

# THE FUTURE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

why your brand  
won't survive  
without social  
customer service

WHITEPAPER JANUARY 2015



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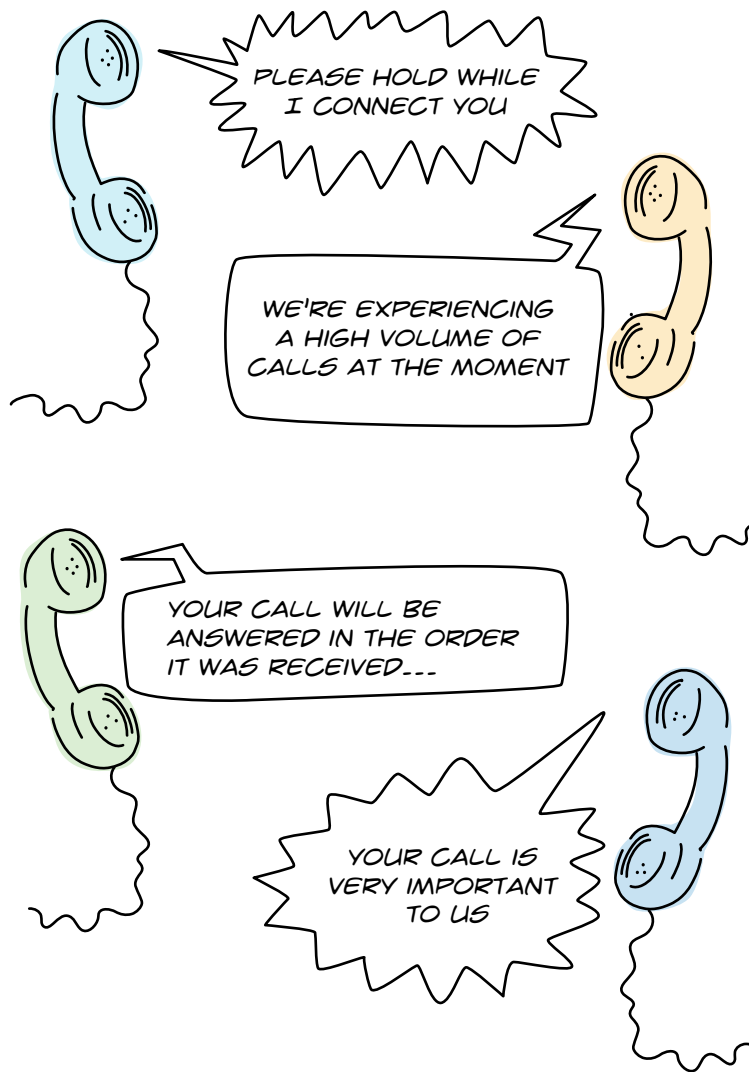
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While reviewing your credit card balance, you discover an abnormality – you were charged twice for a recent purchase.

“Honest mistake,” you think, and begin dialing your credit card company’s 1-800 number.

“Press – or say – one for general inquiries...  
Press – or say – two to enjoy 0% APR...  
Press – or say three – to talk to a representative...  
Press – or say four...”

You cut off a robotic, yet chipper, voice. “Three.”  
“You selected ‘two.’ If this is correct, please press one.”  
“No. Threeeee.”  
“I’m sorry, I didn’t quite get that. To hear the menu again, press star.”

You sigh. You smash buttons. You develop violent feelings.

Eventually, your hard work pays off.  
“Please hold while I connect you.”

Ten minutes later, you are still listening to seventies music.  
“Your call is very important to us.”  
Twenty minutes in: “... high volume of calls.”

Nearly an hour later, someone finally picks up. His name is Carl and he’s a real human being. Your joy is short-lived.

Carl says he can’t help you. You see... Carl doesn’t have the authority to access existing accounts. But don’t worry, he’ll connect you.

Please hold.

# WHAT CUSTOMER SERVICE LOOKS LIKE TODAY

Long wait times, dropped calls, restating a single problem dozens of times – one could dedicate a novella to the pain points associated with customer service.

To customers, these pain points are, well, painful. To companies, they're a necessary part of doing business.

When you're a multibillion-dollar brand with hundreds of locations worldwide, scale equals survival. Call centers are the epitome of scale. Fixated on efficiency, many companies forget what it's like to be on the other end of the line.

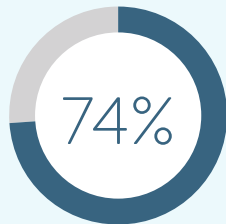
They forget about the customer experience.

## HOW CUSTOMERS REALLY FEEL ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE

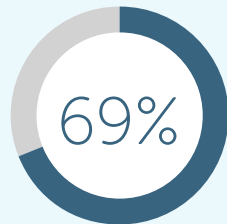
Customers hate your customer service.

According to a 2013 study by Accenture, almost 75% of respondents cited being "extremely frustrated" when having to contact a company multiple times for the same reason. Other frustrations that arise from tried-and-true customer service methods include being on hold for a long time and having to repeat the same information to multiple employees.

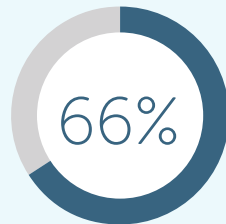
### CONSUMERS "EXTREMELY FRUSTRATED" BY CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCES



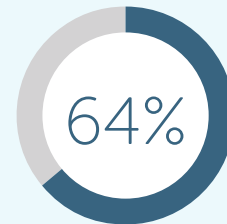
having to contact the company multiple times for the same reason



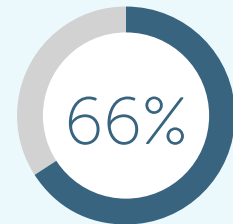
being on hold for a long time when contacting the company



having to repeat the same information to multiple employees or through multiple channels



dealing with employees or self-help sites/systems that cannot answer my questions



dealing with employees who are unfriendly or impolite

Source: Accenture, 2013

If you think these inconveniences are only minor – part of the “new normal” as a consumer today – think again.

Of those surveyed, 66% said they switched service providers due to poor customer service. Consumers would rather go to a different company than play a never-ending game of tag with your phone operators.

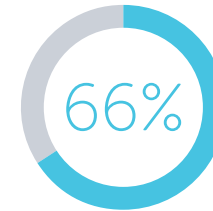
And once your customers leave, they’re not likely to come back. Nearly [40% of respondents](#) from a Dimensional Research study said they avoided companies for two or more years after a negative customer experience. Individuals from high-income households hold an even bigger grudge – 79% will avoid companies with whom they have had a bad experience.

The repercussions of poor customer service reverberate way beyond your unhappy customers.

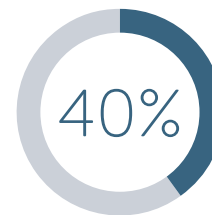
Customers who perceive your customer service in a negative way are going to tell other non-customers how they feel. In fact, [95% of these dissatisfied customers](#) will tell others about their bad experience. And almost half will share these experiences via social. So not only will customers leave you due to poor customer service, they’ll also tell potential customers to avoid doing business with you.

Tried-and-true customer service models are causing your organization to lose customers and prospects.

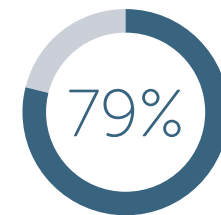
## REPERCUSSIONS OF POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE



switched service providers

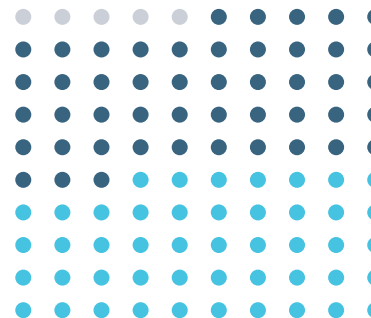


avoided vendors two or more years after



of individuals from high-income households avoided vendors two or more years after

## DISSATISFIED CUSTOMERS



95%  
tell others about  
their bad experience

50%  
share these experiences  
via social.

Source: Dimensional Research, 2013



**Augie Ray**  
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Augie Ray has been in digital and social business for 20 years, working in agencies, market research, and Fortune 200 firms. He is a former Forrester analyst who covered social technologies in the Bay Area. Since leaving Forrester, Augie has worked in three Fortune 200 financial services firms, focusing on strategy, marketing, customer care, and governance of social media efforts, along with methods for giving customers more voice throughout the enterprise. He led an effort at one firm to develop the organization's first social business vision, a blueprint for how new and evolving collaborative economy models offer threats and opportunities to traditional banking and insurance firms

## CUSTOMERS WILL PUNISH BRANDS THAT LACK SOCIAL CUSTOMER CARE

In the social media era, our brands are created more by what we do than by what we say – and even more by what customers say than what we broadcast about ourselves. But many companies still have difficulty recognizing the necessity for robust social customer care and fail to make the necessary investment in it. Even brands that will happily spend six – or seven – figures on social media marketing persist in under-staffing and under-funding their social customer care functions.

Is social customer care really that important? Here's what recent research shows:

- In 2011, Oracle found that 46 percent of worldwide Internet users expect brands to provide information and customer service through their Facebook pages.
- In 2012, American Express found that 17 percent of consumers have used social media at least once in the last year to obtain a customer service response and, of those who did, 83 percent have not completed an intended purchase because of a poor customer service experience.
- A 2013 study by LiveOps found that 89 percent of consumers surveyed believe it is important to be able to communicate with companies through any channel – including social media. And believe they should still receive the same quality and efficiency of response.



## We cannot promote our brands as responsive, caring, and customer-focused if we ignore the needs and complaints our customers express in social media.

Even though customer expectations are well established, brands still struggle with social customer care:

- The 2013 LiveOps study found that about 70 percent of complaints on Twitter and Facebook are ignored.
- A 2013 eDigital Customer Service Benchmark study revealed that fewer than half of the customers who have used social media to secure service are happy with the experience.

A few years ago, social media was a service channel of last resort, with consumers turning to it only after failing to get satisfaction in traditional ways, but this is changing. More customers recognize social as an immediate and easy platform for service. Facebook, Twitter and other social networks are becoming a channel of preference for many.

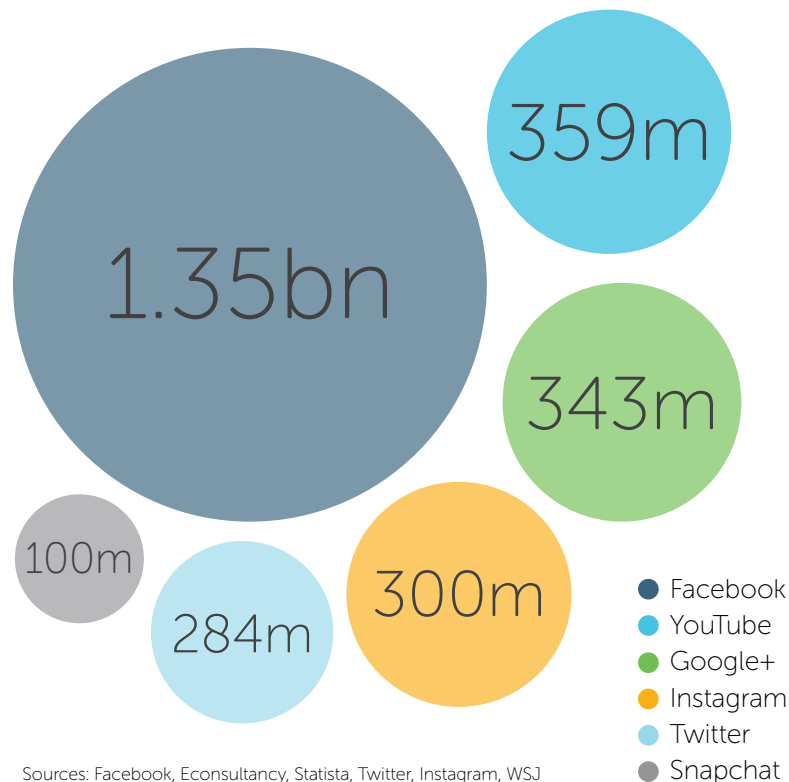
As with any customer care channel, consumers have expectations of brands and punish those that fail to meet them. A 2013 Lithium study found that 53 percent of consumers expect brands to respond in less than an hour. Sound unreasonable? Consider what consumer expectations are if they pick up the phone to call you. That hour begins to seem generous, doesn't it? The same study found that when brands fail to meet the one-hour response time, 38 percent of consumers feel more negative about the brand, and 60 percent will take unpleasant actions to express their dissatisfaction.

We cannot promote our brands as responsive, caring, and customer-focused if we ignore the needs and complaints our customers express in social media. The solution is to place as much importance on social customer care as we do in traditional customer care, such as phone and email communications. Your customer care personnel already have the skills they need to provide empathetic, accurate, and responsive service. All they need are the tools and support from corporate leadership in order to provide the same level of service through social media platforms.

# YOU NEED SOCIAL CUSTOMER SERVICE, AND HERE'S WHY

Social customer service is a big investment. It requires executive buy-in, internal training, and new technologies – not to mention the funding necessary for all of this. But it's becoming a necessary part of doing business. To put it bluntly, when it comes to social customer service, you no longer have a choice.

## MONTHLY ACTIVE USERS OF SOCIAL NETWORKS



Sources: Facebook, Econsultancy, Statista, Twitter, Instagram, WSJ

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## CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIORS AND EXPECTATIONS

To say that today's consumers are social is an understatement. Roughly one out of every five people worldwide log on to Facebook each month. Even smaller networks, like Instagram and Snapchat, are growing at an impressive rate.

Consumers aren't just using social media to interact with one another; they're using these channels to communicate with brands. Customers are using social to tell you about your faulty new product, to ask questions about your return policy, to invite you to serve them on multiple channels.

If you're still unsure about consumer behavior when it comes to customer service and social media, look to the numbers. The percentage of consumers using social media for customer service more than doubled between 2011 and 2013, from 16% to 37%. During that time frame, the percentage of physical visits to a location and phone calls stayed the same – signaling that although consumers still want a personalized experience, they are increasingly looking to non-traditional channels to get what they want.

Millennials are especially adoptive of social media. More than half reported using social media as one of their customer service channels. (FYI: there are roughly 80 million millennials in the U.S. alone, and they spend approximately \$600 billion each year.)



## WHAT CONSUMERS WANT MOST FROM YOUR BRAND

Today's consumers want one thing: great customer experiences. They want this so desperately, they'll even pay more for it. [Three out of four](#) consumers have spent more with a business due to a history of good customer service, says a 2014 American Express report. And 68% of consumers are willing to spend more with a company that they believe will deliver excellent customer service.

If your customers are willing to spend more money to receive a better experience, it's your duty to provide. It's your duty to pick up when they call. To be waiting at the counter when they drop by. And to comment back when they post on your Facebook wall.

## CHANGING COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

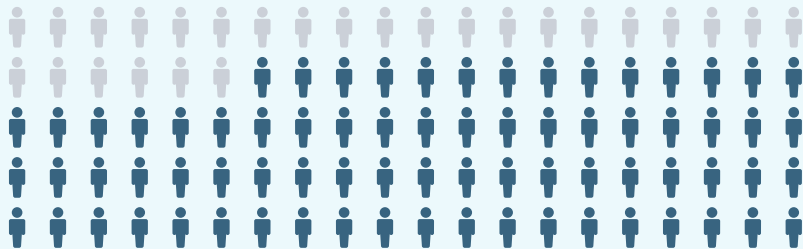
In 2010, [roughly 10% of organizations](#) were using social media as a customer service channel. Early adopters included risk-takers with a tolerance for potential failure – like Comcast. The global media and technology company was using Twitter for customer care – establishing @ComcastCares in March 2008 – at a time when many large brands still didn't believe in the potential of Twitter.

Today, it's no longer the risk-takers or early adopters with a social care program. More than half of companies (58%) now use social media to manage and respond to customer service issues. In less than four years, the adoption of social media as a customer care channel increased by nearly 400%.

What will happen five years from now? You don't need a calculator to foresee complete adoption across all industries and companies.

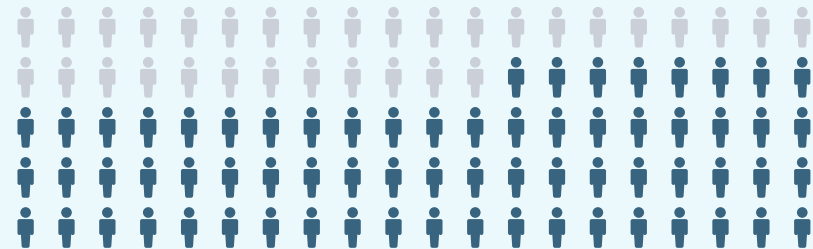
74%

of consumers have spent more due to good customer service



68%

of consumers are willing to spend more



Source: American Express, 2014



## Frank Eliason

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Frank is a Global Director of Customer Experience for Citi. He was formerly the Global Director of Social Media at Citi. Prior to that, he was credited with starting social media customer service while at Comcast. He has been recognized by many publications, including being called "the most famous customer service manager in the US, possibly the world" by BusinessWeek. He is also the author of "@YourService," published by Wiley.

# THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA CUSTOMER SERVICE IS CHANGING!

In the past few weeks, my role at Citi has changed, and it is something I see happening throughout our industry. Social media has become more ingrained in what we do, and how we act as a company. It is no longer about what we say, but instead a reflection of what we do. If you think about it, there is a natural evolution happening that you should be thrilled to be a part of. In fact, many reading this are helping to lead the way.

Before I get into where we are moving, we should first step back and take a look at where we have been. Let me set the stage for you...

The year was 2007. Not that long ago in human years, but for those involved in social media, it feels like a lifetime. Twitter had just celebrated its first birthday. Facebook was not even close to going mainstream. Myspace was passing its peak and taking a turn for the worse. No one had even heard of Google Plus (okay, maybe some still have not heard of it). And many of the other social networks we use today weren't even ideas yet.

I just started working for Comcast, the Philadelphia-headquartered cable company. My background has always been in Customer service, which I have always found to be an underappreciated part of the business world. Still on a high from my success of transforming the Customer service operation at a bank, I was eager to tackle a similar endeavor, this time, at the largest institution in Philadelphia.

I never anticipated what would happen next.



## The tides of change have been working, and customers have realized they control the brand, not the company.

Immediately after I joined Comcast, Advertising Age writer and NPR personality Bob Garfield began his public ridicule of the company, a vicious rampage which would later become known as the “Comcast Must Die” crusade.

As a company, we had to decide how to respond. I did what any service person would think to do: I helped people. It was with this that social media Customer service was born.

At first, we simply called disgruntled Customers on the phone. Telephone Customer service continued to grow as our Customers found it to be the best way of getting help. This eventually led me to Twitter, thanks to a colleague, Scott Westerman. Twitter became a fruitful platform once the search function became available through now defunct companies like TweetScan and Summize (Twitter bought Summize.) All of a sudden, we could easily search for conversations being had about our company, and respond in real time.

Our Twitter efforts were part of a much broader effort to improve the service Comcast offered Customers. Our social media Customer service received a lot of favorable press coverage and inspired many other companies to strive to emulate our strategy of Consumer engagement on Twitter.

As time went on, I think many companies forgot the part about fixing what was broken. Many of the first companies were receiving glowing write-ups in social media and the press. The problem with social media Customer service is inevitably you are asking people to blast your brand publicly for help. Nearly 90% of the time, those that turn to social are frustrated by other, more traditional channels – and so, they take to social to blast a company into submission. The tides of change have been working, and Customers have realized they control the brand, not the company.

Over the years, social media for businesses has become more and more about pushing some message that nobody cares about. We forgot that social media is about dialogue and the best aspect for business is enriching the lives of Customers. As this push aspect became predominant in social media, we watched Customers take action against brands, especially in comments. It used to be the worst brands would see this, but today we even see it with some of the most loved brands.

Social media is not TV or other forms of mass marketing. It is the birth of micro-marketing, or one-to-one marketing. It is a space that thrives on word-of-mouth, but the mouth people care most about is their own, or those of their closest friends. Companies have to change in order to truly succeed.



My role has changed. I am now focused on Customer experience, and proud of that fact. I, along with many of my colleagues at Citi, are working to make the Customer the center of everything we do.

Apple, notorious for not being heavily present in social media, has been actively listening to conversations with the launch of the latest iPhone and the newest version of the iPhone software. The company was using social media to quickly identify and fix problems. This has always been the way companies can have the greatest success in social media. Recognize the shift in control, and then understand how your company can capitalize. We always said it starts with listening, but the reality is that listening isn't enough. It may start with listening, but action is also required. I am not talking about the action to fix that one person's problem. If that is your focus, you will attract more and more negative attention. It is about listening and making the wholesale change necessary to fix procedures, products or even cultural issues that are wrong within your company.

My role has changed. I am now focused on Customer experience, and proud of that fact. I, along with many of my colleagues at Citi, are working to make the Customer the center of everything we do. My former company, Comcast, recently promoted Charlie Herrin to be the SVP of Customer Experience – reporting into the CEO of the cable division. We were fixing a lot while I was at Comcast, but it was not built into their culture.

Now it will be Charlie's job to do just that. Each day, I see similar roles developing within thousands of companies. This is the natural evolution of social media Customer service.

This is your evolution and now it is time for you to step up and lead your organization in this manner. You have access to the Customer story, written in their words. Does your brand mission match the true story shared by Customers? Is your CEO aware of the brand story that your Customers share? It is time you provided that and build the new brand story for your Customers.

# THE ROI OF SOCIAL CUSTOMER CARE

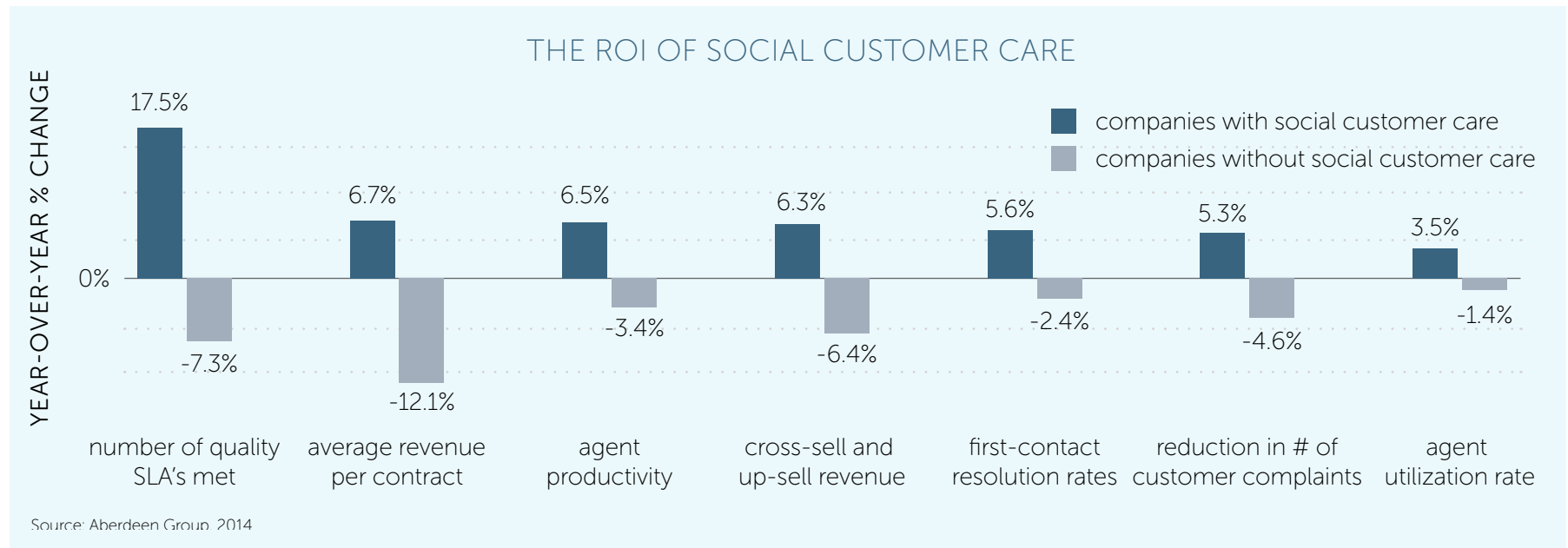
What is the business value of social customer service?

According to a [2014 report](#) from Aberdeen Group, companies with a social care program simply do better than their counterparts.

Socially-enabled companies experience a 5.6% YoY increase in first-contact resolutions, 6.5% increase in agent productivity, and a 17.5% increase in SLA attainment.

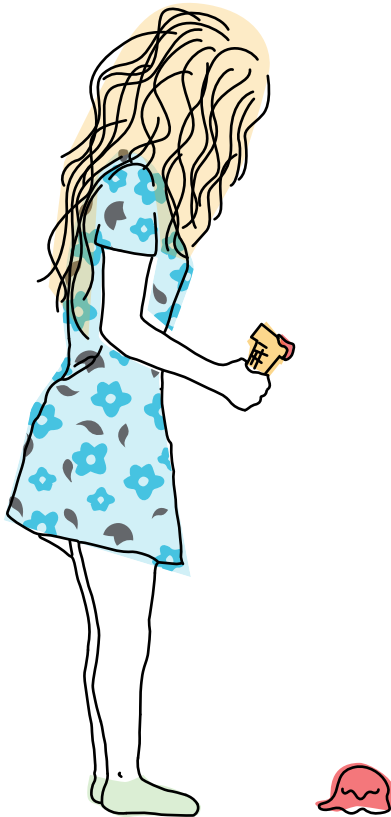
These companies also see fewer customer complaints. Fewer complaints mean fewer unhappy customers, which leads to perhaps the biggest ROI for social customer care... customer retention.

Companies with a social care program experience a 7.5% YoY increase in customer retention – those without only see a change of 2.9%. The more customers you keep, the healthier your bottom line, as retaining a customer is estimated to be around five to seven times cheaper than trying to get a new one.



# FOUR STEPS TO GREAT SOCIAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

Social media customer service will benefit your business many times over. Ready to go from theory to reality? Here's how to get started with social customer care.



## 1. IDENTIFY UNHAPPY CUSTOMERS

Social media used to be a channel of last resorts – when people were so fed up that they would turn to the web to vent. Now, social is one of the first touchpoints. Customers come to your brand's social media channels before they pick up the phone. This presents brands with the opportunity to resolve issues before they escalate. But first, you have to be aware of these conversations.

### START WITH MONITORING DASHBOARDS

Monitoring dashboards are the most foundational requirement for brands managing multiple accounts. These dashboards aggregate your brand mentions across multiple social channels, enabling a macro-level view of all your inbound messages. If someone has a customer service question, but they're mentioning a different Twitter handle, social monitoring makes your customer service team aware of the inquiry. No tweet is left behind.

### LAYER IN SOCIAL LISTENING

To go beyond conversations targeted "@ your brand – and proactively look at all conversations happening about your brand – employ social listening. Listening is beneficial for any global brand and can be particularly critical in highly-sensitive industries like healthcare, financial services, or manufacturing. Social listening pulls in all online mentions of your brand, competitors, products, and other key business topics.

This comprehensive level of brand awareness is important because if there's a product failure, many of the critical conversations won't directly mention your brand.

Social listening (if integrated with the rest of your social media management platform) can also be set up to automatically alert your team if certain keywords or volume thresholds are met. You can create a rule in your platform to notify your PR team every time the volume of mentions exceeds 100,000, for example. This way, the right experts inside your organization are made aware of negative conversation trends before they turn into full-blown crises.



## 2. KNOW HOW TO COMMUNICATE

It's imperative that your community management team – or really any team touching customers online in a public way – receive consistent training on how to communicate on behalf of your brand.

### So, ask yourself:

- Is customer service a part of your social media playbook? Conversely, is there a social media section of your customer service handbook and related training materials?
- Are there tests in place to ensure that individuals meet basic criteria before they are given access to social media as part of their jobs?
- Is there one brand voice consistent across every location, team, and department at your company?
- Is there another pair of eyes on social messages or some level of governance?
- If you already have a social care team in place, are team members outside of that team trained to take over, whenever necessary?
- Are multiple departments invested in social care and working from the same platform?

You should have a resounding “YES” across the board. If not, your social customer care program could use some reevaluation.



### 3. STREAMLINE YOUR RESPONSES

One of the biggest complaints about customer service is having to repeat the same information to different people. Not only does it result in a disjointed experience for the customer, but it's also inefficient for your internal team. To streamline communication, you need the following platform capabilities:

**Macros:** This feature allows you take multiple actions on a single message. You can, for example, program macros to automatically tag messages and route them to the appropriate queues simultaneously.

**Customizable approval paths:** Depending on the industry, company, and sensitivity of the message, dozens of teams might be needed for message approval. Your social media platform should have approval paths that can be customized (and scaled) to fit your company's specific needs.

**Message history:** Message history allows you to be aware of past conversations an individual has had with your brand on social media. This results in a more personalized interaction.

**Smart identification:** In addition to conversation history, you'll also want to create profile descriptions of your social audience to provide additional context. Profile tags can be customized to reflect what you need to know about your community – e.g. industry, interests, age group, location, annual spending, products mentioned, relationship with the brand, and so on.

**CRM integration:** The people interacting with your brand on social media are often the same ones interacting with your brand in real life. Uniting your social media platform with your traditional CRM system allows you to see that "John Doe" isn't just someone posting on your Facebook page... he's also a loyal customer.

**Case management:** Another feature you should consider is case management, which organizes multiple messages into a "case" with its own unique ID, assignee, and subscribers for easy collaboration. Case management can also draw out learning opportunities, such as how long it takes to resolve an issue and sentiment before and after a service experience.

**Pre-approved content:** Do you often share content across multiple teams and regions? Then you need a centralized library of pre-approved assets. Rather than creating new items from scratch – and going through the approval process – you can simply pick from the library, customize, and go.

#### **Integration with your paid social media:**

The worst thing you can do when a customer complains is to serve them with a promoted post. Integration across paid, earned, and owned social media in one platform allows you to create automatic "rules" that prevent users who have raised complaints from being targeted with ads.



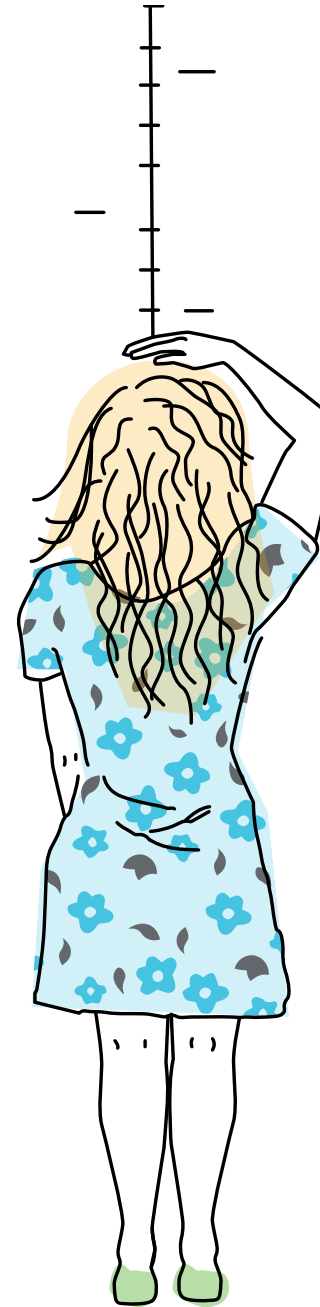
## 4. EVALUATE YOURSELF AND OPTIMIZE IN REAL TIME

Like all initiatives, the success of your social customer care program depends heavily on your ability to sustain and improve it. Here's how you can optimize:

**SLA reporting dashboard:** How many customer care cases are being resolved? How long does it take for your team to reply? Are your reply rates improving over time? You need SLA dashboards to see your progress in resolving customer problems/inquiries.

**Audit trail:** An audit trail is necessary for a couple reasons. It allows you to see which agents replied to what, and how they're replying, which you can use to uncover learning opportunities. Audit trails also provide documentation of your social interactions. Even if a message gets deleted on the native channel, you still have a record of the conversation. This is vital when complications arise.

**Tagging:** Inbound tagging enables you to see what your community needs most. If the majority of your incoming messages are related to customer service issues, this can help you identify gaps in resources. In addition to inbound tagging, you should also be tagging your outbound messages. This allows you to see what types of content resonates with your audience. You can know for sure if they really prefer videos over the written word, if they like webinars or in-person events, and so on.





**Shep Hyken**  
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Shep is a customer service expert and New York Times bestselling business author. He works with companies who want to build loyal relationships with their customers and employees. Shep has been inducted into the National Speakers Association Hall of Fame for lifetime achievement in the speaking industry.

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## TIPS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE ON SOCIAL CHANNELS

Customers have always used word of mouth to share their experiences with others. Whether their experience with a business was positive or negative, they would share their views with family and friends over the phone or in conversation at social gatherings. There is a big difference in today's world, though. Thanks to social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Yelp, and others, customers' reviews enjoy a vastly wider audience.

### INTERACTION

Companies need to embrace social media in both reactive and proactive ways. First, you must accept the fact that your customers may post online reviews about your company, so you must always perform as if they will. Treat every interaction as an opportunity to show how good you are. Here are some points to remember:

- People do business with people. Even in the online world where customers make purchases through your website, remember that the website was designed to be used by people. Make the site easy to navigate and simple to understand.
- Be accessible through multiple channels. Even if you have a great call center, you should also have support available through other channels, such as email, texting, Facebook, and Twitter. Put contact information on every page of your website. Make it easy for a customer to connect with you instantly.



Social media is not a weapon to be feared, but a powerful tool that can open the lines of communication and create opportunities to connect with your customers – and the world.

- When a customer contacts you via social channels, respond quickly – which means minutes, not hours or days. If I wanted my questions answered in two hours, I would have waited two hours to ask the question!

## REACTIVE RESPONSES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Companies must also monitor social media channels for customer comments. Act quickly if you receive a negative comment. Response time is one of the keys to a successful resolution. As noted above, great companies respond within minutes.

A positive outcome to a negative situation will ideally end with your customer returning to the same social channel and broadcasting a complimentary statement that turns into positive PR.

## PROACTIVE WAYS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Most companies view social channel customer service as a reactive medium. They monitor the channels for comments and react. However, social media can be an incredible outbound customer service opportunity. Here are some ways to use social media more proactively:

Engage customers via social channels such as Twitter and Facebook. Share tips on how to best use your products and services. Be less promotional and provide greater value instead.

If you're not using YouTube for customer service, it's time to start. Post "how to" videos on YouTube. Encourage customers to do the same. Ask them to share their personal tips and tricks on how they are getting the most out of your products. For example, Ace Hardware teaches viewers how to fix a faucet, tile a bathroom, etc. A jeweler shares tips on how to properly clean jewelry.

Social media is not a weapon to be feared, but a powerful tool that can open the lines of communication and create opportunities to connect with your customers – and the world.

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Al is a member of Citi's US social media servicing team and has been with Citi for 11 years. Al was named as one of the Top 100 Most Social Customer Service Pros on Twitter in 2013 and a Top 50 Contact Center Thought Leader in 2014. In his spare time, he is a co-host of a weekly customer service Twitter chat (#custserv). Al is pursuing his MBA in marketing and is expected to graduate in the spring of 2015.

## THE THREE P'S OF SOCIAL MEDIA CUSTOMER SERVICE

Social media has matured to the point where networks are being used for more than just marketing. Service conversations on social media happen quickly, and business intelligence is gathered at an enormous pace. Customers often use social media as a channel of last resort. This gives you the opportunity to use these conversations to show that you are listening and want to help ease the pain.

There are three P's that must be addressed in order to have a successful social media service team that will help change the conversation around your brand from a negative one to a positive one: start with a Plan, have the right People in place, and use the right Platforms.

The order in which you address each P is up to you, but each P needs to be acknowledged to get the highest return on investment.

### PLAN

Have a plan in place for everything, not just the simple conversations, but the hard ones as well. General George Patton once said, "Good tactics can save even the worst strategy. Bad tactics will destroy even the best strategy." You have a set of tactics for answering the daily service concerns of your customers, but what is your strategy for when a primary system goes down or a news article hits your brand where it hurts? Work with your team to understand what needs to happen, and when they need to escalate the issue to you. You can be sure they will know something happens before you do if you have the right people in place, and they are using the right platforms.



Plan for success and challenges; put the right People where they can help the most; get the right Platform to make it all happen the way you want.

## PEOPLE

A solid social media customer service team needs to be your company's all-star team. This does not mean each member of the team has to be active on social media – some of the best service reps aren't, but they do have to know your products and services better than anyone else. You can teach them how to use the new channels, but you cannot teach familiarity with your products and confidence, which are essential for operating at the speed of social media. A good way to approach hiring a social customer service team is to make sure each product, service, or service department is represented. This way, there's a designated specialist available for the immediate responses your customers are looking for.

## PLATFORM

There are several characteristics to look for when considering the right platforms to make your team successful. The first is an internal community relationship management (CRM) tool. This lets your all-stars have access to a customer's entire relationship with your company so they can make empowered servicing decisions quickly and together in one place. Next, you need

to have a reliable social media management system (SMMS) in place that can combine with your CRM. A good SMMS brings together all of the networks your team will service, such as Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, or Google Plus. The more networks you can deploy together in one SMMS, the better. A successful platform also lets your team search for indirect mentions so they can hear what customers are saying about your brand when they aren't saying it to you. The search needs to have real-time and historical capabilities so you can track trends and provide feedback to product development teams. All the components of your platform should be integrated to have reporting capabilities to measure response times, volumes, and key drivers. It should have strong security and event logs to protect your brand from compliance concerns. When all the moving parts work together as one, your customer care team members have a holistic view of the customer, enabling them to provide the best service possible.

When deploying a social media customer service team, all three P's are needed for success. Plan for success and challenges; put the right People where they can help the most; get the right Platform to make it all happen the way you want.

# THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL CUSTOMER CARE

Social customer service is no longer an option for brands. But as you're building out your strategy, it's vital to keep cross-functional teamwork in mind.

Customer service cannot be a stand-alone strategy or program.

Social media is not something that exists on its own, disconnected from the rest of the organization. Your social customer care program is the same. It's not limited to marketing or traditional customer care, but is instead an enterprise-wide responsibility.

Every functional team at your organization is thinking about ways to make or save revenue. Which means every department is responsible for gaining and retaining the customers responsible for that revenue. Which really means that every department is tied to customers, and to customer service, if you really think about it.

Every team is responsible for managing the customer experience. And as we've outlined so far, delivering better experiences is critical to meeting customers' ever-growing expectations.

It's the key to surviving as a corporation.



Sprinklr is the most complete enterprise social media management technology in the world, purpose-built for large companies to drive business outcomes and manage customer experiences across all touch points. Called "the most powerful technology in the market" by Forrester Research, Sprinklr's fully integrated social media management software powers more than four billion social connections across 77 countries. Headquartered in New York City with more than 550 employees globally, Sprinklr is revolutionizing customer engagement for more than 750 top enterprise brands, including IHG, Intel, Microsoft, Samsung, and Virgin America, and partners like Deloitte, Accenture, R/GA, Golin, and AKQA. For more information, visit [sprinklr.com](http://sprinklr.com) or tweet us @sprinklr.

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