



Brief: Focus On Three New Service Experiences To Thrive In The Age Of The Digital Customer

Social, Proactive, And Embedded Customer Service Builds Intimacy With The New Breed Of Consumers

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WHY READ THIS BRIEF

A new generation of customers doesn't seem to remember details of service processes. They have begun to prefer self-service versus speaking with contact center agents and now look to companies to act as the coordinator of their customer service experiences. The modern customer prefers to learn where to find information, rather than actually memorizing it. This report details why these digital-focused customers think and behave differently than preceding generations and what AD&D pros should look for in customer service technologies to deliver outstanding customer experiences to this new breed of customer.

A NEW BREED OF CUSTOMER DEMANDS NEW TYPES OF SERVICE INTERACTIONS

Every generation views the generations that follow it as somewhat alien — it is simply the human condition. But when it comes to communication preferences and styles, the most recent generations do actually have distinct tastes (see Figure 1). From their appreciation for the ephemerality of Snapchat to their near antipathy to using the phone to their preference for self-service, the generations under 35 years old present distinct challenges to contact center decision-makers, including a misalignment between the channels provided to customers and those customers use in their personal lives.

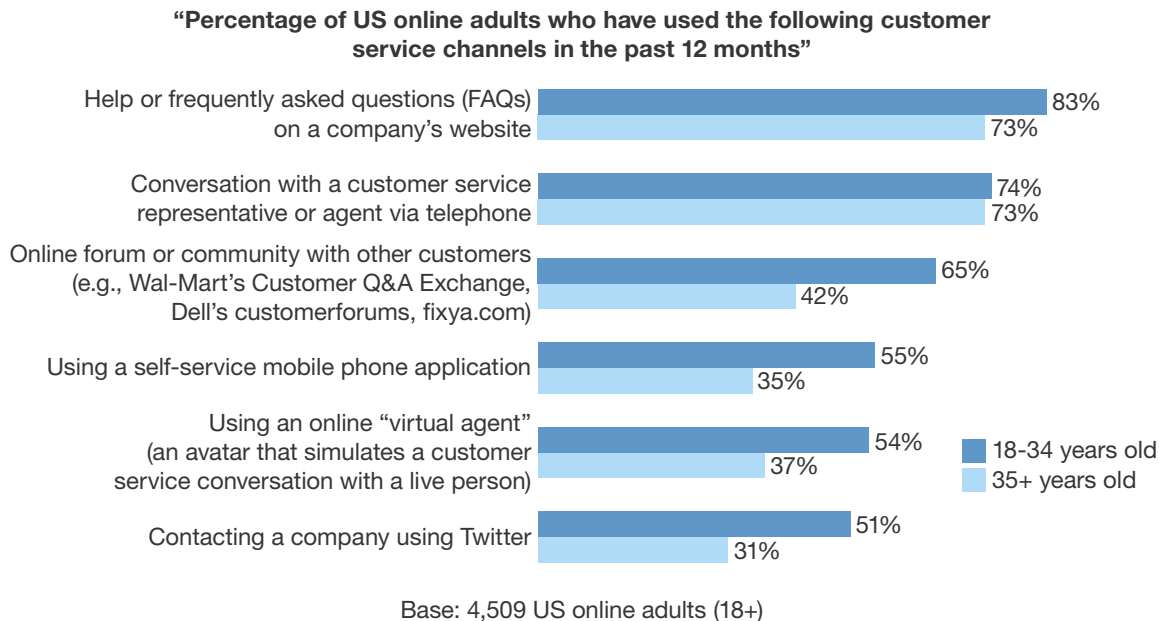
Additionally, customers have developed a different relationship to information than they had just a decade or so ago. “People really are not just retaining information in the same way they used to. As long as there is a pointer to where the information sits, they don't feel the need to retain it,” according to Lynn Ridenour, senior director of solutions marketing, enterprise at Nuance. “They say, ‘I won't remember because my phone will remember for me.’” This new focus on repeatedly finding information rather than learning it can be attributed to:

- **Neuroplasticity.** Neuroplasticity describes the capacity of neurons and neural networks in the brain to change their connections and behavior in response to new information, sensory stimulation, or damage.¹ However, according to neurologists from Harvard Medical School, “Plastic changes may not necessarily represent a behavioral gain. Plasticity is the mechanism for development and learning, as much as a cause of pathology.”² Repeated actions create more connections between neurons, which strengthens the pathways, while disuse weakens those pathways.
- **The search engine effect.** The now-ubiquitous search engine spread from web browsers on desktop computers to mobile phones to entertainment devices, such as televisions, and to smart home devices, such as Amazon Echo. This omnipresence of rapid and global search creates the conditions required for neuroplastic changes and creates a public less inclined — and possibly less able — to retain large chunks of information.³



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Figure 1 Modern Customer Service On The Rise

Source: Forrester's North American Consumer Technographics® Customer Life Cycle Survey 2, 2014

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DON'T MAKE CUSTOMERS GO IT ALONE — GUIDE THEIR SERVICE EXPERIENCES

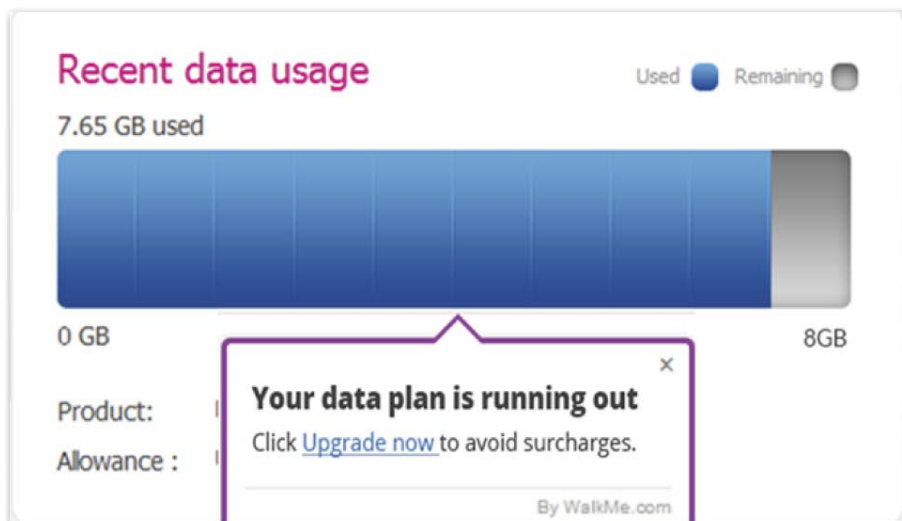
Forrester believes contact center pros should react to the neurological and demographics changes in their agent pools by deploying technology that provides agents more direct guidance.⁴ Agents, however, should not have all the fun; customers unwilling to remember complex processes would also benefit from guided customer service experiences. Customers may not remember information or processes for customer support, but they expect companies to remember everything about them and their experiences. AD&D pros should look to embed context-sensitive guidance into:

- Customer self-service.** In 2014, more US online consumers used web self-service than any other interaction channel for customer service. AD&D pros can help ensure those self-service experiences lead to a positive outcome by creating guided paths for common service requests. For example, web hosting provider Endurance International Group used guided service technology from WalkMe to help its customers transfer their domains from other providers. The WalkMe balloons indicate where a customer should click, what fields the customer must complete, and what data the customer must provide (see Figure 2).

“People are now so used to Google to search for what they need, when they come to our site they search our knowledge base and videos. They do that before they would use the phone to contact us,” according to Swapnil Gadkari, director, operations initiatives, at Endurance.

- **Agent-assisted service.** Today, agents must direct customers through multistep processes in a time-consuming but low-value-add way. AD&D pros can reduce both customer and agent frustration by providing agents automated walkthroughs such as the WalkMe technology mentioned above. A chat agent could simply send the customer a link that initiates the self-service walkthrough and then either end the chat or monitor the customer's progress while also serving other customers.
- **Virtual agent-assisted service.** Companies such as Nuance have developed more conversational interfaces for virtual agents that can adapt to the user's context. For example, if a customer tells a virtual agent to "Pay my cable bill next Tuesday," the virtual agent knows that it needs to ask the customer how much to pay and from where it should withdraw the funds. However, if the customer simply says, "Pay a bill," the virtual agent could walk the customer through the entire process.

Figure 2 WalkMe's Balloon Guide Draws The User To A Specific Action



Source: WalkMe

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AD&D PROS SHOULD FOCUS ON PROACTIVE, SOCIAL, AND EMBEDDED SERVICE

AD&D pros contending with shifting communication channel preferences among customers have focused primarily on adding channels to contact centers that have already matured in work environments, such as email and chat. But Forrester data shows burgeoning usage for essentially every service channel, including web self-service, mobile apps, peer-to-peer support in communities, and virtual agents.⁵ Within each of the three service modalities described above, AD&D pros can deploy numerous new service experiences.

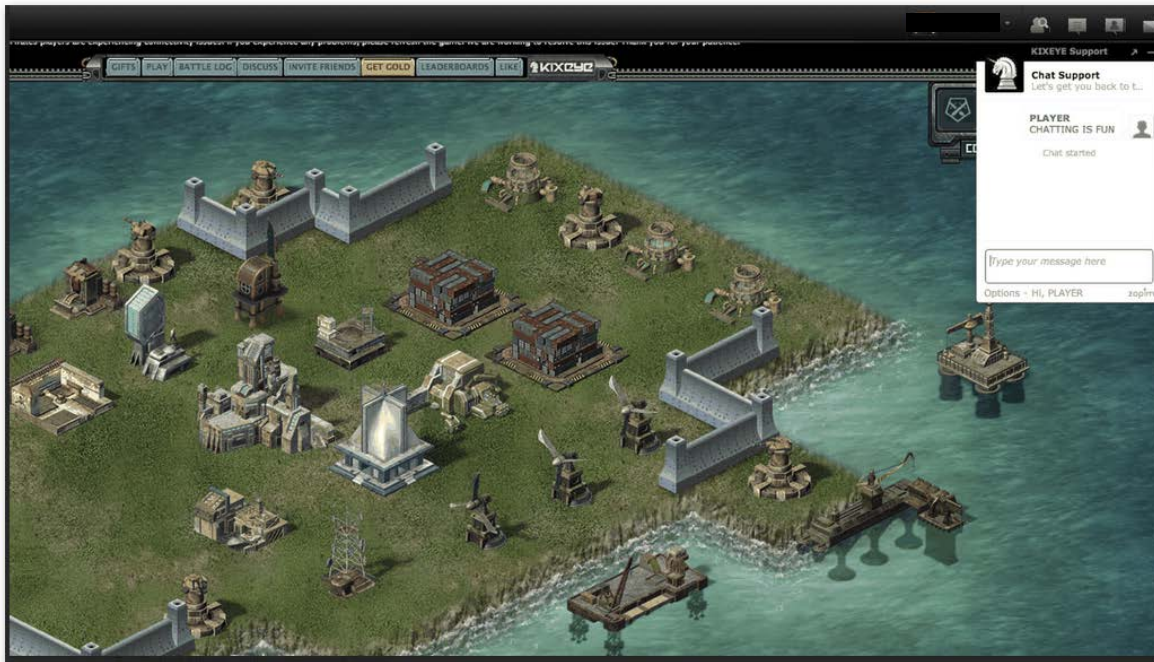
Although younger consumers more strongly demand these new channels, the change in preferences crosses all age groups. Companies must increasingly view all of these customer service technologies as part of a broader business technology agenda, which focuses on technologies designed to win, serve, and retain customers. AD&D pros looking to master the changes the new breed of customers will bring should keep an eye on technologies supporting:

- **Social customer service.** Although consumers have turned to Twitter and Facebook to receive customer support for several years, few companies have brought social support under the purview of the contact center. That has begun to change. Money transfer provider MoneyGram, for example, has its contact centers handle a variety of service requests that come in via Twitter and Facebook using Lithium Social Web. Moreover, the company found that customers of all ages use its social channels with no meaningful differences between the type of issues older and younger patrons use social channels to solve.
- **Proactive notification.** The neurological and behavioral changes described above result in many customers offloading their memory for events such as appointments to online or mobile calendars. When those calendars fail, either through technological fault or user error, companies suffer real financial consequences. Missed appointments for MRIs, for example, cause extremely expensive equipment to go unused and well-paid hospital staff to sit idle. Proactive notifications, in the form of calls, texts, or app notifications, act as yet another “outsourced brain” for customers.

Furthermore, notifications have uses well beyond appointment reminders. Customers now often also forget to pay bills, especially bills that do not come on a regular cadence. In these cases, the bills go unpaid not because of a lack of cash, but simply because the due date slipped the customer’s mind. A notification with an actionable component — a link to a pay-by-phone system, for example — makes both the customer and the company happy.

- **Embedded service experiences.** Customers have moved toward immersive experiences. When they are in their mobile apps or game environments, they don’t want to jump out of that environment to receive support. Companies frankly don’t want that either as customers forced to exit an experience may end up jumping to a competitor. Accordingly, companies have begun to look at ways to make service an integral part of the immersive experience. Game developer Kixeye, for example, worked with customer service technology provider Zendesk to embed a customer service chat function directly into its gameplay environment (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Chat Support That Keeps The User In The Experience



Source: Kixeye

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RECOMMENDATIONS

CHOOSE PROJECTS THAT IMPROVE SERVICE ACROSS DEMOGRAPHICS

Although you may find it tempting to jump into projects employing sexy new technologies that cater primarily to Millennials and other younger customers, you need to remember that the baby boomers have not disappeared yet. AD&D pros should source technologies that provide tangible benefits to all demographics. To strike that balance, they should:

- **Adopt underlying technologies that support multiple interaction channels.** Younger customers avoid voice calls as much as possible; older customers still turn to the phone first. Guidance technologies add value to voice agent-assisted service, chat service, web self-service, service through mobile apps, and virtual agent interactions. Similarly, you can embed customer service functionality into mobile apps, websites, and games delivered on any Internet connected platforms. These technologies allow you to cover all the bases and spread the benefits across the generations.

- **Build proactivity into all your service models.** While this research discussed the benefits of proactive notification, the modern consumer demands that your company connect the dots of customer experience for them. For example, you can proactively surface context-appropriate content when a customer follows a certain clickstream on your website that indicates a looming customer service issue. Your customers will appreciate the way you understand them as individuals.
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SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Survey Methodology

Forrester's North American Consumer Technographics® Customer Life Cycle Survey 2, 2014 conducted an online survey fielded in August 2014 of 4,546 US individuals ages 18 to 86. For results based on a randomly chosen sample of this size, there is 95% confidence that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 1.5% of what they would be if the entire population of US online adults (defined as those online weekly or more often) had been surveyed. Forrester weighted the data by age, gender, income, broadband adoption, and region to demographically represent the adult US online population. The survey sample size, when weighted, was 4,509. (Note: Weighted sample sizes can be different from the actual number of respondents to account for individuals generally underrepresented in online panels.) Please note that respondents who participate in online surveys generally have more experience with the Internet and feel more comfortable transacting online.

Companies Interviewed For This Brief

Endurance International Group	WalkMe
MoneyGram	Zendesk
Nuance	

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Source: Michael Rugnetta, "Neuroplasticity," Encyclopædia Britannica, February 4, 2014 (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/410552/neuroplasticity>).
- ² Source: Alvaro Pascual-Leone, Amir Amedi, Felipe Fregni, and Lotfi B. Merabet, "The Plastic Human Brain Cortex," Annual Review of Neuroscience, July 2005 (<http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.neuro.27.070203.144216>).

For summaries of similar neurological and psychological research, check out the following books. Source: Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2011 and Maggie Jackson, *Distracted: The Erosion of Attention and the Coming Dark Age*, Prometheus Books, 2009.

- ³ For an exploration of what this confluence of factors means for employees inside the contact center and for the AD&D pros responsible for arming those employees with appropriate technologies, see the “[Brief: Retool For A New Workforce Reality — New Technology For A New Breed Of Agent](#)” Forrester report.
- ⁴ To further explore what types of tools AD&D pros have at their disposal to provide agents with guidance, see the “[Brief: Retool For A New Workforce Reality — New Technology For A New Breed Of Agent](#)” Forrester report.
- ⁵ Between 2012 and 2014, the percentage of US online adults who used self-service for customer service rose from 67% to 76%; those who used an online forum or community rose from 31% to 50%; and those who used a virtual agent rose from 28% to 43%. In 2014, 42% of this population used a self-service mobile phone application. Source: Forrester’s North American Consumer Technographics® Customer Life Cycle Survey 2, 2014.