Protect Your Customer Base by Ensuring the Best Customer Experience

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SYNOPSIS

The Telecom environment is ever changing. Demand for smartphones and tablets continues to increase, more people become more mobile and telecom service providers are under pressure to grow revenue, customers and market share. This whitepaper will explore the changing landscape for devices and platforms, the evolution of support desk metrics from efficiency measurements to customer satisfaction ratings, and how incorporating remote support tools into a telecommunications organisation can improve the customer experience and increase customer satisfaction. The paper explores some of the key points where introducing remote support can help improve your customers' perception of support, keep them mobile and productive and explore some examples of how telecommunication organisations worldwide have improved their customer service by implementing remote support as part of their service offering.

INTRO

Churn, the operators' greatest bugbear, is not diminishing; in fact, analyst house Informa Telecoms & Media found it is on the increase. And poor customer service has been identified by the researcher as a key reason for the end user to move on. There is no question that all stakeholders in the telecoms ecosystem have latched onto customer experience as a core element to focus on to combat churn. After all, who would admit to not wanting to improve it? Yet a sense of disparity comes from defining or measuring that experience in the first place, before being able to act on it.

When it comes to measuring the customer experience, is it best to develop a customer satisfaction index, or send sniffing devices out into the network to collect data from the various backend systems and user terminals, then feed all that information into an analysis tool? And does the output of this process bring you any closer to representing the authentic end user experience?

Consider the same question from the end user's point of view. Monitoring network KPIs is a lot less abstract and easier to do than monitoring the actual customer experience. But dropped call rates are not the same as dropped calls. An operator can meet all of its KPIs and still find that customers are complaining.

The argument today is that KPI and performance metric-based customer experience is an outdated and legacy toolset and that the approach to take is more about how the delivery of the customer response is managed. It is not the indicators themselves but what the indicators can tell you about the user experience that you should be taking an interest in.

The Net Promoter Score, NPS, according to customer experience specialist LogMeIn, is now the industry standard favoured by experts in the field and the operators as it gives carriers a 'tougher' view of their performance. In a nutshell, NPS only takes into account the very positive feedback and very negative feedback, effectively discounting the middle ground, so operators have to work a lot harder to bring their score up.

NPS EXPLAINED

KPI and performance metric based customer experience is considered a legacy toolset, according to LogMeIn. As a result, the Net Promoter Score (NPS), developed by SatMetrix, has replaced customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores as the most popular metric for customer service.
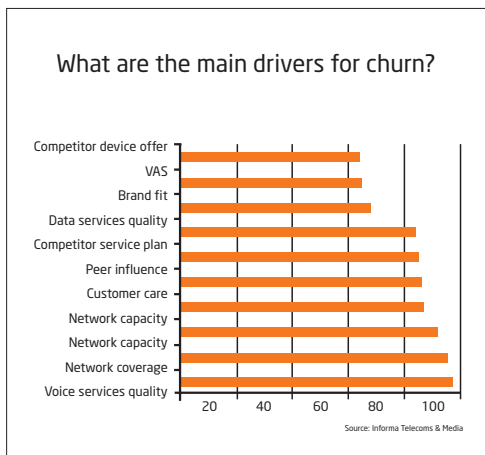
Where CSAT scores indicates the percentage of customers that are happy with a company, product, or service, NPS indicates the percentage of people that would positively endorse the same.

> NPS uses a scale of 0–10 to separate consumers into three distinct categories:
> Promoters would give a score of 9 or 10 and would recommend to others.
> Passives would give a 7 or 8, meaning they are satisfied but unenthusiastic.
> Detractors would give a rating of 0–6, meaning that they wouldn't recommend the service.

You work out the NPS by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters, giving the operator a tougher view of how they are doing as NPS only takes into account the very positive feedback and very negative. So operators have to work a lot harder to bring their score up.

Fortunately, the questions asked of customers in legacy surveys and the newer, NPS-based ones are much the same, so they remain familiar with the participants. The big difference is the number of touchpoints the operator has with the end user. Around five or so years ago a telecoms provider would get perhaps just one measure of customer satisfaction over the course of the customer's life, but now has the opportunity to gauge the customer experience after every point of contact adding much more dynamism to the relationship and a more complete picture about what influences satisfaction.

What are the main drivers for churn?

| Competitor device offer |
| VAS |
| Brand fit |
| Data services quality |
| Competitor service plan |
| Peer influence |
| Customer care |
| Network capacity |
| Network capacity |
| Network coverage |
| Voice services quality |

Source: Informa Telecoms & Media

A 2011 survey carried out by Informa looked at the top ten main drivers for customer churn and found that rather than desire for a new device placed at the top of the list, voice service quality, followed by network coverage and capacity were the leaders. Customer care actually came in fourth, but it's fair to say that its importance should not be underestimated given that the top three churn drivers would likely lead to some form of interaction between the user and a customer service system.

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Changing market conditions and an evolving customer profile means that that loyalty is seen as the safest way of maintaining a solid customer base and revenues. Moreover it is recognised that the lifetime value of a customer is such that an organisation can generate more revenue from the customer by giving them a better experience – after all, who can afford to let their most valuable customers churn?

One of the key touchpoints between carrier and end user arises through the growing adoption of smartphones, which for many new users are seen as more advanced and complex devices.

Informa expects the smartphone market to grow dramatically over the next five years, with the global total of smartphone users increasing from 445.5 million at the end of 2010 to one billion in 2013, approaching the two billion mark by the end of 2016, by which point it will account for about 39 per cent of the total number of mobile subscribers worldwide.

Naturally, smartphone penetration will be more prevalent in the more developed markets, exceeding 75 per cent in Japan, South Korea, North America and Western Europe. In contrast, the number of smartphone users in many emerging markets, including Africa, India and parts of Latin America, will be significantly lower, but will still fall close to the 25 per cent mark in some of these markets.

There's also the burgeoning tablet space. Data released by research analyst IDC reveals that tablet shipments in EMEA reached more than 12 million units in the first three quarters of 2011 and was estimated to cross 20 million units by the end of the year. Although business purchases represent less than ten per cent of the entire tablet market, the opportunity for growth and interest from businesses is huge following the success of the Apple iPad. Functionalities such as a responsive touch screen user interface, enhanced portability, attractive design, and a plethora of business application solutions that address specific vertical business needs, are all factors that motivate the adoption and demonstrate the value in businesses. With evident uptake among the IT services and professional services industry, other sectors such as transport and storage, utilities and distribution are showing strong interest.

The impact on business is relevant to the carriers. Mobile consumerisation represents the greatest opportunity - and challenge-- to enterprises, with many factors compelling the adoption of a "bring your own device" (BYOD) strategy. As a result, companies are struggling with the growing number of devices infiltrating their organisation and must balance the

acceptance of these devices with securing and managing their assets and keeping users in compliance, while respecting privacy issues. It's the same set of issues that must be tackled by the providers but on a much grander scale.

"There are major operational and management changes in store as the connected world continues to evolve at a rapid pace and with the onslaught of mobile products, usage, and applications. With more than 30 billion "things" connected to wireless networks, forward-thinking executives are the ones proactively addressing topics such as BYOD and updating strategies to incorporate mobile now," said Stephen Drake, program vice president of mobility and telecom at IDC.

BEARING THE BURDEN

The huge growth in the smartphone market, and the subsequent rise in mobile broadband traffic, is placing an unsustainable burden on existing telecoms customer service infrastructure. Queries regarding smartphones can take ten times longer to resolve than those for high end mobile devices that were available five years ago, according to industry researcher, Ovum. This trend should be driving investment in systems enabling customers to more easily solve their smartphone problems.

Consider that after years of low cost, price cutting strategies designed to build market share, operators have cultivated a generation of consumers that associate mobile operator value with price. Yet the perception of the customer experience is now being dictated by the likes of Amazon and Apple and customer loyalty is being courted along with it. Therefore it is the responsibility of the operator to now create an experience that delivers to the brand promise so tightly that business strategy and customer experience become inseparable. An observation from Julian Johns, Enterprise Sales Director, EMEA at LogMeIn, is that successful implementation of this model means that customer support has a revenue figure attached to it - it is no longer a cost centre. A simple approach perhaps, but one that requires a huge shift in the operator's attitude.

LOGMEIN RESCUE KEY FEATURES

With LogMeIn Rescue, IT teams can keep customers and employees up and running without the need for pre-installed software. Use a single remote support tool to service PCs, Macs or smartphones on demand anywhere, 24/7, as if you were sitting in front of them.

Support Tools for Technicians
Service providers rely on LogMeIn to remotely support, manage and back up hundreds or thousands of desktops, laptops, servers, kiosks, POS machines and the applications that run on them. Cross-platform capabilities include support for Windows PCs, Macintosh computers and smartphones, including BlackBerry, Symbian, and Windows Mobile devices.

Collaboration Tools
Give technicians and managers simple ways to work together to solve more problems on the first call.

Tools for Managers
Give helpdesk and IT managers easy-to-use training tools and visibility into support interactions.

Efficient Session Management and Queuing
Route support calls to the right technicians and make it simple for customers to request support.

Customization
Customize your remote support to deliver a unique customer experience and enhance your service brand.

Fast Time-to-Connect
Ultra-fast remote control with patent-pending, point-to-point technology handoff.

Technology, which may have been a hindrance in the past is now available as an enabler, introducing remote mobile device configuration capabilities to quickly troubleshoot smart devices in the field via a simple, web-based, SaaS interface. As a result, helpdesk and customer service staff can simplify support of customers' increasingly sophisticated smart devices – connect to them, solve problems, push configuration settings, and secure remote devices anywhere with an internet connection, as if the device were in their hands.

A recent report from industry analyst Ovum, looking at customer service and where providers are investing, found that the most frustrating elements of an operator's customer service suite were long waiting times in phone queues, automated telephony systems, and then language or accent barriers when dealing with call centre staff. Remote support tools that can allow full configuration and chat support go far in nipping these issues in the bud. "Having a right first time approach will lead to a significantly improved customer experience," Ovum noted in its report.

Moreover, the arena where customers can – and want – to engage with support and service organisations is definitely expanding with the rapid adoption of social media. Customer care organisations are expected to come under increasing pressure to incorporate these media into their operations, and to still deliver a 'wow' factor to the experience, as analysts like Ovum highlight how social media is evolving beyond a grievance platform for exposing poor service to something that is more constructive for both operators and their customers. Implementing remote support helps them accomplish that and some service providers have gone so far as to integrate the remote support access portal right into their Facebook pages, broadening use cases beyond the device in question to the broader set of internet connected devices that comprise a customer's "digital life".

Support organisations that implement remote support are able to deliver service directly to the device the customer is having an issue with; improve the perception of the customer experience; and add a 'wow' factor to the experience that influences the customer's propensity to recommend, resulting in increased NPS scores.

LogMeIn claims a 37 to 41 per cent response rate to the multi platform survey tool deployed straight after a customer call or exchange because it is deployed immediately, in the context of the support session. A typical industry response rate is between 12 and 16 per cent.

"The phrase used now is 'customer entanglement'," LogMeIn's Johns said. "The more often you successfully engage with a user, the more entangled they are."

VODAFONE CASE STUDY

Vodafone Germany deployed LogMeIn Rescue to equip the carrier's support staff with remote support tools for both mobile and DSL products, increasing the employees efficiency and raising customer satisfaction at the same time. The operator found that its agents were able to solve more issues on the first customer contact and reduce the time it takes to do so.

Markus Baumhaus, project manager for Customer Experience with Vodafone Germany, said that some calls can be long, but with LogMeIn Rescue, the company was able to shorten the average handling time and avoid the need to complicate the process by involving other touchpoints like sending an onsite technician to the customer.

"Now with remote support using LogMeIn Rescue, we are able to resolve many of these topics remotely and right on the spot. We have been able to reduce the number of onsite technicians we send into the field, shorten the time it takes to resolve an issue, and have received very positive feedback from happy customers at the same time."

In terms of specific features LogMeIn Rescue offered Vodafone a single tool that enabled the operator to resolve issues of various use-cases with both computers and smartphones. "This means that we need to train agents only once and can support various topics," Baumhaus said.

While in terms of smartphone troubleshooting, Vodafone agents have access to a variety of devices where they can simulate customers' problems. However, finding the correct devices in the big cupboard, switching it on and so on often wasted time in which customers had to wait. But "Accessing virtual smartphone skins that are embedded into the LogMeIn console saves both our agents and customers valuable time," Baumhaus said.

CONCLUSION

Several years ago, customer experience was almost frowned upon by the service provider community and companies didn't really have a plan. But these shortcomings were mainly down to a lack of technology, which is now available.

At the same time, mobile operators cannot continue to invest and encourage innovation under current pricing pressures. Instead they must start winning back customer loyalty based not on price, but on service and brand value. But it must be recognised that customer service is no longer a differentiator, it is now the customer experience that is an enabler for the rest of the business, and more importantly, for recurrent revenues.

So with changing market conditions and evolving customer profiles, operators should see loyalty as the safest way of maintaining their customer base and building revenues, while at the same time, striving to find a way to quickly support a growing number of people carrying increasingly sophisticated devices.

Telecoms operators need to understand they must follow the customer journey on the customer's terms but that with some careful hand holding in the shape of effective support tools, they can secure customer loyalty in the face of disruptive players such as Apple and Amazon, by being accessible, responsive, consistent, and effective. The reward for which, is loyalty.

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Our editorial team go beyond the daily headlines and produce in-depth features on industry leaders, technological advancements and market trends – delivering content that inspires, stimulates debate, and provides insight and understanding on the key business and technology issues facing the industry.

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ABOUT LogMeIN

LogMeIn (Nasdaq:LOGM) provides cloud-based remote access, support and collaboration solutions to quickly, simply and securely connect millions of internet-enabled devices across the globe – computers, smartphones, iPad™ and Android™ tablets, and digital displays. Designed for consumers, mobile professionals and IT organizations, LogMeIn's solutions empower more than 13 million users to connect over 100 million devices. LogMeIn is based in Woburn, Massachusetts, USA, with offices in Australia, Hungary, India, Japan, the Netherlands, and the UK.

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