

A Journey in Omnichannel Service Delivery

The growing number of customer service channels poses challenges that your organization can't afford to ignore. Consumers are demanding fast, accurate, personalized service across a wide variety of channels. If you're unable to provide this level of service, your customers are likely to try to find it elsewhere.

But in real life, how does omnichannel service delivery play out? Let's take a hypothetical example of Mary, who is shopping for her son's birthday. There are a lot of choices, so she takes her time shopping on her favorite store's website.

As she goes about her day, Mary switches from her computer to her mobile phone, adding items to a single cart along the way. She has a question about the assembly requirements of a bike, so she launches a chat with an agent to get more information. Joan, the chat agent, sees the incoming chat, along with Mary's customer information and details on the product she is currently viewing.

Joan: I see you are looking at one of our children's bikes. Can I answer a question for you?

Mary: Yes. Will this be difficult for me to assemble by myself?

Joan: No, I see that this item only requires that you attach the seat and handlebars. It should be straightforward.

Mary: Thanks so much for your help!

Satisfied with her choices, Mary purchases the items in her cart and receives an email confirmation indicating a delivery window of three to five days. As expected, a delivery arrives at her house a few days later. However, upon opening the box, Mary finds the bicycle seat is cracked. She calls the customer service center. Contact center agent Matthew

receives the inbound call. Based on Mary's phone number, Matthew can see Mary's customer information, including recent contacts and orders.

Matthew: I see your package arrived today. Was there a problem with your order?

Mary: Yes, the seat of the bicycle was cracked. Is there time for you to ship a new one before my son's birthday?

Matthew: I'm sorry your merchandise was damaged. I can get a new order shipped out tomorrow, so it should arrive by the end of the week. Is that soon enough?

Mary: Yes, his birthday isn't until next Wednesday.

Matthew: Great. Then I'll get this shipment out right away. You'll see an email with a new tracking number as well as a label for you to ship the broken item back when you get a chance.

Mary receives two emails, verifying the new shipment and providing a shipping label for the return. This time, the bicycle arrives in perfect condition. Mary is thrilled and wraps the gift up for her son. A few days later, while celebrating her son's birthday, Mary receives a text message from the store wishing her son a happy birthday and offering a 10 percent discount off a future purchase.

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Executive Perspective

Delivering Personalized, Effective Customer Journeys

Many organizations struggle with delivering such omnichannel service because their systems and channels are disconnected. Successful omnichannel customer service should include the following capabilities:

- **Unified history** — Customer journeys often span multiple channels. Every employee handling a customer interaction should have full visibility of previous interactions across channels, as well as any other relevant customer details. Having this background allows an agent to pick up the conversation where it left off without requiring the customer to repeat herself.
- **Seamless transitions** — Even if customers begin an interaction in one channel, they may want to change channels along the way. Customers may need to transition from one device to another for convenience, security, or other reasons. These channel transitions should be as seamless as possible, allowing customers to continue forward on their journeys.

- **Consistent experience** — Today's customers use mobile, chat, web, social media, and more. It is critical to deliver a consistent level of service regardless of the channel selected. Customer service agents should use a central set of tools around customer data, knowledge management, and case management to help ensure a consistent experience.

Ultimately, there are many different ways that customers may choose to interact with you over the course of a purchase. Joining these individual interactions together for a seamless experience is increasingly imperative for retaining your customers and market share.

The Customer Engagement Company™

Americas

info@verint.com

1-800-4VERINT

Europe, Middle East & Africa

info.emea@verint.com

+44(0) 1932 839500

Asia Pacific

info.apac@verint.com

+ (852) 2797 5678



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blog.verint.com

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