Did you hear?

Sarah is not afraid to tell you or her friends all about your company. She is that customer that fills out every survey you serve up and always shares her opinions on social media channels. She has a lot of great ideas about how your company can improve but are you listening?

To be a leader in customer experience, companies require a successful Voice of Customer (VoC) program which must be supported at all levels of an organization, from front-line agents to executives.

91% of all businesses wish to be considered a customer experience (CX) leader in their industry, yet 37% are just getting started with a formal CX initiative and only 20% consider their CX initiative "advanced"[1].

A thriving VOC program will not only improve each customer's experience but also your bottom line.

Examples of customer experience impact:

• Increase in Net Promoter Score
• Customer issues are resolved faster and with fewer 'bounces'
• View stores, website, and social interactions from customer point of view
• Customers offer great ideas and suggestions

Examples of financial impact:

• Grow average customer spend
• Increase loyalty, leading to more profitable customers.

Successful VoC programs have these three capabilities:

1. Ability to listen to customers through their channels of choice

You need good data on your customers as they use a variety of channels for communicating. It's important to listen effectively to what customers are saying and to use a variety of means, both solicited and unsolicited, to collect information. Also make sure you gather the data several times throughout the customer lifecycle. VoC insights include the combination of customer behavior plus feedback generated through all organizational channels. There are numerous approaches for gathering these including surveying customers directly, observing social communities and websites, browsing customer submitted emails, webforms, and even contact center agent's comments from a phone call.

As a best practice, develop a strategy, program, and toolset to systematically gather, listen to, and monitor customer feedback across all customer touchpoints. Plan for the specific kinds of feedback desired, how to gather it, what tools to use, when, where, and what to do with it once it is gathered to ensure it is acted upon and meets your organization's strategic objectives.

Service Cloud surveys helps Big Fish track customer satisfaction. In February of 2007, the survey indicated that 58% of customers were very or somewhat satisfied, and 35% were very or somewhat unsatisfied. Three years later, surveys indicated that the percentage of customers who were very or somewhat satisfied had risen to 94%, and only 3% were very or somewhat unsatisfied.

"We get comments all the time from customers, telling us how blown away they are by our responses, how impressed they are with how fast and professional our customer support is," says Joni Barrott.

2. Interpreting and reacting to the feedback

Interpreting customer feedback is more than just reviewing what your customers are sharing. It means using these insights to act and drive change that continues to improve the customer's experience every time they interact with your organization.

Propose recommendations for improvement based on the insights. Present "actionable" information and not just data. Use actual customer comments to emphasize your point? Tie feedback to each contact record providing a 360 view for your agents.

Reacting to customer feedback and taking action from your interpretations of the findings is key to making a positive change. According to Gartner, while 95 percent of companies surveyed collect customer feedback, fewer than half of those bother to alert staff, much less inform their customers as to how their feedback was used. In fact, only 5 percent of the companies surveyed close the loop by letting participants know what was done based on their feedback[2].

As a best practice, implement a program for key stakeholders to systematically review, prioritize, and act on feedback that is interpreted and identified worthy of further action. Within this program, develop a means of closing the loop to notify customers how their feedback was used. Note that not all feedback needs the same level of action. Feedback received from particular customer segments, about particular products, about certain topics, or having certain characteristics (such as an extreme score) may require higher attention or priority than other feedback.

3. Validating impact and monitoring results over time

Just as important as listening, interpreting, and responding to the voice of your customers is the ability to spot trends or common denominators. A historical view of the feedback captured can provide insight as to whether the actions taken from the feedback are making a difference or not. It could even help identify your most vocal customers and your most satisfied ones. Monitoring the results of capturing, analyzing, and acting on the feedback from your customers, can be the difference between success and failure for an organization's VoC program.

"Oracle Service Cloud (formerly Oracle RightNow) allows iRobot to collect valuable feedback from our customers," says Maryellen Abreu, iRobot's Director of Global Technical Support. "That ability to hear the customer's voice and quickly respond to it is a major business advantage."

As a best practice, implement a program to achieve continuous feedback improvements measured and monitored using key performance indications. Decide on what types of feedback you need to measure, and why, based upon your particular needs. Then, determine what measurements constitute success or whether improvements are even needed.

With this understanding, develop a core set of feedback key performance indicators. Remember to baseline where you are at today and monitor over time to gauge whether or not improvement is occurring. Customer feedback programs should always evolve as your business changes.

Because Xactware understands that a positive experience drives customer loyalty, the company offers "We're Listening" links throughout its website to encourage its customers to offer their opinions. This provides a forum for customers to ask questions, offer compliments, and issue complaints.

Every question and complaint automatically generates an incident in Service Cloud, making certain Xactware doesn't overlook a customer issue. In addition, the company sends a closed incident survey after a customer has contacted the company for support to make sure it is providing the services customers require.

Investing in VoC programs builds a defensible advantage in delivering great customer experiences. Those encounters lead to bottom line growth, profitability and improved customer loyalty.

[1] Global Insights on Succeeding in the Customer Experience Era, Oracle, October 2012.
[2] Customer Experience Management: Raising Customer Satisfaction, Loyalty and Advocacy, Ed Thompson, Jim Davies, Gartner webcast, 12/3/2008

Why Oracle?

Oracle offers a complete solution for organizations looking for a customer feedback, insights and response platform.

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