“SUSTAINING AN AUDIENCE IS HARD,” BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN ONCE SAID. “It demands a consistency of thought, of purpose, and of action over a long period of time.” He was talking about his route to music stardom, yet his words are just as applicable to the world of customer experience. Consistency is exceptionally powerful, especially at a time when channels are proliferating and consumer choice and empowerment are increasing. A bad experience on any channel will significantly affect the customer’s attitude; the perception barometer will dip to the negative despite any prior positive interactions.

Unfortunately, opportunities to break the consistency of service experiences across channels arise far too often and may cause customers to jump to a competitor, especially if their expectations of experience are met on one channel and not another.

This brief outlines the key challenges to delivering consistent service experiences, how they impact customers, and how businesses are tackling these issues with Oracle Service Cloud.

THE CHALLENGES TO DELIVERING CONSISTENT SERVICE EXPERIENCES

Channels are Disconnected
Disconnected service channels are the principal reason customer service experiences are inconsistent. This tends to occur when businesses roll out a multi-channel strategy using different technologies, and often different vendors, with point-solution offerings. Each vendor will claim that their solution and channel is best for all types of interactions, and consequently the channel will be built according to the expectations of running a standalone product, not an integrated solution.

The key challenge, therefore, is integrating disparate channels into a consistent multi-channel service offering. Customers prefer to use different channels based on their context—web, text, chat, email, or phone—and they expect a similar experience across all of them. It’s overwhelming and costly to integrate several best-of-breed systems, each with a unique architecture, UX paradigm, look and feel, API, licensing structure, SLAs and support line.

Customers are Not Recognized Across All Channels
Once they have integrated their channels, businesses must have the ability to recognize customers across all of those touch points. Consider this scenario: A customer sends an email and then initiates a live chat session two hours later. If the agent is not aware that the customer sent an email earlier, that doesn’t instil a lot of trust in the service department—especially if, after finishing the live chat, the customer receives a reply to the email from another agent.

Routing is Inconsistent Across Channels
Delivering a consistent and personalized customer journey across channels is dependent on routing the interaction to the agent most suited for the customer interaction. Additionally, it is imperative the experience is consistent across channels, should your customer move from one channel to another within the same interaction. Depending on how your contact center is organized—group/queue based, location based, context driven or by service level—you’ll need to route customers to those different queues with the same efficiency across channels.
There is No Single Source of Truth
If agents in every channel have a different source to find answers to questions, it’s going to be really difficult to give consistent answers across channels. It’s easy to get duplicate or obsolete answers when there is not a single knowledge base used in all channels, thus leading to inconsistent experiences.

HOW BUSINESSES ARE ADDRESSING THESE CHALLENGES

Implementing an Integrated Multi-Channel Service Platform
This means a single, multi-channel service platform where all channels are a native part of the platform. It also gives agents context around earlier interactions with customers in one snapshot. This way, when a customer sends an email and follows up with a call, the agent can instantly see the email, understand the context, offer more personalized experience, and avoid overlap with other agents.

Enabling Customer Recognition Across all Touch Points
By having one system of record with natively integrated channels, agents can easily identify the customer whether using the phone, email, chat, or social channels.

Using a Single Unified Agent Desktop
Whether on the phone, email, chat, co-browse, or social channels, agents work in a single unified desktop. Although agents are using different, tailored workspaces, depending on the channel, they are all part of a single, intuitive application. Using rules and automation, consistency is assured.

Tapping Into a Single Knowledge Base
Through a single knowledge base surfaced in all channels, agents can find answers from one single source of truth. Using smart knowledge, answers are automatically presented to agents on any channel, and can be added with one click of the email, social network interaction, or live chat session. Troubleshooting flows to triage issues can be applied across different channels.

Consistently Measuring the Experience
Finally, these businesses consistently measure quality of service experience across different channels. Through automated post-case feedback surveys the customers are asked to rate the service quality. This insight is used for continuous optimization of service operations.

“Sustaining an audience is hard. It demands a consistency of thought, of purpose, and of action over a long period of time.”
— Bruce Springsteen

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