

Joannah Holmes

URBN

Innovating to Ensure Customer and Agent Satisfaction



OVERVIEW

- Joannah Holmes
- URBN Director of Contact Centers
- Contact Center Director
- Urban Outfitters

Having journeyed from front-line customer service agent to director within the URBN organization, Johanna has a keen understanding of URBN customers and their expectations. In addition to running day-to-day operations, she helps guide customer service strategy for Anthropologie & Co, Urban Outfitters, and Free People.

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Our CX Spotlight series illuminates the movers and shakers in the CX world who just happen to be [24]7.ai™ customers. Each CX Spotlight is told in the champion's own words. Here're Joannah's.

Most Important Trait of a Successful CX Leader?

"It's impossible for me to pick just one—sorry! I'd say first is the ability to understand, manage, and embrace change. Retail customers are constantly pushing technology forward and we have to flex with them—and stay a step ahead. Second, a genuine appreciation that customer service is not only for external customers but also for internal customers—our employees. We have to ensure we are finding opportunities to better our employees' experience as well as our customers'. For example, we use employee surveys for valuable insights and to answer key questions like: Does our team love what they are doing? Do they come to work ready to engage with customers? Do they feel valued for the great service they provide?"

What Do Your Customers Think of the Job You're Doing?

"We launched Voice of the Customer (VoC) surveys a few years ago so we could get a true gauge of what our customers think about their interactions with our contact center agents. It can be a bit overwhelming to think what you perceive as "great service" might not be what your customers perceive as "great service," but we were prepared for whatever the findings revealed. Thankfully, we learned our customers are happy overall with how we interact with them. But we didn't stop there. Instead we dove into what was driving the less-than-stellar interactions and pushed for improvement. We've really embraced customer self-service. We believe any engagement with customers is an opportunity to build brand loyalty, but we also understand the reality that our customers don't always want, or have the time, to talk to us!"

Your No. 1 Daily Challenge?

"Keeping our workforce engaged. Answering customer inquiries and meeting customers in the middle of their frustration can be mentally and emotionally draining. How do we keep our tenured agents from feeling the burnout? How do we keep our new agents from jumping ship at the first sign of rocky seas?"

What Keeps You Going?

"My favorite thing about working with Urban Outfitters is the freedom to innovate! The spirit that brought this company to life in 1970 on the first floor of a small row home in Philadelphia is the same spirit that keeps pushing us forward today. I love having the license to innovate and being part of the growth within Anthropologie & Co, Urban Outfitters, and Free People. I love

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thinking like a customer and challenging our internal teams to do the same—though that is just step one! Step two is understanding how we use new technology and how we optimize existing technology to create the MOST seamless, MOST efficient, MOST intuitive ways to service our customers. So, spoken as a true perfectionist, what I don't love is when I fall short of that."

Your Biggest Accomplishment?

"Our biggest accomplishment over the last few years was partnering with a vendor to customize and develop a one-stop-shop platform for our agents. Big improvement over a collection of programs that agents used to respond to one customer service request. We've also grown from offering only voice and email to offering voice, email, social, chat, text, and proactive chat. When I think back on what our contact center looked like in 2009 compared to today, it's unbelievable how far we've come. Not only in size—we were a bit "mom n' pop" back then—but in capability. And our customers are thrilled to engage with us how THEY prefer, not by what we are limited to."

Your Response to Changing Conditions?

"The pandemic impacted us, along with the rest of the world, with little warning. Within two weeks, we went from a fully functioning, in-house workforce to a fully functioning, work-from-home workforce. Our biggest learn? We needed to diversify the epicenter of our workforce for greater resilience in the service of responding to our customers' needs. We very quickly started exploring the benefits of trusting a reputable third-party's agents with our customer interactions. We made that decision and haven't looked back. We continue to look for ways to utilize our third-party workforce to improve our customers' experience."

What Trends Are You Keeping on Eye On?

"Customer expectations are at an all-time high. They are looking for faster and higher quality interactions. That has led us to reimagine our workforce and contact channels. With that said, our customers have really surprised us with their resiliency! Going into our second holiday season with strained supply chains and COVID impacts, we were prepared for a very frustrated and weary shopper. Instead, our customers showed sincere understanding and patience when we ran into issues outside of our control. While the pandemic has certainly driven cultural divides, it is impacting us all equally—customer and retailer—and on that we can agree."

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[24]7.ai is redefining how artificial intelligence, human insight, and deep vertical expertise can produce personalized, satisfying customer experiences across all channels. Our advanced conversational AI platform predicts consumer intent and creates frictionless interactions that help the world's largest and most recognizable brands to strengthen customer relationships and increase brand loyalty. With more than two decades of contact center operations expertise, [24]7.ai empowers companies to deliver natural, consistent conversations that increase customer satisfaction while lowering costs.

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