



WHAT DOES MULTI-CHANNEL CUSTOMER CONTACT LOOK LIKE ?

**THE WORLD-CLASS
CONTACT CENTRE FORUM,
LONDON, 7TH/8TH OCTOBER 2009**

THIS FORUM, ORGANISED BY THE FOCUS GROUP, FOCUSED ON THE QUESTION “MULTI CHANNEL CONTACT IS CHANGING THE WAY IN WHICH THE CALL CENTRE OPERATES, BUT WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOUR BUSINESS MODEL?” WOW...WHAT? I’M STILL NOT SURE I ENTIRELY UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION, BUT FORTUNATELY MANY OF THE ANSWERS WERE INTERESTING. WE DON’T HAVE ENOUGH SPACE HERE TO DETAIL ALL THE PRESENTATIONS, BUT WE’LL TAKE A WHIRLWIND TOUR THROUGH MY PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS.

Doug Shaw, What goes around limited

Doug spoke passionately and well about the importance of engaged staff in delivering great customer experiences. I liked Doug so much that we’ve included a full article from him elsewhere in this edition. See page 34.



Beverley Rowney, British Gas

Beverley says her role is to improve life for her people and customers. Much like Doug Shaw, her message is very clearly that a great customer experience starts with engaged people...and that, of course, means getting senior buy-in to the idea.

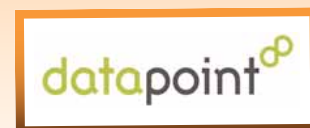
At their call centre they have moved away from what Beverley calls a “metric-driven culture” to focus on behaviours rather than output (in the sense of traditional KPIs). The customer measure is the most important.

Like an increasing number of organisations, British Gas has done some interesting personality work with its people, branded “*Look who’s calling*”. The idea is for their teams to learn about themselves, colleagues and customers, and to understand how this may affect interactions. What is the best way to deal with a customer who is a “feeler” or a “thinker”? This kind of work can be really valuable in helping to engage with customers on an emotional level, even if it achieves nothing but raising staff awareness of the concepts involved.

Beverley listed a number of exciting-sounding innovations, such as speech analytics, using Flip videos for staff engagement, introducing a concierge to make people’s lives easier, encouraging staff to vent frustrations and so on.

Far more revolutionary, I thought, was the promise that they would stop using IVR since 96% of customers said they didn’t like it. I was also pleased to hear her say that their strategy was to do more outbound, proactive, calling. I think this is a

major area of weakness for larger organisations, and a significant opportunity for reducing inbound call volumes as well as customer dissatisfaction.



Martin Hill-Wilson, Datapoint

Martin systematically tore apart every premise behind the forum’s title. There is no “world class”—that’s way too far down the road, and we’re obsessed with our immediate problems (like bums on seats). Planning has gone out of fashion (“*who has a customer service strategy?*”). What does multi-channel mean? More complexity and more cost, unless you plan properly.

The answer is to realise that it’s all about relationships with customers, and that technology is not the answer. “*Humans are much better at compensating for organisational incompetence than auto-*



mated services”, that’s why voice is more popular with customers. As Martin says, “You can’t hear customers screaming online.”

If call centre and online contact are going to be integrated, when was the last time the contact centre team, web team and marketing were all in the same room? Self service is a great idea, but, as per the point made by Prahalad and Ramaswamy in our co-creation article (page 7) “many examples of self-service provide benefit for the wrong party”. Those that do benefit the customer, like ATM, are eagerly adopted.



Tony Watson, Everton FC

Tony spoke brilliantly about his use of social media to boost fan engagement at Everton Football Club. I’d say that, in half an hour or so, he converted a roomful of slightly antagonistic sceptics into advocates for social marketing. Having experimented with a range of social media options, he’s settled on a combination of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn for his strategy.

- Marketing
- Viral campaigns
- Listening to customers

Everton has 18,000 fans on Facebook. The beauty of social media is that communication can be two-way. As well as offering another channel for “broadcasting” news about the club, Facebook allows fans to comment. Instant feedback on this scale has never been possible before.

Tony is anxious to point out that these conversations are happening out there anyway—when he started there was no official Everton fan page but over 400 unofficial groups. Having a social media strategy lets you gain control of the conversation, or at least the ability to

“ You can’t hear customers screaming online ”





respond. A good example of this is hotel reviews on sites such as Tripadvisor—negative reviews can have a big impact on a hotel's popularity, but those savvy enough to respond can go at least some way to offsetting this.

- Traffic generation
- Signposting complex sites
- Listening to customers

Twitter is the most misunderstood social marketing tool. *"But what's it for?"* is the most common question, followed by *"why should I care what you had for breakfast?"*. Tony uses Twitter mainly to generate traffic to specific parts of Everton's large and complex website. He gives an example of posting a picture of a wedding that took place at Goodison Park, which instantly generated fifteen extra wedding bookings.

If you think that's small fry, when Everton reached the FA Cup final last year they staged a screening at Goodison Park which made a small fortune for the club. The screening was marketed only through Twitter and Facebook.

- Commercial links
- Conferencing/events

If you think social media is all about consumers, you couldn't be more wrong. Twitter is probably used more for business networking sites than anything else (except perhaps puffing the egos of celebrities). LinkedIn is the leading networking site, and Tony uses it for the more corporate side of his social marketing strategy.

In terms of direct business development (selling) Tony argues that LinkedIn allows him to be much more targeted, making for less annoyance and higher conversion rates. Two of Everton's corporate sponsors have come direct from LinkedIn.

the benefits of a good CRM system are much wider than sales, although Wolseley did see a £3.6 million increase in sales after the switchover. It also made it easier to track problems from complaint to resolution, to allow customers to track the status of their orders through a portal, and to *"democratise the data"*—making it easy for people to get at.

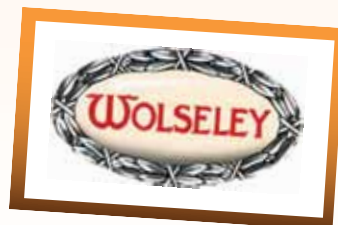


Dave Thomson, Cisco

Dave opened with the assertion, backed by research, that companies don't like having call centres, customers don't like using them, and staff don't like working in them.

So what's the future? A technical solution is virtualisation and increasing use of home agents. Many organisations use virtualisation to manage volumes already, but ultimately this might mean the virtual elimination of the *"call centre"*. Particularly if more organisations adopt Dave's second suggestion, which is to eliminate the cause of the calls. Ultimately it may be a case of replacing physical call centres with virtual call centres. He gave us the example of a hardware store using virtualised call handling based on location—if no one is available at your nearest branch the call is routed to the next nearest, only ending up at a call centre as a last resort. Why don't more organisations (banks?!) use branch staff as their frontline? If the banks adopted co-creation, what do you think the customers would vote for?

Another way to reduce call volumes is to adopt better self-service models. Done right customers can be perfectly happy with self-service models (Dave points out that, starting from scratch, the retail service model sounds horrendously UN-customer-centric. Time invested in training customers to serve themselves can be beneficial—so rather than fixing the problem, show the customer how to get the information they need from your website. **S**



Simon Macklin, Wolseley

Although at times it tended to veer into a sales pitch for the vendor (Salesforce.com), Simon's discussion of the benefits Wolseley have found from using a remote cloud-based CRM system was fascinating. The challenge was to have a single repository for customer data across the business that everyone could use, and in which all customer contact was logged. At the beginning of the process only around 1,500 of the 7,500 daily customer contacts were being logged.

The benefits of cloud computing in this case were easy mobile access for staff based in the field, and the fact that the transition to the new system could be achieved *"despite the IT department"*. Simon was particularly keen to stress that

