

The pitfalls and potential of web self-service

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Goals and measures are critical when developing a self-service strategy because organisations tend to have an inaccurate view of customer perception and the customer experience. There's a rather infamous study from Bain where they interviewed organisations and asked if they believed they delivered a good customer experience. 80 per cent thought that they did. Then they interviewed customers, and asked them if the companies were delivering a good customer experience. By contrast, only 8 per cent agreed.

This massive gap shows that you only truly know how well you are doing from a customer experience perspective if you have a clear definition backed up by accurate measurement.

With any major organisational initiative, I always recommend starting by thinking about people, process, and technology. Any significant technology initiative will fail if you don't have the necessary people and processes to back it up and a plan for success.

From a self-service perspective, you need to focus on how this channel fits in with your existing channels (mobile, bricks and mortar, etc.). Each channel should be joined up for a consistent customer experience. You should also focus on your plan for measurement, feedback and improvement. What are your goals for success? How will you measure them? How will you get feedback from customers on their experience, and are you staffed post-launch to make changes based on that feedback?

Obviously there are several components, but some key things to consider:

- **The full customer lifecycle** – Your strategy should account for prospects who are researching and comparing products, the purchase process itself, customer support, and return customers looking for add-ons and additional purchases.
- **Customer effort** – In everything you do, think about the customer effort. You should always try to make things as simple as possible for your customer. Usability studies are fundamental to ensure you are achieving this.
- **Escalation** – As much as we want our customers to complete their journey online, there are times when this is not possible. Make sure your prospects and customers have an easy way to escalate to an assisted channel like email, live chat, or the phone.

The great thing about web self-service is that it moves the needle on the two key metrics.

Service organisations are looking to improve. This means reducing costs while improving customer satisfaction. Often we feel that we have to choose between those two competing metrics. With web self-service, customers appreciate the choice of doing things in their preferred channel, especially in today's anytime/anywhere environment.

Additionally, the ability to let your customers complete transactions on their own is very cost-effective. Service agents can be deployed where they are most needed and reduce waiting times in



other, potentially non-digital channels. In this way, you are able to balance these competing metrics of cost and satisfaction.

Ecommerce is critical in today's competitive marketplace. With retailers like Amazon offering millions of products online, the only way to keep pace with your competitors is through effective ecommerce.

The top three issues I'd look out for are:

1) Inconsistency across channels: Your ecommerce strategy cannot exist as an island. You need to provide a consistent experience across channels to ensure your customers receive accurate information about products and services regardless of their channel of choice.

2) Not accounting for multiple customer types: Every customer is different. Some like to browse around, some like to compare, some know just what they want. Throughout your ecommerce strategy, keep in mind that people like to interact in different ways and offer options for all customer types.

3) Lacking escalation: When your customer is unable to complete their transaction through web self-service, you have to offer another choice. If the customer cannot easily get help through live chat, email, or the phone, they will simply abandon their purchase, or go to a competitor. It's important to get the most out of your web self-service so that your customers and brand can benefit. Consider your web self-service implementation more of a constant evolution, rather than a one-off project. Your products and services are always changing, as are your customer's needs and wants.

You should constantly be measuring success, both through accurate reporting as well as direct customer feedback to determine the success of your implementation. Another important feature that can really differentiate your brand is the ability to personalise the experience for your customers. Use information about the customer's location or purchase history to provide targeted support and cross-sell offers. This will in turn drive sales, provide faster support, increase loyalty and boost self-service usage.

Link: http://www.retailgazette.co.uk/articles/33200-the-pitfalls-and-potential-of-web-selfservice?dm_i=26NX,2OMDU,GHXB12,9SWUC,1