

Match Customer Service Agents to Customers

Assess your current operations, talk to potential partners, and determine what improvements can be made to your customer service quality.

by [Allanna Kelsall](#)

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Imagine you are an executive at Harley-Davidson. Your entire brand is based upon a community of people who know and love your motorcycle products. What if you could have an unlimited geographic recruiting area and employ only Harley-Davidson motorcycle owners as customer service agents?

Further, what if you could direct calls about specific models of bikes to people who actually own those same bikes? Would your key customer service metrics increase by matching inquiries from your customers with people who combine passion for your products and the knowledge to provide the highest quality service? Could your customer service indexes, sales metrics, and customer retention be increased significantly?

This is not a customer service dream--it is a reality that companies across the country are taking advantage of today. Agent profiling, the process of matching customer service agents directly with the needs and personalities of customers, is a win-win situation for businesses, customers, and employees alike. It provides the highest and most efficient level of service possible while linking customer service agents' passions to their job. The backlash from customers who have received mediocre service from offshore facilities shows that consumers expect more than simply having their call answered quickly.

Recruiting customer service and sales agents who are passionate about your products and services and who have strong customer service skills is the first step in providing a superior experience to your customers. Only the fittest should survive this process. The next step is to expand your recruiting operation to as broad a geographical area as possible. Increasing the size of your potential labor pool is an opportunity to enhance the likelihood of finding that perfect fit.

Next, many companies have customer service teams that are limited by their tie to a physical center. Even when outsourcing to a provider with several customer service centers in various locations or maintaining several centers internally, a company's recruiting boundaries extend only as far as potential employees are willing to drive to that center. Consider partnering with an outsourced provider that uses home-based customer service and sales agents and thus is not bound by the limitations of a traditional call center.

Automate applicant screening as much as possible to ensure the efficient use of the recruiting department's time. First, filter out applications that don't match your basic-level requirements for a customer service or sales employee. Next, test agents on their hard skills, such as computer knowledge and speed of use, and then on softer skills like voice quality, self-sufficiency, adaptability, and customer service ethics.

It is at this stage of recruiting that you should use more detailed employee profiles that are established to define what specific skills your agents should possess. These profiles will provide a foundation for you to dig deeper and determine the strengths of each applicant. Be certain to ask about hobbies and previous work experience and hire those agents who are the most natural fit for your customers' needs. Once you gain proficiency in these initial steps, there are many opportunities to enhance your questioning to fully understand the personality and capabilities of each potential agent.

The connection that can be developed between your customer and your company in such a scenario is worth a great deal in customer retention and customer service quality. It also leads to an increase in average sales revenue and other financial metrics, as well as employee satisfaction and retention. Not doing so leads to big problems: Studies have shown that customer loyalty drops by up to 76 percent when a customer is less than satisfied with the customer service response he or she receives.

Customers who receive great customer service will associate your company with great care and will maintain or increase their loyalty to your company. Loyal customers are more receptive to up-selling and cross-selling opportunities; as many as half of customers are open to the possibilities of purchasing additional products and services at the time they contact your company with a customer service inquiry that is properly resolved. Also consider the impact of referral business; a satisfied customer typically tells one to three people, while an unsatisfied customer talks to as many as 10 people about your company.

Finally, as mentioned throughout, matching customer service and sales employees' job description with their skill set is also the best situation for them. As we know, work dissatisfaction is driven in large part by employees who are forced to work in roles that are contrary to their abilities and void of passion for them. Attrition rates can be dramatically reduced by providing enjoyable work to your employees through profiling them and then matching their skills to the correct roles and responsibilities.

Enhancing your company's ability to profile potential customer service and sales agents for specific skill sets establishes a win-win-win situation for your customers, your employees, and your company as a whole. Assess your current operations, talk to potential partners, and determine what improvements can be made to your customer service quality. That way, the imagined scenario can be a reality for your company as well.

About the Author

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