

# Creating an Omnichannel Customer Engagement Strategy

Five Questions to Help Focus Your Efforts

## Introduction

For years, consumers have engaged with organizations in a linear manner, trying one channel at a time as they worked to resolve an issue or gather information. Increasingly, customers are using multiple channels simultaneously—browsing the Web as they talk on the phone, cruising the store aisles as they use mobile devices to compare prices online, and so on.

Empowered by technology, these omnichannel customers are quickly becoming the norm. But is your organization prepared to engage them? Can you deliver omnichannel customer service? Are you able to collect, analyze, and act on the large amounts of customer interaction data—structured and unstructured—across all your communication channels?

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**"15% of businesses indicate that they are fully satisfied with their ability to use data to manage customer expectations.\*"**

- Aberdeen Group

\*Aberdeen Group, Getting Ahead in Customer Analytics: Which Technologies Do You Need to Succeed? June, 2016.

The questions that follow can help you determine where you stand—and gain insight into new ways to enrich customer interactions, optimize your workforce, and improve your customer service processes.





## 1. Can your service representatives add communication channels as needed to enhance the customer service process?

Today's empowered consumers routinely use digital devices to "multitask" across different channels and platforms—and they expect your service representatives to be able to do the same. That's why your service representatives need to be able to access and effectively use all of your company's communication channels, either one at a time or concurrently.

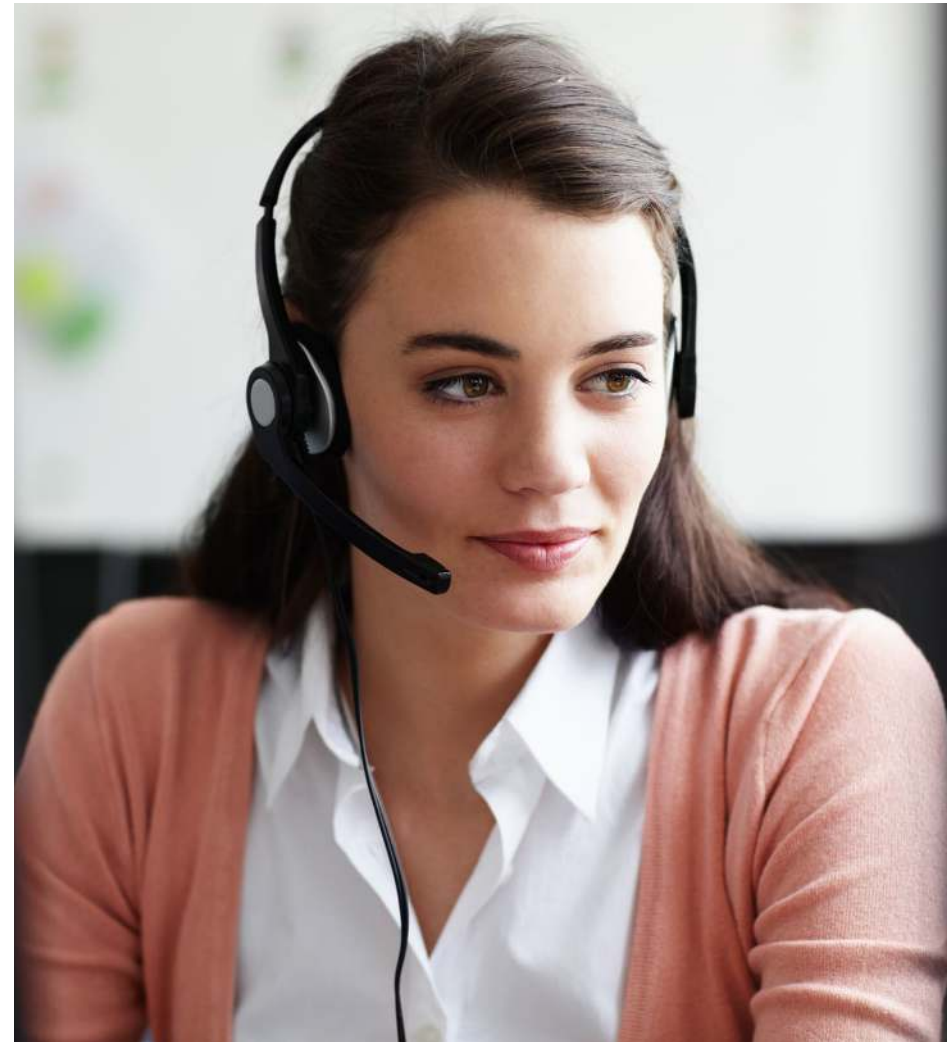
**Example:** When Maria calls a customer service center to deal with a flight cancellation, the customer service agent should be able to provide her with a list of available alternatives, delivered via the channel (email, app, browser, etc.) that best meets her needs.

## 2. Do your service representatives have a complete view of customer preferences and histories?

Your service representatives need to be guided by context when serving individual customers and deciding exactly which combination of channels can best meet their needs. This might include providing reps with a listing of the customer's previous purchases, current service plans, past contacts and complaints, and all channels used.

Ideally, service representatives should be presented with a consolidated view of this data, so that every customer interaction can be complete, consistent, contextual, and personalized. This not only helps enhance customer engagement, but also can be a significant competitive differentiator for your business.

**Example:** If William phones a contact center—or customer engagement center—to report that the product he ordered arrived damaged, it would be helpful for the customer service representative to know he is a premium online customer who has never before filed a complaint, or that he has a history of making frequent returns.







### 3. Are you delivering a truly seamless customer experience?

As your customers jump from channel to channel, they expect an experience that's continuous and consistent. However, it's worth pointing out that "consistent" does not mean "identical." The goal is to deliver consistent answers and the same level of feeling, responsiveness, and knowledge across all channels. This means all channels must draw on the same knowledge base and customer profiles. It also means that you need to have the right number of staff with appropriate skill sets available to deliver service as needed.

**Example:** Sophia's account information and purchase history is stored at her favorite retailer's online site. If she chooses to order by phone, the contact center agent needs access to that same information to help ensure her experience is consistent and convenient. This means that information needs to be centralized so that it can be shared by the different functional areas of your organization.

#### 4. Which performance metrics are you using?

New customer engagement strategies demand new approaches to measuring performance. Many organizations are augmenting their traditional, interaction-based metrics, such as first call resolution and average handle time, with engagement-based metrics. Metrics for customer service and performance management will continue to evolve as companies devise new measurements to assess omnichannel interactions. These new metrics will focus on whether the desired outcome was achieved and can have a significant impact on customer experience, loyalty, and satisfaction drivers. They can also help drive employee coaching and training programs, which in turn can influence staff effectiveness and satisfaction.

**Example:** Organizations are relying more and more on Net Promoter Score®, customer retention statistics, brand affinity metrics, and sentiment ratings. Having the right metrics in place can help organizations measure what really matters.





## 5. Do you know which service channel will be most popular with your customers next year?

While analysts may debate which service channels will earn the greatest favor with tomorrow's consumers—mobile, social, live chat, or perhaps something new entirely—the real answer may well be, “all of the above.” To help maintain your competitive advantage, you must optimize your customer engagement strategy so that your channels, processes, interaction data, and customer history / preferences are integrated. Once that's accomplished, your customer service representatives can deliver true omnichannel customer service.

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