accelerated through the application of other segments and artificial intelligence.

Markets in every vertical industry are keenly focused on improving customer support – for the sake of customer satisfaction levels, as well as the identification of additional sales opportunities. The focus of software automation has traditionally been a larger priority for customer acquisition teams as opposed to customer support. However, the growth of Omni-channel strategies has forced companies to make automation investments in their customer experience strategies.



Software Solutions That Leverage Today's Technology

New technologies offered today apply similar marketing and sales concepts compared with those in pre-sales support, post-sales support, as well as agent knowledge. One new solution enables consumers a self-support destination across all digital channels. These “Academy” destinations include content such as FAQs, Guides, Tutorials and Videos that are intelligently linked to predictive user journeys leading to positive outcomes for the consumer. This behavioral data science drives better outcomes and enables the continuous learning environment required to keep up with the demands on call centers and sales organizations.

A second solution leveraged by organizations today offers a shared reference library of industry-leading consumer electronic devices. These devices contain the most frequently used content by consumers in the marketplace for the purposes of self-support, and continuously change as the needs change in the market. These fluctuations are often driven by software or app upgrades, feature enhancements or new service offerings. Additionally, organizations can complement this shared lab with their own private lab of devices to complete their digital offering. This Virtual Device Lab has a built-in content monitor that is pervasively looking for new requirements and the overall score of the existing content to provide the best user experience.

Lastly, a third solution is focused on harnessing the massive knowledge base built from real user behavior in a cross-channel data collection engine. These data solutions can contain over 100 million user behaviors and feedback while leveraging self-help articles, and they are growing by the thousands every day. This cross-channel strategy reaches customers where they “live” in the digital world; i.e. client websites, mobile apps, search networks, social media, virtual and live chat, voice controlled assistants like Alexa, or even in real-time communications like SMS/MMS. This predictive support solution not only takes the answers to consumers in a predictive journey but it also provides organizations insights that are not available in their own datasets. These insights can include trends in sales and support to make better decisions around product and/or logistical strategies, competitive intelligence or benchmarking and data-driven decisions on product enhancements to ensure brand loyalty and satisfaction.

Summary

The integration of these modern support solutions, along with the compliment of the data assets will propel organizations into a support experience that matches their current sales and acquisition experience. This parity will expand the knowledge they have around each prospect or customer. With the increased consumer knowledge, organizations can automate the experience in all channels while controlling the costs of scaling their business and supporting customers. As such, Transparency Market Research's combination of this artificial intelligence with predictive analytics will create a market exceeding \$15 billion by 2019 and the usage of data assets could expand that market well beyond those estimates.

About DeviceBits

DeviceBits supports organizations driving toward a self-service customer support strategy by providing an integrated content delivery and information collection platform that efficiently aggregates multi-institutional, multi-national and public data into an analytics repository. The power of statistical analytics requires a sufficiently large dataset across a wide range of data types, including searches, forums, usage patterns, outcomes feedback and customer specific support and relationship management tooling. No one organization, even the very largest, has sufficient data to allow for true personalization of the user experience statistical analysis. However, by combining and integrating public and organizational data, sufficient scale can be achieved for statistically valid and actionable analysis.

Support data is both domain-specific and incredibly diverse, coming from multiple data sources, each with their own data structures and schemas or sometimes with no structure at all, known as free text. Each part of the organization has its own tools for support including; Sales, Technical Support, Customer Support, Marketing and Executives. This diversity creates challenges and opportunities to build patentable technologies around the collection and lexicon of the data sources. With this diversity, organizations can tear down their data silos and provide customers with a better experience with their brand through integrated, automated and self-optimizing support, known as DeviceBits SupportPredict.

All DeviceBits applications – Academy, Virtual Device Lab and DBAssist BOTS – are driven by this same data asset. Thus, DeviceBits implementations present a domain-familiar user experience to allow users to ask questions in a variety of ways, serve their needs in a variety of content models, and deliver answers in a medium where they are already spending screen time, all of this done easily and quickly based on the DeviceBits data science being applied in SupportPredict. Questions and troubleshooting, which once took several minutes or sometimes hours, can now be done in a few seconds. Users can resolve their issue or answer their question and expand their knowledge in a behavioral way that is backed and understood by the DeviceBits’ years of experience and millions of known user journeys.

This level of flexibility is essential to a “self-service” design principle in the Academy offering, allowing any user to serve their own requests without requiring them to understand an organization’s website, mobile app or website. This usability drives higher adoption of the platform on an accelerated timeline ensuring organizations can realize the immediate benefits of self service operations and the DeviceBits offering.

For more information or to schedule a demo, visit www.DeviceBits.com.

Appendix

- 1: “[Ten Customer Service And Customer Experience Trends For 2017](#)”; *Forbes*; January 7, 2017.
- 2: “[Inside Sears' death spiral: How an iconic American brand has been driven to the edge of bankruptcy](#)”; *Business Insider*; January 8, 2017.
- 3: “[Online personal shopping services are exploding](#)”; *TheStar.com*; December 31, 2017.
- 4: “[Customer Journey Personalization Is Pie in the Sky](#)”; *1to1media*; February 11, 2016.