



Customer Service Buyer's Guide

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Introduction to Customer Service Systems

What is Customer Service?

We traditionally think of customer service as the department in an organization responsible for handling customer complaints or issues, but this may not be the best definition to utilize to provide quality service.

- Is customer service handling problems that arise after a sale?
- Is customer service treating a customer with respect when selling a product?
- Is customer service providing prospects with the right information at the right time to make the right decisions regarding the purchase of your products?

The answer is yes. Customer Service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation.

This buyer's guide focuses on acquiring technology to assist in enhancing customer satisfaction through providing relevant customer service, primarily post sale, but keeping in mind that a holistic solution will reap the biggest benefits.

What are the Advantages of Providing Quality Customer Service?

Once thought of as a necessary expense, customer service is now receiving more attention and importance within organizations. In fact, customer service has been called “the new marketing”— and with good reason. Customers that have positive experiences feel cared for and valued. In turn, they stay loyal to your organization, they buy more, and they tell their friends and colleagues.

It's tough to put a dollar figure on the impact of a positive customer experience; it's easier to measure the impact of lost customers due to poor experiences.

- The cost of acquiring new customers is 3 to 5 times the price of keeping existing ones.
- One study shows that if a contact center exceeds a customer's expectations, nearly every caller (95%) will use the company's product or service again.
- Only 16% of contact center experiences get rated as exceeding a customer's expectations.
- One "bad experience" encourages 63% of callers to stop giving their business to a company altogether.

In the face of statistics like this, upper management has taken notice, giving contact centers greater importance. Because contact centers are the natural choice for interacting with customers (both pre- and post-sales), contact center managers are under more pressure to simultaneously increase service levels, lower costs, generate

revenue through cross-selling and up-selling opportunities, and become a profit center.

Technology and Customer Service

A number of technologies exist to help post sale customer service teams operate more efficiently and effectively. However, most are focused on productivity gains and cost-savings for contact centers, rather than optimizing the customer experience. With so much technology supporting customer service, it's easy to lose the human touch and alienate customers.

New technologies empower organizations to accomplish both objectives at once: raise service levels and improve the profitability of the contact center. Here are some ways that technology can help improve the customer experience while also reducing costs.

Enhancing the Customer Experience – and Loyalty

In spite of overwhelming evidence, many companies are focused on acquiring new customers, ignoring the potential sales that already reside in their databases. The challenge is to turn a new customer into a lifelong buyer through consistent, top-quality care, and to gain new ones from positive feedback posted on the web.

How many times have you called a contact center and been prompted for your identification information, only to speak with another agent who asks for the same information again, and possibly even again? Without voice and data integration, allowing customer information to transfer from one agent to the next, companies waste time and frustrate callers. Without integration, agents have to repeat steps and can't serve customers from the same page.

Likewise, lack of integration with a CRM or incident case management system means agents don't have access to essential customer-specific data to help them serve customers, such as the customer's support plan, or their sales and support history.

The following example is a customer service "horror story" that's unfortunately too common today, and underscores the need for quality data in contact centers:

"It was a terrible experience. I ordered a rocking horse (in stock item) several weeks ago; it's never shipped out. When I called, the first representative told me the order was canceled because the item was out of stock. She told me if I still wanted it, I needed to replace the order. Then I

Customer Service Experience Pains at a Glance

- Customers repeat information to multiple agents.
- Customers feel like they're in an endless "maze" when calling into phone systems.
- It takes forever for customers to reach the right person to help them.
- Customers want service anytime, anywhere they need it.

replaced the order. I called again. The second representative told me the first order was not canceled and was pending. Nobody knew why it was pending for so long. I was quite upset because I began to worry about my second order, now a duplicate order. I asked her to cancel my second order, she told me an order could not be canceled once it was committed, neither the first one or the second one. Several days passed with both of my orders pending. I don't know when they will be really canceled, and I can't buy the rocking horse from anybody else. It is a gift for special event. I'm quite upset for checking order status every day."

The Web is full of accounts like this. With sites like Amazon and Epinions providing a forum for customers to post grievances publicly and immediately, companies simply can't afford the high costs of poor service. They must focus on providing quality service every time.

In the example above, if either rep had access to quality data, and had the authority to discuss it with the client, this posting would be very different. Sure the rocking horse might not have come on time, or they might have lost that specific sale by canceling it for the customer, but the lost profit of one rocking horse will pale compared to the loss of an untold number of potential customers and sales due to this posting.

Communication Channels

Customers want service in the way that's most convenient for them, from anywhere at any time. They should be able to log customer service issues a number of ways – by e-mail, Web form or phone. Your customer service solution needs to support the ways your customer wants to talk to you.

Customer Self Service

Self-service capabilities have traditionally been online. Customers can look up frequent issues, log incidents or check on the status of a ticket on the Web. However, sometimes customers don't have online access while others still prefer to just pick up the phone.

Voice self-service technology—which merges the phone with service desk solutions—transforms self-service by allowing customers to use the phone when they want and need to do so. Voice self-service makes information accessible over the telephone, for live personal communication, as well as automatic self-service. This is becoming increasingly important as our customers are more and more tied to their mobile phones.

To the Right Agent, Faster

Customers are also frustrated by being bounced around from person to person until they reach the one who can best handle their issue. With better identification of call

types, customers are routed more quickly and directly to the appropriate agent. That results in faster resolutions with customers, and hence, happier customers.

Customer Opt-Out Options

When customers need assistance, many would prefer to log the incident and get back to work, instead of waiting on hold listening to music or announcements. Voice self-service allows customer service teams to give customers more options for how they want to report incidents. They can either choose to wait for an agent, or they can leave a message and receive a prioritized call back. This increases customer satisfaction and ensures that customers are still served in the order in which they called.

Reducing Operational Costs

As customers become savvier, they expect customer service to keep pace with their expectations. At the same time, contact centers usually have the same budget (or less) as last year to cover people and technology.

Staffing Costs

People are your greatest budgetary item, and agent training and productivity are two of the biggest financial challenges contact center managers face. While salary and benefits are fixed expenses, there are many areas in the contact center where you can reduce other staffing costs.

One of the keys is managing the time needed to route a call, gather customer information, and provide specialized solutions. Contact centers often lose valuable time and money without time-saving technology.

Such technologies ensure calls are...

- (a) Routed to the right place
- (b) Agents have customer information in front of them
- (c) The agent is trained to help with that customer's issue

By ensuring those three steps, agents are fully equipped to serve customers expeditiously, lowering call resolution times and staffing costs.

Operational Costs Pains at a Glance

- Too much time wasted with calls that are routed incorrectly.
- Expensive toll-free time used collecting information that should be gathered by an automated application.
- Too many agents that are generalists and have to be trained on every topic.
- Lack of performance metrics making it impossible to judge how well a contact center is performing.
- Contact centers have historically been available only to Fortune 1000 companies with large budgets and infrastructures.

Telephony Costs

Telephony costs are another major expense companies need to control. Every minute a customer talks on your toll-free numbers costs you money. Calls need to be routed faster, and they need to go to the right agent the first time. You need sophisticated queuing and routing rules that can be configured to meet your dynamic business climate.

IT Infrastructure Costs

The infrastructure costs of telephony are not insignificant, either. Traditional systems cannot easily integrate with software applications. Trunk capacity limits the number and type of interactions a system can handle. Expansion is costly, and leaving trunks unused is wasteful. Solutions today should include the convergence of voice and data onto the IP network, which will greatly simplify infrastructure management and reduce your costs.

Configuring, managing and monitoring all of your incoming voice, e-mail, and web interactions requires measuring the performance of not only your employees but also the systems that support them. You need a solution that simplifies gathering performance metrics; creating routing rules; managing and changing users, workflows and backups; as well as creating and sending meaningful reports that enable you to make business and operational decisions.

Implementation Costs

In the past, sophisticated contact center solutions have been too expensive, risky and time-consuming for companies outside of the *Fortune* 1000. In fact, in a recent Dataquest survey, 25 percent of the respondents reported integration costs as their highest concern when thinking about adding a contact center. A solution should leverage your existing investment, using the hardware and software that you already own, use and support. And the implementation and integration should be complete in days, not weeks or months.

Driving Business Growth

Many companies are recognizing the revenue-generating possibilities of their customer service departments. Customers with satisfactory experiences often buy more, and refer their friends. Companies today have two objectives: service the needs of their customers and turn their relationships into up-sell and cross-sell opportunities.

As contact centers play an increasingly critical role in customer transactions, many businesses are seeking tools and applications to generate new revenue during interactions with established customers.

Data at Agent Fingertips

Agents need to have customer information at their fingertips to help them identify the products and services that each individual customer might want and need. That's where it's valuable to integrate with customer relationship management databases that provide details about the customer's current products and services, allowing agents to recommend other solutions.

Informative Hold Messages

Wait times are another opportunity to let customers know about new offers. That can generate revenue automatically, without an agent's assistance.

Up-sell and Cross-Sell Activities

By giving the customer service rep the ability to sell additional products and services, no money will be left on the table and your customer service center can quickly turn from a cost center to a profit center.

Reporting and Analysis

The contact center must be able to analyze and adapt to the ever-changing service landscape. A need for in-depth reporting, and the ability to drill down into the details of your service center data, are key items for monitoring change.

How Does Customer Service Compare to Disparate Helpdesk and Sales Tools?

Customer Service departments and sales departments are rarely managed by the same executive staff. This has most often led to silo implementations of sales force automation tools and helpdesk case management solutions. While both systems are usually well suited for their own requirements, such implementations lack the ability to see the big picture, from the customer's perspective.

Think about the most likely time a customer will contact you. It's immediately after a sale, and the customer is excited about using their new product. In a typical implementation, where the SFA and Customer Service tools are separated, the customer's initial call to support will be met with confusion, or worse – denial, because the systems aren't even aware that the person calling is now a customer. That's not the way to make a first impression.

Customer Service is really part of a larger; three piece solution. This should include Marketing, Sales and Service. Only by combining all three aspects of your

New Business Growth Pains at a Glance

- More companies are looking to contact centers to generate new revenue.
- Agents need customer information to identify selling opportunities.
- Companies need ways to offer new products and services while customers are in a queue.

relationship with your customer can you match their expectations to their purchase to their support.

Customer Service Implementation

Do I Need a Customer Service System?

This is a very important, and often under investigated question. It is a very poor investment to spend money on technology that won't improve your ability to enhance your customer's experience. If you can't answer yes to at least one of the following questions, your business probably isn't well suited for a customer service system:

- Do I have a relationship with my customers? Will they contact me again in the future?
- Do I need to understand how my products meet my customer's needs?
- Am I asked to report on the services my team provides?
- Does my service team have room for improvement?

If you find that you answered yes to some or all of the above questions, you will find benefit to having a customer service solution.

Whether you are implementing customer service solutions for the first time, or if you already have a customer service solution, and are considering a new one, the most critical success factor will be in defining what improvements you want to see, ensuring these are measurable improvements, and communicating these needs to your prospective vendors. Good vendors will work with you to understand whether their products will allow you to meet these goals, to help you make the best choice in solutions for your specific needs.

Steps to Implementing a Successful Customer Service System

Create a Plan

1. Plan the requirements for the Customer Service system
2. Plan the timeline for the project
3. Assemble the team assigned to choose and manage the solution

Create Realistic Goals

1. How many cases can a technical analyst handle today? How many would you like them to handle with a Customer Service system?
2. How long does it take to analyze your service metrics without a Customer Service system? How long would you like it to take with a Customer Service system?
3. What percentage of your customers renews maintenance contracts each year? What percentage would you expect with a new Customer Service system?

4. What is your current first call resolution rate? How much would you expect this to improve?
5. How many calls are abandoned waiting for agents today? How much to you expect to reduce this by?
6. What redundant tasks do your agents perform today? How many of these could be offloaded to self service via phone or web?

Evaluate and Try Available Options

1. Understand the level of product sophistication required for your organization
2. Ask for several product demonstrations from vendors, both from a business user's view and from a technical, administrative perspective
3. Consider performing a paid proof of concept with the selected vendor to see if they can meet your challenges in your own environment, prior to committing to purchase.

Decide and Implement

1. Decide on a solution and embrace it
2. Crawl, walk, run. Don't attempt to incorporate all aspects of your customer service operation on the first day. Tackle your biggest pain points first, such as your inbound calling to tier 1.
3. Add web integration, self service options and knowledge management in a phased approach. This will allow your staff time to adapt to the changes.
4. Train business users and request feedback. Listen to that feedback! This requires an understanding up front that your implementation won't be perfect, and you should embrace making changes to improve it as the implementation progresses. Don't see this as a failure, but rather a crucial factor of the implementation process.
5. Provide feedback to all parties involved. Keep them in the loop on what is working, what is being changed, and how their jobs will need to adapt going forward. People have much less fear of what they understand than the unknown.
6. Establish organizational best practices from knowledge gained

Assess Results

1. Analyze the measurable goals you set before the project started.
2. Examine the change in customer service open case volumes
3. Inspect Customer Service solution usage within your team
4. Understand the amount of time now required by staff to support both customer service and sales efforts.
5. Assess the results of the Customer Service implementation

Ten Questions to Ask When Evaluating Customer Service Systems

The questions below will help you evaluate what solutions best meet your business needs. These are meant to help you organize your thoughts before you evaluate and choose the Customer Service suite that is right for you.

1. How do you currently manage your incoming service requests?
2. What communication channels do you currently support (phone, email, web, etc.)?
3. Does your sales team use a CRM system?

What are Your Goals?

4. Which areas of your support and sales processes could be more efficient?
5. Who in your organization will use the Customer Service system?
6. What is the projected timeline for deciding on a solution?
7. What are some of the short-term goals to be achieved with customer service technology?
8. What are some of the long-term goals to be achieved with customer service technology?

How Do You Currently Manage Your Customer Service Needs?

9. How do you track customer issues today? How will you transition this to a new system?
10. How do customers contact you today? Web? Phone? Email?

Upon answering these questions, you should have a better understanding of what you should be looking for in a Customer Service system.

What to Expect During the Customer Service Sales Process

Choosing a Customer Service solution should be straightforward and based on continuous feedback between vendor and client. The following sample steps will help you know what to expect during the evaluation process.

Step 1(Self- Evaluation)

- Answer Customer Service evaluation questions
- Determine implementation goals
- Set a project leader

Step 2 (Vendor Evaluation)

- Choose solutions to evaluate
- Receive high-level business demonstration of each
- Narrow choices
- Re-evaluate goals based on presentations

Step 3 (Technical Demo)

- Receive technical demonstration
- Ask final vendor questions

Step 4 (Trial)

- Sign up for software trial
- Set up Customer Service solution

Step 5 (Decision)

- Evaluate the solution based on your trial run
- If satisfied, purchase solution

Step 6 (Implementation)

- Work with vendor to install and configure system.

Step 7 (Training)

- Outline training objectives
- Receive training for specific business scenarios
- Have full team begin using the solution

Step 8 (Feedback)

- Provide feedback to vendor based on experience
- Offer suggestions for improvements
- Set up open communication for continuing dialogue

Functionality Checklist

There are many strong Customer Service solutions available, and choosing the one that best meets your business needs can be difficult. The following matrix provides a straightforward way to compare different products in terms of functionality. We have checked off the features available in GoldMine Customer Service and have left space for you to examine other solutions as well.

Description	GoldMine Customer Service	Solution 2	Solution 3
Account Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Contact Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Opportunity / Pipeline Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Product Catalog	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Quoting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Lead Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Customer Case Tracking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Service Level Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Skills based case routing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
CTI / Screen pops	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Voicemail routing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Knowledge Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Up sell / Cross sell support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Activity Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Email Response Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Phone Self Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Web Self Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Customer Relationship Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Outlook Integration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Real Time Dashboards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Historical Reporting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Automated Process Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

Description	GoldMine Customer Service	Solution 2	Solution 3
Answers calls after hours	☑		
Revenue Management	☑		
Email campaign management	☑		
Agent telephony campaign management	+		
Automated voice dialing campaign management	+		

- ☑ Standard Features
- ⊕ Optional Features

Completing the Solution

What other components will need to be licensed to implement your Customer Service Solution?

The following aspects will be required to implement a complete customer service solution. Some you may already have in place, others may need to be purchased and deployed:

- Server Hardware / OS
- Database to store CRM data
- Web Server to provide web self service
- Telephone lines
- Email Server
- Local Area Network
- PC workstations for agents
- Phones and / or Headsets for agents

FrontRange Customer Service includes full telephony. Your FrontRange representative can provide a buyers guide for the Voice telephony component that details specific requirements to integrate with your current phone system.

About FrontRange Solutions

FrontRange Solutions develops award-winning software and solutions used by more than 130,000 companies and over 1.2 million users worldwide to manage a wide variety of business relationships and provide exceptional service. FrontRange product families, designed specifically for small-to-medium-enterprise (SME) and distributed enterprise organizations include: GoldMine® for business relationship management, team-based contact management and sales force automation solutions; IT Service Management with HEAT® and ITIL® standards-based modules for complete service management; Communication Management including IP Contact Center for reduced telephony costs and increased agent productivity, streamlined customer service and communications; and Infrastructure Management, which provides the ability to optimize the full lifecycle of a company's assets. Customers representing 44 percent of the Fortune 100 and 76percent of the FTSE 100, include Coca-Cola, Shell Oil, Prudential Securities, Électricité de France, Mack Trucks, Campbell Soup, Avaya, Bechtel Corp, Bank of America, and Turner News Network.

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