

Whitepaper:

What Customers Want and How Your Contact Center Can Deliver

Today's call centers must be all things to all people. Despite this, most customers agree on what they do and don't want from their service experience. This whitepaper presents new study findings on current consumer hot buttons, identifies what's still broken when it comes to customer service, and highlights the industries and businesses that know how to get it right.



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The Cost of Poor Customer Service

It's not a revolutionary concept. Poor customer service not only costs companies in terms of goodwill and reputation; it also can do some serious damage to profits. Consider the statistics below, which present findings from the 2013 Customer Rage Study extrapolated¹ to the nation's population:

2013 CUSTOMER RAGE STUDY	
Number of households experiencing at least one problem during past 12 months ²	56,000,000
Number of households experiencing RAGE ³	38,080,000
Number of households posting information about their most serious problem on at least one website	25,200,000
Revenue at risk to business ⁴	\$75,992,000,000

The Customer Rage studies provide an excellent snapshot of American customer service satisfaction over time. Based on customer survey benchmarks first established in a 1976 study commissioned by the White House, the series of six follow-up studies conducted by Customer Care Measurement and Consulting (CCMC), in conjunction with the Carey School of Business of Arizona State University, show a downward spiral in customer satisfaction and a rise in customer rage.

Thanks to the Rage Studies, we know what makes U.S. consumers angry. But another recent study identifies what can make – and keep – them happy when it comes to their contact center experience.

"We found satisfaction is no higher than reported in 1976. People are frustrated that there are too many automated response menus, there aren't enough customer-care agents, they waste a lot of time dealing with the problem, and they have to contact the company an average of four times to get resolution."⁵

Scott Broetzmann
President & CEO
CCMC

¹ Statistics apply to ONLY most serious problem during the past 12 months. Findings extrapolated to the nation's population; "Will We Ever Learn?: The Sad State of Customer Care in America, Nov. 2013, Highlights from the 2013 Customer Rage Study." <http://bit.ly/1ybUrwj>

² Assuming 112,000,000 total U.S. households.

³ Based on "extremely" and "very upset" respondents.

⁴ The mean cost of products/services subject to most serious problem multiplied by the number of households experiencing problems.

⁵ Mark Huffman, "What's Behind Customer Rage?" Consumer Affairs, Dec. 6, 2013: <http://bit.ly/15NMQ0a>

What Customers Want⁶



Reduced Hold Times

32% will hang up after waiting on hold for more than five minutes; nearly half (49%) believe lowering hold times would vastly improve customer service.



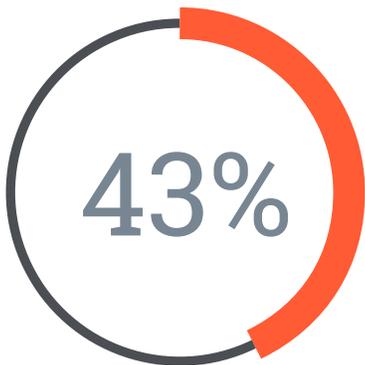
Knowledgeable Agents

37% ranked knowledgeable agents as the primary service consideration as to why they would continue to do business with a company.



Quick Resolution

45% said trying to get an issue with a current service or problem resolved was the most complicated request they experienced when interacting with an agent.

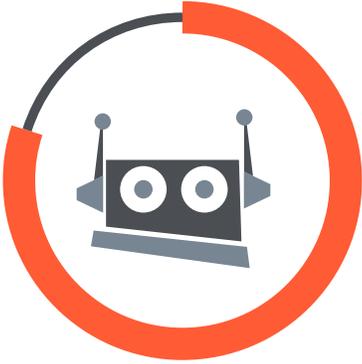


Convenient Hours

43% said they prefer to call customer service in the afternoon; 40% indicated a preference for mornings.

⁶ Corvisa polled 1,214 individuals via an online uSamp survey between August 25-28, 2014. The margin of error is +/- 2.98 percentage points.

What Customers Want (con't)



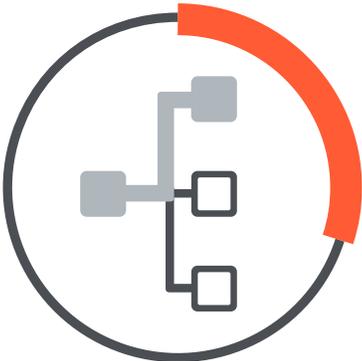
Humans, Not Robots

80% said their customer service calls feel scripted and robotic.



Multiple Delivery Channels

While 55% still prefer to get help by phone, 39% indicated they will also use web chat, email and social media.



Straightforward & Smart

30% picked Anderson Cooper as the celebrity persona who possessed the above traits of their ideal customer service rep.

Why These Interactions Matter



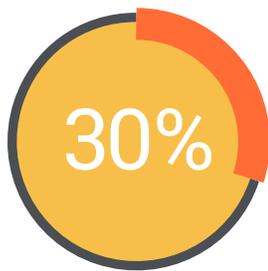
Customers Are Contacting Customer Support More

As compared to a similar 2013 study⁷, overall frequency is up.

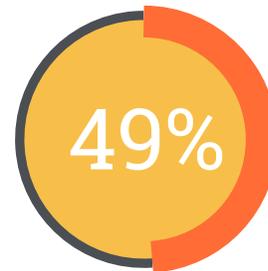
You Don't Get Many Chances to Make a Good Impression

34% had contacted a service center just once during the past year; 20% had made contact twice a year or more.

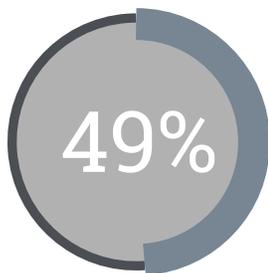
The Good, The Bad & The Ugly



30% said the hospitality industry provides the best customer service.



49% believe small companies provide the best customer service; only 11% said the same for large businesses.



49% report cable and Internet providers are the worst at customer service.



64% lost their temper with a customer service agent within the last year.

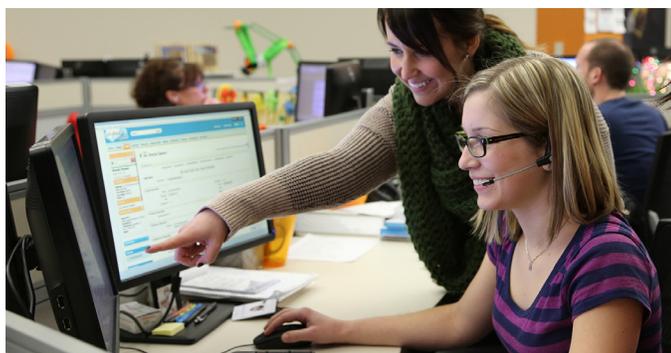
⁷ Corvisa polled 1,109 adults in the U.S. via Zogby Analytics between August 20-23, 2013. The margin of error is +/- [3.1] percentage points.

The Takeaways: How to Improve Service Delivery

Hire the Right People

When it comes down to it, customer service is all about people helping people. First and foremost, **know your customer**, what they want and what challenges they may encounter with your product or service. Then, based on this knowledge, **be strategic about the people you hire**. Emphasize the importance of their role in your organization's success – and **incentivize them accordingly**.

Also, make sure you select people who embody the traits highlighted in the survey. While it's a given that all customer service reps need to be great communicators, think about the style in which they communicate as well. In addition to the smart and straightforward approach modeled in the #1 survey celebrity persona pick of Anderson Cooper, also select people who come across as empathetic and sweet, as noted in the #2 survey choice of Jennifer Garner. In addition, make sure those



Hire agents who are a good fit for your organization and invest in their training.

you hire have excellent verbal and written communication skills. Nearly half (49%) of respondents said call center agents were not informed and difficult to understand. Overcoming those weaknesses can help to set your business ahead of your competitors.

Invest in Training

Hiring the right people is only half the battle; making sure they're correctly trained and well-informed – no matter if they're the team rookie or a seasoned pro -- is the other half. While all organizations provide some type of training prior to reps taking calls, it's important to give agents coaching and feedback as a means of ongoing training and continuous improvement. There are also many new technologies that can make the training process easier, so don't be afraid to modernize your tactics.

Many contact center software systems include supervisor oversight features such as **silent monitoring** and **whisper coaching**, which give managers the ability to provide feedback and guidance without interrupting the conversation between the agent and the customer. Other features such as **barge-in** and **call takeover** enable managers or team leads to become part of the live call and assist in resolution. Another supervisor oversight tool, **call recording**, not only assists in feedback and

training, but also aids in compliance monitoring and serves as a point for historical reference.

Find the Right Agent, Right Away

Nearly half of survey respondents said lowering hold times would vastly improve customer service. And those responding to the 2013 Customer Rage Study reported that it took a customer an average of four attempts to resolve a problem.⁸ All of these customer annoyances - unacceptable hold times, multiple transfers or the need to contact a company more than once - can be triggered by issues such as inflexible systems that can't scale to handle fluctuating call volumes, improper staffing or utilization of staff, or poorly structured call menus.

Decrease hold times and the need for customers to call or be transferred multiple times. Invest in contact center technologies that make it easy to **adjust queues on the fly** or **tweak Interactive Voice Response (IVR) menus** based on common issues you see in post-call reports. Also, keep in mind that no two customers

are the same and the same is true for your agents. If your customers aren't being directly connected to the right agent or department, or are all generically passed through the same call bottleneck, you'll find yourself facing underutilized staff and unhappy customers. Your customer service reps have different strengths and skills that enable them to handle different customers effectively. Software features like **skill-based or team-based routing** can help direct calls to a well-suited agent, while tools like **workflow automation** software can also help ensure all agents have the information and directives needed to be effective.

Use Technology Based on Customer Needs

As noted in the 2013 Customer Rage Study:⁹

The reason for these low levels of complainant satisfaction is not that companies have failed to adopt upgraded programs to handle customer complaints...The problem is, instead, that companies ARE DOING ALL THE RIGHT THINGS, THE WRONG WAY.

The key to success: **know your customers** and then **deploy the technology accordingly**. An

Did You Know?

A dissatisfied customer will tell between 9-15 people about their experience. Around 13% of dissatisfied customers will tell more than 20 people.

White House Office of Consumer Affairs, 2011

78% of consumers have bailed on a transaction or not made an intended purchase because of a poor service experience.

American Express Survey, 2011¹⁰

In 2011, 7 in 10 Americans said they were willing to spend more with companies they believe provide excellent customer service.

American Express Survey, 2011¹⁰

⁸ 2013 Customer Rage Study, Ping-Ponging: Still the Deadly Game, page 35: <http://bit.ly/1ybUrwj>

⁹ 2013 Customer Rage Study, Highlights, page 5: <http://bit.ly/1ybUrwj>

¹⁰The American Express Global Customer Service Barometer research was completed online among a random sample of 1,000 U.S. consumers aged 18+. Interviewing was conducted by Echo Research between Feb. 2-10, 2011. Overall, the results have a margin of error of +/- 3.1% at the 95 percent level of confidence: <http://amex.co/1yPgMUK>

example of how customer understanding can make technology a source for good versus a source of frustration – IVRs.

Telecom technology review firm Software Advice recently released a report¹¹ on IVR optimization based on the study of 50 customer service-oriented Fortune 500 companies. The company then spoke with specialists in operations research and call center benchmarking for insight on best practices for IVR design. For instance, when it came to the number of options in the top menu, the IVR researchers and developers suggested that the number be limited to five to reduce cognitive demand on callers. The study team also noted that some IVRs had individual recordings that extended to an excessive 19 seconds. Per Daniel Harris, VoIP and telecom researcher at Software Advice, these findings suggest that **companies need to think harder about which services they want their IVRs to automate**, especially since most callers tend to settle on just a few service options in an IVR menu.

Another finding from the Software Advice study also emphasized how **knowing your client base should dictate IVR design** -- younger callers actually want the ability to complete tasks such as booking a flight without having to speak to a human agent. However, 46% of the IVR systems called failed to include self-service options in the top menu.

Scale Up to Meet Demand

While some younger consumers may want to avoid talking when it comes to certain requests, unhappy customers – no matter their age – still want to talk to someone on the phone and get an answer quickly. The 2014 Corvisa survey found that 55% still prefer to get help by phone, and the 2013 Customer Rage Study found U.S. consumers are 11 times as likely (66% versus 6%) to make a call as they are to use the Internet to complain.



Make sure you have the appropriate number of agents and systems in place to handle those calls, especially when volumes spike due to such dynamics as seasonal demands, a new product offering, or an emergency response situation. Many cloud contact center solutions are natively structured to **support scalability**. For example, in the event of a disaster, customer service inquiries can easily be re-routed to other locations not affected by the event or additional lines can be turned up quickly to support the influx of phone calls.

Provide Multiple Channels

The phone call still reigns supreme, but be sure to also **give customers options to access you on their terms**. Surveying your customer base can be an effective way to see which outlets might be right for your target customers.

¹¹ IVR Design Tips From Researchers and the Fortune 500, IndustryView 2014, Software Advice. <http://bit.ly/1rlwaj>

Additionally, make sure that your agents and data can easily transition between **various delivery channels** so you are able to retain both an individual and aggregate view of customer needs.

Keep It Real

An alarming 80% of survey respondents said agents sounded robotic and scripted. While no agent sets out trying to emulate Siri®, that's often the result when he/she is juggling multiple products, multiple call scripts – which sometimes require compliance with strict regulatory standards – and multiple technologies to deliver service. Add in the fact that these jobs are generally entry-level positions prone to rapid turnover and you have a recipe for a robotic interaction that can leave customers and companies out in the cold.

While technology may be partly to blame for the lack of personalized service, it also can make all the difference when used effectively. For example, modern **workflow automation** tools speak directly to the issue of providing personalized service that doesn't sound robotic or scripted. Such technologies equip agents with on-screen knowledge of the next best action to take, troubleshooting questions to ask, or sales suggestions to make based on the path the conversation is taking instead of just a 1-2-3 ordered call script. The technology also enables an agent to collaboratively

co-browse a screen with a customer, making it easier to help customers select products, complete an online form or review terms. Such tools make it easier for agents to sound – and act – like humans. Most important, workflow automation solutions provide agents with the in-depth knowledge needed to help resolve customer issues.

Get Personal

Now more than ever before, it's important to make sure your staff has the right tools, information access and authority they need to truly solve customer problems and deliver outstanding service. This is where exceptional cloud contact center software can help transform a mediocre agent into a competent agent, resulting in the difference between an angry or happy customer. Features like effective **call routing, supervisor queue monitoring, activity sync** with customer records, and integration with your customer relationship management (**CRM**) **software** can all help to create a personalized customer experience that will keep them coming back for more. In addition, integrations between cloud-based systems are often pre-built or easier to facilitate. Look for providers that offer an open **Application Programming Interface (API) platform or Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS)** model, which allows you – or a third-party developer – to create customized solutions that will make for both happy customers and happy agents.

Summary

Poor customer service can have devastating results on an organization's reputation and profits. Your contact center is integral to the delivery of the customer service experience, so be sure to spend the time and effort needed to get the right staff and resources that best suit your customer base. Doing so won't be without its challenges, but modern contact center and business automation technologies can help

to make sure your agents are equipped to respond in the manner your customers demand.

Learn more about what these tools can do for your organization. Contact us for an initial discovery session.

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With more than 15 years of experience as a business owner and consultant – including leading operational roles in launching eight call centers – Brandon Knight manages the CorvisaOne® Solutions Engineering team. He has held operational and

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About Corvisa

Corvisa brings customer success to the heart of every business interaction through our cloud-based communications platform, contact center technologies and consulting services. We help businesses work smarter, save money and make customers happier...and with our passion for service, we make getting there an enjoyable experience.