



SPEED VS SERVICE?

Don't just Take Calls. Build Connections.

Perfect scorecards may not always translate into meaningful relationships with customers.

How often have you found yourself on a call with a company, patiently waiting for half an hour, only to be suddenly disconnected?

Have you ever experienced chat agents who simply drop or close the conversation without fully addressing your query?

Now, imagine a company proudly displaying impressive scorecards on a big screen. But here's the real question: Does that screen also reflect the meaningful relationships they're building with their customers?

We exist in a world where customers hold the reins. And in this realm, performance metrics serve as a pivotal gateway to their happiness — or at least, they should.

You know, tying performance metrics to strategy has been hailed as a solid practice over the past few decades. But here's the thing — there's a sneaky trap hiding within this organizational setup — a company can easily lose sight of its actual strategy and instead become hyper-focused on those metrics meant to represent it. While assessing the quality assurance of their call centers, companies forget that it is the customers themselves who wield the final verdict on whether their concerns have genuinely been addressed — not the managers.

Every single day, across practically every organization out there, strategy gets hijacked by numbers. It's like we start mentally replacing strategy with metrics— and let's just say, this sneaky phenomenon has the power to wreak havoc on a company's value.

The Substitute Trap

Metrics, as we all know, are never perfect. In the world of business, their purpose is to capture intangible goals, but it's evident—they often fall short of accurately representing what truly matters.

Imagine a company that sets out to “delight the customer” as a strategic objective. To measure progress, they decide to rely on CSAT scores. Now don't get us wrong, these surveys do provide insights into how well the company is satisfying customers. However, somehow employees start fixating on maximizing survey scores, losing sight of the real goal: to deliver an outstanding customer experience.

You can easily see the problem, right? Boosting scores doesn't always equate to pleasing customers. Remember those instances when, after a customer service interaction, you were urged to rate your experience a perfect 10 on a survey, with anything less being considered a failure? Such requests can skew feedback or inflate scores artificially, leaving a less-than-authentic impression. And let's not forget the incessant pop-up windows, follow-up emails, and automated calls bombarding us with surveys we'd rather ignore. The substitute trap can lead those responsible for customer delight to employ these metrics anyway, even if it deviates from their original strategy.

The 'resolution' in First Contact Resolution

One may wonder, what could possibly go wrong with First Contact Resolution (FCR)?

FCR is when an agent successfully resolves a customer's query in a single interaction. Sounds great, right? Well, not quite. FCR is categorized as a 'performance metric,' not a 'satisfaction' metric.

Unfortunately, many organizations tend to view FCR solely from their perspective, neglecting the fact that the true determination of resolution lies with the customer. For organizations that genuinely prioritize customer satisfaction, there should be no room for debate—the definition of “resolution” in First Call Resolution must be customer-driven.

The ‘first contact’ in FCR

Due to deficiencies in knowledge management record keeping or a lack of omnichannel support, it is possible for a customer who has previously reached out to an organization through multiple channels to be treated as a “first-time caller” when they finally connect via phone. However, if the customer feels that their desired outcome required more than one contact, it cannot be classified as First Contact Resolution.

In a customer-centric environment, performance metrics should be chosen based on their positive impact on customers. This is why organizations must perceive First Contact Resolution as a measure determined by customers. If call centers fail to meet customers’ expectations, their performance can be considered inadequate. Your perfect FCR scores may not accurately be depicting the picture.

Mishandling the Average Handling Time

Picture yourself making a call to a customer care department where you are requested to wait. However, after waiting for just under thirty minutes, your call abruptly ends due to the system’s configuration aimed at reducing the average handling time, which includes the time spent on hold.

Disconnecting callers becomes the only recourse for certain contact centers to meet their targets. Moreover, customers who endure lengthy waiting periods consistently feel enraged, resulting in agents actively avoiding interactions with them.

While this scenario serves as an extreme example, it is not an isolated occurrence. Nearly all call centers aspire to expedite the resolution of inquiries and complaints, often prioritizing efficiency through prominently displayed electronic boards visible to agents. Nonetheless, only a minority of these centers genuinely strive to cultivate customer relationships or actively seek their input. By placing speed ahead of service, these centers inadvertently exasperate customers rather than providing the intended assistance.

How obsessing over metrics can undermine customer interactions?

When call center metrics become an obsession, it can take a toll on customer interactions. Agents – driven by the pressure to meet predefined standards – can often resort to categorizing customer concerns into simplified boxes, prioritizing quick and effortless resolutions. However, this approach fails to address the emotional aspect of customer experiences and undermines the development of genuine connections.

Opportunity to turn the tables – not just scorecards

By focusing solely on metrics, there comes a risk of overlooking the intricacies of customer emotions. Customers want to feel understood and valued, and a generic, fast-paced resolution can look good on a scorecard but it can leave them feeling unheard and dissatisfied. It’s important to recognize that each interaction holds the potential to evoke positive or negative emotions, which in turn impact customer happiness and loyalty.

Remember, the true essence of call center metrics lies not just in meeting targets, but in ensuring customer happiness and cultivating long-lasting relationships. Let's see how you can do that.

● **The idea hunter.**

Customers who regularly interact with your products or services possess a wealth of knowledge and insights. They understand the pain points, the desired improvements, and the potential opportunities better than anyone else. This is where your call center agents come into the picture. They are ideally positioned to spot innovative ideas and emerging trends.

Empower call center agents as idea hunters by leveraging their proximity to customers who possess valuable product knowledge. Encourage idea generation through incentives and customer surveys. This encourages your call center agents to actively seek out and share new ideas from customers.

At ChatPandas, we have established, what we call, a dynamic ecosystem. Through the utilization of customer recordings and the showcasing of customer ideas, we communicate the significant contributions of call center staff to the entire organization, to drive positive transformations.

● **Listen and talk.**

Call centers have to understand the importance of prioritizing customer satisfaction and engagement over short-term efficiency. Rushing customers off the phone or immediately honoring cancellation requests may seem like a time-saving strategy – but it often overlooks the potential for deeper insights and opportunities.

By adopting a more proactive approach, businesses can gather valuable information from customers who express their intention to cancel or depart. Forget about the scores for a second; engaging in meaningful conversations, asking empathetic questions, and actively listening to their concerns can reveal invaluable marketing insights and reasons behind their decisions. This knowledge allows companies to better understand their target audience, refine their strategies, and ultimately gain a competitive advantage in the market.

Rewarding agents based on customer satisfaction rather than call duration encourages a customer-centric approach. For instance, at ChatPandas, by valuing quality interactions over rushing through calls, we build stronger customer relationships and reduce the risk of losing customers to competitors. Emphasizing customer satisfaction as a performance metric can lead to improved retention rates and increased revenue.

● **Focus on EX to improve CX**

'I am so excited to receive this call' – said no agent. Ever.

The issue lies in the fact that the call center encounter, or the overall customer service experience, is not only the most anxiety-inducing aspect for customers, but it also takes a toll on the well-being of the employees involved.

There is a strong link between employee experience, customer experience, and revenue growth. Happy agents make happy customers. Full stop.

Research has revealed an intriguing finding: companies that prioritize both employee experience (EX) and customer experience (CX) witness nearly twice the revenue growth compared to those that neglect either aspect. Let's not view employees and customers as separate entities, each confined to their own little box of happiness. Instead, it's the shared interactions and experiences between them that truly shape overall satisfaction.

With Chatpandas, we create an ecosystem where harmonious interactions pave the way for mutual growth and prosperity. This bridges the gap between employees and customers, cultivating strong relationships that drive satisfaction and success.

- **Redirect focus on what you measure**

By altering the metrics used for measurement, organizations can effectively manage demand and redirect their focus toward enhancing the customer experience. This shift ultimately leads to a reduction in the number of calls received from dissatisfied customers. At ChatPandas, instead of solely measuring call quality, we also implement the Net Promoter Score as a key metric for gauging customer loyalty. Similarly, instead of fixating on average handle time, we develop metrics centered around achieving a “first call right” resolution to yield better outcomes.

- **Feedback Fuel.**

Embrace customer opinions as a catalyst for growth and transformation. By actively seeking and valuing their feedback, you gain invaluable insights into their needs and preferences, enabling you to refine your products, services, and overall customer experience.

- **The Future leader wears a headphone.**

By recognizing the wealth of customer knowledge possessed by call center agents, companies can unlock the untapped potential within their call centers and nurture individuals who are laser-focused on meeting customers’ needs.

Transforming the call center into a breeding ground for new talent allows for the cultivation of a customer-centric mindset, setting the stage for future success within the organization. This fosters a culture where the customer is at the forefront of decision-making and permeates the entire organization. As these future leaders rise to influential positions, they bring with them a deep-rooted empathy and an unwavering dedication to understanding and meeting customers’ ever-changing needs.

A customer-centric revolution

When call centers fall short of meeting customer expectations, they miss the mark, failing in their fundamental duty of fostering customer delight. To truly enhance customer interactions, call centers must strike a balance between meeting metrics and catering to customer emotions. At ChatPandas, our culture has always been to steer clear of rushed call resolutions, and instead of obsessing over metrics and internal objectives, we lend a keen ear to customer voices, valuing their feedback and experiences. By doing so, we chart a course toward customer-centricity, surpassing expectations, and cultivating enduring satisfaction.

Businesses should invest in meaningful engagement and taking the time to understand individual needs, so agents can build rapport, foster trust, and create positive experiences that leave customers genuinely satisfied.

It’s time to go beyond scorecards and embrace a customer-centric revolution.

Place customer happiness above all else – even (especially) above the urge to rapidly conclude calls.