



Immediate and personalised: the new customer norm

Utility eBook
October 2017

INTRODUCTION

WEATHER THE
STORM

PLEASE HOLD

TECH SAVVY
CUSTOMERS

KEY DIFFERENTIATOR

ABOUT
NATTERBOX

Introduction



In today's society, consumers have become accustomed to the instant gratification afforded to us by technology. Customers expect you to know who they are when they call in, and yet, the utilities sector continually ranks near the bottom of surveys ranking customer service, by industry (KPMG International).

In a market where switching provider is made extremely simple with price comparison sites, customers want to feel in control of their bill and overall utility service, typically choosing the least expensive operator. An over saturated market, with over 30 suppliers and new entrants attempting to gain market share, we look at some challenges within the utility sector, but also the opportunity to use customer service as a key differentiator.

Most consumers are inherently loyal; therefore, a positive experience is essential to keeping ratepayers from defecting to the competition.

Utilities that want to retain customers, must embrace new 21st century tools and business models if they want to deliver on new expectations.

Weather the storm



There are elements out of a utility company's control; poor weather, volatility of energy costs and other natural challenges to service reliability. You can however, control positive customer experiences.

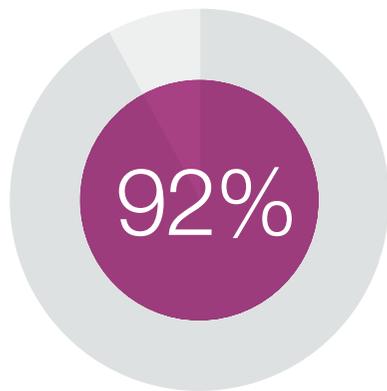
A Harvard Business Review Study showed that 43% of utility customers who have had a negative experience are still members a year later, compared to 74% of those who have had a positive experience.

Understanding pain points and providing a better customer service can only be achieved by talking to customers to understand their full requirements and what they need.

When organisations get it right first time, satisfaction levels increase.

Customer priorities are changing and their expectations continue to grow. For any organisation wanting to deliver the ultimate customer experience, companies need to find new ways to anticipate demand and should focus on delivering a truly uniform experience in an omni-channel environment.

Your call is important



of all customer interactions still happen over the phone.

A utility customer with an urgent problem expects a prompt response. If they smell a gas leak or water pressure is very low, then they want a fast resolution. Those problems often require an interaction with a live customer service agent who needs to express sympathy while clearly detailing the solution.

Taking customers for granted can lead to a poor customer experience.

Customers will be met with longer than average hold times, unresolved calls, and other metrics that can cause customers to leave the utility, and with all the social media options available, they'll certainly relay their negative experience to others.

Likewise, customer service agents who spend all day talking to unhappy customers, are working inefficiently and this can lead to hiring additional staff or further risk of alienating customers. Despite us all anticipating a bad customer experience when calling in to resolve a problem, we all still pick up the phone, proving that despite the ease of both email and live chat, voice is not dead.

Tech savvy customers



In an Accenture study, they describe how “utility customer engagement efforts need to recognise that they are serving a new generation of tech-savvy customers, who amongst other things expect a smarter experience with a personalised service”.

- Are your engineers purely carrying out repairs or are they taking the face to face opportunity to advise on home energy management and cross-sell/upsell?
- Are you enabling your customers to self-service, providing automated services to resolve pain points and motivate customers to take action?
- Do you know who your customers are when they call in, without them having to follow a long process of keying in numbers and then attempting to articulate their postcode?

Expectations are high, we have become accustomed to same day delivery and using the internet to leverage a fast response.

But can this be applied to the utility sector, to raise satisfaction levels and truly delight our customers?

The key differentiator



Utility companies have a social and public welfare obligation to maintain a secure, reliable and affordable supply to customers. Increasing customer expectations and high levels of public scrutiny and debate, requires utilities to be seen to be efficient and to act with integrity.

The UK's energy supply is expected to be mostly made up of gas, nuclear and wind by 2030. Renewable energy will increase its share and new sources such as fracking will come into play. The energy mix is however, constantly changing due to improving economics and the development of new and improved technologies.

We referred to the omni-channel earlier, a mix of all communication channels enabling you to service customers in the most efficient way. Voice is part of that omni-channel. It may come as a surprise that old school telephony is still considered vital (even over social media) because of the personal experience it delivers. Especially in situations where telephony complements other communication channels, such as your own CRM system. The website may be an organisation's shop window, email a transactional communications channel – but **when it comes to trust, relationship building and delivering a high-quality communication experience, many organisations still need to talk.**

Imagine how impressed your customers would be with the relevant agent knowing exactly who the customer is and what they're calling in about, providing the right information, for the right person at the right time. This can happen in a matter of days with CRM & telephony integration.

About Natterbox

Natterbox is a global, cloud-based, telecommunications company based in Croydon, UK. Founded in 2010, Natterbox is the world's first global business phone system with contact centre, 100% embedded and managed entirely within Salesforce. Our technology can help you make and receive calls, retrieve records and automatically log calls within the relevant object in Salesforce.

We invite you to engage with us to learn more about how we can connect your global offices, increase productivity and personalise your telephony integration.

Once connected, the Natterbox Advanced Voice Services platform optimises and automates your business to intelligently route calls, increasing productivity and efficiency.

Natterbox is dedicated to enhancing the value of its customers businesses, through intelligent integration of future proof telephony, personalisation and services.



References

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/8-challenges-uk-energy-sector-must-address-shane-keaney/>
http://www.investopedia.com/terms/u/utilities_sector.asp
<http://www.energycentral.com/c/cc/using-innovation-save-bad-customer-care-utilities>
<http://www.v12data.com/blog/how-utilities-can-improve-customer-experience-and-increase-revenue/>
<https://www.mycustomer.com/service/channels/service-in-the-energy-sector-why-is-it-so-bad-and-what-can-be-done>
<http://utilityweek.co.uk/news/utilities-sector-ranks-worst-for-customer-service/1158832#.Wd9y32hSyUk>