

Elevating Customer Service in 2023: Leveraging AI & Other Tech Tools



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Let's cut to the chase. You need to up your customer service game, and you need to do it yesterday. You're either looking for ideas for the future or taking inspiration from what has already come. Luckily for you, some ideas stand the test of time, most of which you might not even have thought of.

It's no secret that the past couple of years have dramatically changed the customer service landscape. According to Pew Research Center, [59% of U.S. workers](#) currently work from home most or all of the time. This kind of disruption to the business-as-usual way of conducting customer service is unprecedented. You can't afford to sit on your laurels and do the same old thing, especially if you've just started your business.

That's where technology comes in. The integration of AI into customer service is not just a trend but a transformative force, reshaping interactions and efficiencies.

AI: The Backbone of Future Customer Service Strategies

A strong customer service strategy should include a way to serve customers' need for round-the-clock support. This bar is tough to clear for any business, let alone one just starting out. We can't expect people to be on staff 24/7.

Luckily, AI doesn't have to sleep. Customer service bots or chatbots can help provide round-the-clock support with automated replies aimed at assisting customers with their questions. Robots are not and likely never will be a replacement for a trained and caring customer service team, but they can be a valuable tool for your business.

As the technology continues to improve, even your basic AI can hold a serviceable conversation and get to the bottom of many common customer issues. Allowing customers to use AI tools to self-help also allows you to scale your company more efficiently.

And artificial intelligence in customer service is more than just chatbots. Think of AI's role in synthesizing data across customer interactions to tailor services and predict needs. AI-driven analytics, predictive customer behavior models, and natural language processing enhance understanding and interaction.

When you offload those responsibilities to bots, you can dive deep into your customers' wants and needs and the best way to cater to them. Your customer satisfaction rates go up, and the number of tasks your employees have to handle goes down. Investing in AI's diverse capabilities gives you a nuanced competitive edge.

Investing in AI will give you a competitive edge. Despite the benefits, only about [15%](#) of companies use it for customer service.

Beyond Voice: Video as the Future of Customer Interactions

There are two things anyone who's worked a customer service job that involves actually being in the same room as a customer can attest to:

1. It is a much more demanding job than most people realize.
2. Deceptively unassuming things, such as maintaining eye contact, can help mitigate some of the stresses of communicating with cranky customers.

How do you take that second point and apply it to today's disruptive, digital customer service space? You leverage updated communication technology and focus on video communication. A real-time video communication system is a strong tool that will set your business's customer service strategy ahead of the competition. Incorporating AI, like real-time language translation and sentiment analysis in video calls, can significantly improve communication effectiveness and customer satisfaction.

Non-video technology still has its place, of course, but don't sit back on old maxims and entrenched habits. Customer service through video conferencing can improve customer relationships by humanizing your service team and fostering a connection between your customer and your business. Opening the door for friendly, persistent eye contact is perfect for creating an environment conducive to successful customer service.

Bonus: Setting up a video conferencing system gives your business the flexibility to hold meetings no matter where your team members are located.

Investment in Customer Service Tech Is Going Up

Your business can have the best customer service agents in the game, but customer satisfaction still suffers if you don't give your people the tools to go above and beyond. AI's growing role, from voice recognition systems that streamline call routing to predictive analytics for personalizing customer interactions, underscores the critical nature of tech investment.

What are we talking about here? Well, it can be anything from task management programs to communication programs, even scheduling apps — any AI solution that helps customer service reps do their job more effectively.

[As recently as 2019](#), leaders in the customer service industry committed to tech investments, with deployment increasing to 55%. Of those deployed technologies, 80% were expected to have a positive return on investment. Those are all pre-pandemic numbers, too. Take those and add the changing landscape of work, and the importance of these technologies in wrangling customer service objectives is clear.

Leveraging Technology for Deeper Customer Feedback

It's good to hear from your customers, whether to confirm you're doing something right or, more importantly, to understand where you can improve. Customer service is, obviously, all about the customer, so they will be the best avenue for knowing how your strategy is doing.

That's why any good customer service strategy should include analyzing customer feedback. AI algorithms play a pivotal role in analyzing customer feedback across platforms, identifying trends and issues efficiently. By measuring specific metrics, including Net Promoter Score and Customer Effort Score, you can get critical insights into the success or failure of your customer service strategy.

These tools are some of the most effective ways to react to feedback in a timely manner. They also function as essential training tools for customer service reps

Omnichannel Support Is the New Standard in Customer Experience

Gone are the days when customers interacted with your business through just one avenue. Nowadays, it's all about omnichannel access. This means customers use multiple devices and communication methods to access or contact your business. The

best example is a customer contacting your social media accounts with a complaint or question before being routed to make a call or send an email.

It's not enough to have a single-channel or even a multi-channel support system. The former limits you too much, and the latter can present roadblocks when tracking the customer service journey. Omnichannel support lets your team provide convenient service in the right context for the customer while tracking customer data more effectively.

AI optimizes omnichannel support by intelligently routing customers to the most effective channel based on their history and preferences, ensuring a cohesive experience across touchpoints. This seamless integration of services, powered by AI, significantly enhances customer satisfaction by providing consistent, personalized interactions.

Personalizing Customer Service at Scale

Who doesn't love a personalized experience? Whether through technological advancements such as algorithms or old-fashioned human connections, personalization is increasingly becoming the name of the game for customer satisfaction. The customer service industry is no different.

Personalization in customer service cements a customer's loyalty by allowing them to connect with your business on a level deeper than just the transactional. Customers expect businesses to understand them and their needs, which you can achieve through customer journey tracking.

AI-driven personalization, utilizing machine learning to adapt interactions based on individual customer data, takes service to new heights of relevance and engagement. There are powerful tools available that can incorporate your customer's data into one place, allowing for a holistic view into what makes them tick. By combining data that would ordinarily be separated into silos, you can view a customer's journey fully and overhaul your customer service strategy to fit.

This approach not only solidifies customer loyalty but also elevates the entire service experience, because personalization isn't just for customers. Customer service training can also benefit from personalization. Get rid of those old mantras and tropes about one-size-fits-all training in customer service. Employees trained at a personalized pace are more likely to provide the kind of stellar customer service your organization needs to stand out.

It's common sense. Reps who need some time to master your product, service, or technology can take the time they need to truly become subject matter experts, and those that are savvier can build on those skills further. It's a win-win!

Personalized training does require some investment. You'll need to measure performance, receive feedback, and hold regular surveys before, during, and after training. The good news is that this shows employees that you care about their success and builds a foundation of trust between new employees and your business.

The Era of AI-Enabled Remote Customer Service Agents

COVID-19 and the subsequent push to remote work disrupted the traditional working environment. There's no sign that things will go back to those old ways, and most people are in no hurry to return to the office. [According to a Gartner survey](#), 70% of customer service employees say they'd rather continue working from home. As sad as it is, you'll have to say goodbye to those super exciting water cooler conversations.

Don't get too bent out of shape, though. Remote work provides plenty of opportunities. First and foremost, your business will see savings from reducing office space. You can take that money and invest it back into your business (and new tech for your customer service strategy in particular).

AI tools that support remote agents, from virtual assistants to performance optimization analytics, enable a high-quality customer service operation from anywhere. This shift to remote work, bolstered by AI, saves costs and promotes a flexible, efficient working environment for customer service teams.

You can't ignore the positive effects on your employees' morale. With so many customer service reps ready to continue working from home, it's clear that this is an arrangement they like. Fielding customer questions and complaints from the comfort of home allows reps to tackle customer issues in a relaxed environment, decreasing some of the stress. Less stress equals happier customer service reps equals more satisfied customers.

Now is the perfect time to invest in remote work technology that will help customer service reps. On some levels, you won't even have to do much lifting. The aforementioned omnichannel support tech you should be investing in already tackles channels that can be easily used outside of an office setting, such as social media, live chat, and email. For phone-related channels, consider cloud-based solutions, like business phone services, to ensure your customers have a way to reach you.

Remember: All This Should Be to Serve Your Customers

Integrating AI and other tech tools into your customer service strategy is about more than adopting new technologies; it's about fundamentally enhancing the way you interact with and serve your customers, ensuring your business stays ahead in a rapidly evolving landscape.

Consider these tools when crafting your customer service strategy, but as always, make your decisions based on what your business and customer support reps need. Learn from these trends, but don't get bogged down by the details. Above all else, pay attention to your customers.

Getting feedback that customers feel ignored? Consider upping your omnichannel game so you have all your bases covered. Reps showing low productivity or morale? Consider ways you can use tech to facilitate a better remote working environment. Training not going the way you planned? Bring in some personalization.

The landscape of customer service is evolving rapidly, driven by technological advancements and changing consumer expectations. Embracing these trends is not just about keeping up; it's about staying ahead and differentiating your business in a competitive market.

The core of customer service remains unchanged — understanding and meeting your customers' needs. By integrating these tech trends into your strategy, you can enhance your customer service, foster stronger relationships with your clients, and ultimately drive your business's success in this digital age.