

Avoiding the Pitfalls of Customer Self-Service



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Customers are willing to look for the help they need, when they need it. They actually prefer that to waiting for responses from online forums or support reps.

By giving the customer the tools they need to resolve their own inquiries or facilitate faster issue resolution, you are making it easier for your customer to transact business. The trick is to make it intuitive enough to be effortless. Many businesses struggle to correctly deliver what their customers expect of self-service.

The pitfalls of customer service revolve around the channels through which consumers are looking to self-serve information. Technologically savvy consumers are eager to help themselves and will often outpace your company's systems, but you can't allow your customers' technical aptitude be more advanced than the technology they access.

Your company must keep pace with how your customers want to use technology, facilitating their discovery of answers in a digestible, easy to access platform or location.

Pitfall #1: The Channel Makes It Difficult To Find The Information Your Customer Wants

Mobile is a must. Trying to access information designed for the web through mobile technologies can be infuriating. Accessing FAQs and Help forums through a smartphone simply doesn't work. Putting the right information into the proper channel is essential.

Self-service works best when the information you share is complete and tailored to each channel. To keep content fresh and timely, you need to have a team of internal personnel dedicated to the effort with a focus on positively impacting your buyer's experience.

Key Takeaway: Make the information your buyers seek easily accessible, complete, updated, and in a variety of formats so that your buyers have a positive experience when trying to absorb information.

Pitfall #2: Confusing Multi-Channel Support With Omni-Channel Support

With a multi-channel strategy, you allow your customers to use the channel of their choice. An omni-channel approach focuses on how the customer interacts with those channels as a process. Having omni-channel support means the customer will have a positive experience across all channels - integrated, seamless, and consistent. When you focus on omni-channel, you are anticipating that your customer may start in one channel and move to another as they seek information and resolution. There is no fumble in the hand-off between channels when you use an integrated omni-channel approach.

If you don't have a seamless process for how consumers can change platforms or escalate issues, you may open yourself up to greater buyer frustration than if you were to only provide one channel for support. When your

customers are asked repeatedly for the same information (name, account number, date of birth, last four digits of their social security number, etc.) when their problems are transferred or escalated during the same exchange with a company, this can lead to reduced customer satisfaction, increased frustration and decreased loyalty. The customer will feel as though they are wasting their time engaging with your company and may choose another, more connected, company with whom to do business.

Key Takeaway: Giving your customer multiple ways to self-serve is your goal, but making sure that the transition between these channels is effortless is even more important. Create a seamless user experience that reduces redundant efforts for your customer and they will be more likely to appreciate their interaction with your company.

Pitfall #3: Treating Your Buyer As A One-Purchase Customer

When you approach your buyer as a one-time purchaser, you may be missing opportunities to engage with that customer as their needs evolve, or as you promote different products. By establishing a relationship with a buyer that extends beyond a one-time purchase you can engage with that customer as they need service AND as you want to promote your products and services. Organizations that do this effectively see considerably higher customer lifetime value.

By providing the information necessary to resolve initial issues, you will instill confidence in your buyer. Your customer will feel supported and this will cement their belief that they can rely on you for help in the future. When you make it easier for them to get the information they want and need, you are fostering that nurturing relationship where your customer gets what they need from your company, easily.

If a customer thinks about their first impression of your company, you want them to feel supported in their purchase not inundated with irrelevant information or lost trying to find hard to locate information.

Key Takeaway: Every impression matters, but the first is critical to fostering a longer term relationship. Your buyers should feel comfortable coming back to you for inquiries and relevant, digestible information.

When self-service is done well, it gives customers confidence in your organization and leads to increased loyalty. Your goal is to create a positive experience with your brand and you can do this by avoiding these pitfalls.

Remember, the quality of information provided in the proper format will help eliminate frustrations with a disrupted buyer experience.

Avoiding these pitfalls can improve your customers' experiences with your company and can lead to better relationships and increased sales. By thinking of the user-experience, managing the information being shared through different channels, and facilitating the discovery of pertinent self-service information, you can create loyal, happy customers.

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