Connected Customer Service: The New Imperative for Creating Compelling Shopping Experiences
Disruptive Trends Shake Up Customer Experience Imperatives

There is a multitude of emerging and maturing trends that are significantly changing the way consumers research product information, compare prices and buy items. Some of these trends are even changing the way consumers interact with retailers they buy from, or may be thinking of buying from.

Retailers are taking cues from these trends and, in turn, are changing the ways they market to, engage with and sell to consumers as a result.

Retailers of all sizes and across product categories are keeping pace with these disruptions and innovations by connecting retail systems and creating a comprehensive, 360-degree view of customers. This new, enhanced picture of the modern shopper is thus allowing these retailers to examine customer insights, better understand their preferences and personalize engagement across channels.

Does this seem like a daunting task that will take a lot of time and financial investment? Not so, according to Acumen Solutions. During a special webinar, Anita Constantino, Senior Manager of Retail/CPG at Acumen Solutions and Maria Humphrey, Retail Product Marketing Director at Salesforce, uncovered how retailers can seamlessly integrate their systems and customer service experiences.

**TRENDS**

1. **Brand awareness is being replaced by personalized brand engagement.**

2. **Brick-and-mortar and click-and-mortar experiences are converging.**

3. **Customer behaviors have evolved and will continue to change in the years to come.**

4. **The Internet of Things (IoT) is driving new innovations.**

5. **Brands are now leveraging customer insights to make business decisions.**
Salesforce helps retailers address this need with its Shopper Success Platform, which is comprised of four solutions:

**Connected Shoppers**, which helps craft personalized shopper journeys via email, mobile and social tools.

**Connected Stores** extends tools, product data and a 360-degree view of shoppers to associates, so they can create better in-store experiences.

**Connected Service** allows retailers to listen and respond to shoppers at any time — using their preferred channels.

**Agility and Innovation** enables IT departments to craft and adjust shopper and employee apps in a more flexible, agile way.

“The presentation, titled *Enhancing Shopping Experiences with Connected Customer Service*, reaffirmed one truth that all retailers today face: The rules of retail and shopper engagement have changed.

“This is a customer revolution — the shopper is now in control. Retailers need to think and act differently. They need to connect better with shoppers, associates, their internal systems and external ecosystem to address the needs of today’s empowered shopper.”

*Maria Humphrey, Salesforce*
The Business Impact of Connected Customer Service

Providing great customer service across all channels is arguably the most effective way to improve shopper experiences — leading to improved brand perception, increased sales and a boost in overall loyalty.

The most important elements of a great customer experience, according to a Forrester Consulting survey of 2,403 consumers, is a simple purchasing process (47%) and fast response to inquiries and complaints (47%). These seemingly simple touches simultaneously make the shopping experience easy and enjoyable. Most of all, they help retailers ensure their shoppers’ needs are met.

By embracing Connected Customer Service, retailers can deliver personalized service across all channels, including email, social, web, chat, video and phone. What drives this connectivity? A unified CRM and integrated knowledge base that allows retailers to have access to rich customer data and interactions — without having to replace their underlying systems.

Using real-time, bi-directional integration, your CRM becomes an “interactive layer” on top of legacy systems, including your POS,

If consumers have a neutral or negative experience, however, the results can be catastrophic, according to Constantino. She called out the following data points to reaffirm her point:

- 92% of customers form an opinion about a company’s image through their interaction with the contact center.
- 73% of Millennials will leave after one bad experience.
- 80% of companies believe they deliver a good customer experience, while, on average, only 20% of their customers agree.
- And 85% will tell others about that poor experience.

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By embracing Connected Customer Service, retailers can deliver personalized service across all channels, including email, e-Commerce, order management systems and more.

“Imagine a robust service console that fuels rich customer interactions, transforming contact centers into customer-centric organizations,” Constantino noted. “In addition to increasing agent productivity, the Connected Customer Service solution allows agents to offer personalized recommendations based on order history and customer preferences.”
B&H Photo Empowers Agents With 360-Degree Customer Views

Spotlighted in the top 10 of the e-tailing group’s 18th Annual Mystery Shopping Study, B&H Photo has been lauded for its focus on creating great customer experiences across all channels.

But what makes B&H Photo’s customer service so great and why is it so different from other retailers? As the leading, largest retailer of electronics and photography equipment in the U.S., “B&H is known for its attentive, knowledgeable sales team and excellence in customer service for its more than seven million customers,” Constantino explained.

B&H took its customer experience a notch higher by implementing Connected Customer Service, which empowered its agents with a 360-degree view of customers. Agents have access to shoppers’ purchasing histories, order totals, open quotes, returns and open orders — they can see each customer’s latest interaction regardless of the channel.

“This level of customer information at an agent’s fingertips allows them to build customer trust within the first few seconds of the service interaction,” Constantino noted. On the back end, retailers can customize the service console by featuring the most frequently used tools and modules, such as invoices, order confirmations and tracking information. By analyzing agents’ most common business practices and incorporating those into the service console, Constantino explained that retailers can “give agents the right information at the right time.”

Providing a single, agent-optimized console for all channels helps B&H improve agent productivity, enhance customer experience, and capture key metrics that help improve decision-making and future performance.

Learn more about how B&H agents provide amazing service by watching this episode of TouchPoints TV!

“B&H takes customer experience a notch higher by implementing Salesforce Service Cloud.”

Gaurav Hemdev, VP of IS Applications
Turn Service Analytics Into Long-Term Growth Opportunities

Connected Customer Service empowers retailers to offer more efficient, personalized and timely service to consumers shopping across all channels. With each interaction, retailers can also collect valuable data about the service experience, customer behaviors and final purchases, so they can have more relevant conversations.

“Regardless of what channels customers use to engage with brands, they expect the history and context to carry forward in future interactions,” Constantino advised. “That’s a tall order for retailers that have different teams and systems for each channel. With data integration, you can track all interactions and facilitate robust and meaningful conversations that increase loyalty, brand awareness, sales and conversions.”

But it doesn’t end there. Real-time, integrated omnichannel data can be aggregated and published into analytical dashboards, so retailers can create a comprehensive feedback loop, empowering them to improve:

- Customer service efficiencies
- Marketing campaign planning
- Loyalty program effectiveness
- Product development and/or refinement
- Domestic and global expansion strategies

“You can align your performance and customer insights with your corporate strategies and smart growth objectives,” Constantino explained, “so you can increase revenue and profit, and report results back to your shareholders.”

Walk through the Connected Customer Service experience by watching the on-demand version of our webinar:

“Regardless of what channels customers use to engage with brands, they expect the history and context to carry forward in future interactions.”

Anita Constantino, Acumen Solutions
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contact@acumensolutions.com
www.acumensolutions.com

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1.888.603.3626
info@retailtouchpoints.com