BT Case Study

**Social media makes customer service easier for BT and consumers**

Client: BT Customer Services

**Market Context**

In the highly competitive world of telecoms, customer service is a key differentiator. Good customer service reduces churn, drives loyalty and the ability to increase customer value through the sale of additional products and services.

BT’s aim was to make customer service ‘easy’ – thus making the service experience for its customers better, simplifying its own operations and reducing cost.

**Business/Marketing Objectives**

BT believes that customer service is a critical factor in driving growth. Customers with a positive experience are loyal, more likely to be advocates, and have higher lifetime values.

It wanted to be open and transparent, and empower customers by giving them more knowledge, whether through BT-generated content or from users and community members.

By raising the aspirations of its Customer Services team, it wanted to signal the importance of customer service in the company’s growth plans.

BT identified that ‘ease’ of customer service reduced churn and had positive effects on loyalty and advocacy. It created a ‘Net Easy’ score – based on the question ‘how easy was it to get the help you wanted from BT today?’ – to measure the impact and value of customer service. This metric was found to be more commercially effective than the “Net Promoter Score” used by many other organisations.
BT had several key aims:

- Make service the customer champion, encouraging it to be a key differentiator and factor in brand loyalty
- Make it easier for customers to contact and deal with BT by going from a single channel (phone) point of contact to a multi-channel approach, and use content and knowledge across all channels
- Open itself up to the customer, bring the customer voice upfront, and harness crowd-sourcing and customer-generated content
- Show that it was an innovative, modern company, as comfortable and adept in the same channels as its customers
- Focus on getting the basics right, aiming to give customers an ‘easy’ service experience rather than a ‘wow’ one, and driving loyalty.
Channel Choice

BT wanted a channel strategy that made it easy for customers, was more efficient, and reduced cost.

It identified that social media had the following qualities that made it ideal for customer service:

- Widens BT’s footprint and maximises entry points for customers
- It delivered a painless journey into contact for customers
- It could replace more traditional, and more expensive service channels
- BT could pre-empt in-bound contact by posting appropriate material and eliminate or reduce unnecessary contacts
- Where appropriate, customer journeys could be automated
- It could allow BT to identify hotspots and provide instant feedback
- User-generated content could reduce costs

At the same time, there was clear evidence of customer preference for social channels. Nearly 50pc preferred live chat or social media; among BT customers under 30, 27pc had used social media as a means of obtaining a service; and more customers (74pc) were taking a multi-channel approach to service.

By ease of use, social media outscored other channels, including e-mail, online self-service and voice. According to BT’s ‘Net Easy’ scores, live chat and social media outperformed BT.com by 2:1 and voice by 4:1.
Channel strategy

BT’s social media team is empowered to ‘own’ customer issues and provide an end-to-end, one-contact, resolution service.

BT uses four channels: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and a community forum. Each cross-promotes the other.

Its Twitter channel (https://twitter.com/BTCare) is used pro-actively to post information about outages and local exchange issues, such as a fire at the Gerrard Street exchange in West London.

A tweet about the pressure on 999 calls during the London riots was retweeted almost 400 times, giving a reach of 311,000 and reducing wait times on 999 calls from 41 to 0 seconds.

The Twitter team operates 12 hours a day Monday to Saturday, and eight hours a day on Sundays. It has 42,000 followers.

The BT Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/BTUK) posts a mix of news, promotions and engagement content. It also responds to customer complaints and seeks to solve any issues.

BT’s YouTube channel (http://www.youtube.com/btcare) contains over 100 information and explanatory videos covering subjects such as billing, router set-up, e-mail and broadband. Where appropriate, BT customer service staff interact on discussion pages.

The community forum pages (https://community.bt.com/t5/BT-Infinity-Speed-Connection/Story-so-far-1st-24hrs-with-Infinity/m-p/1088502#M118143) allow customers to discuss issues with each other, as well as BT. Community leaders are self-selected BT customers who provide advice and tips.

The community leaders generate about 20pc of the posts on the forum, and 28pc of the accepted solutions.

BT measures impressions and reach, in particular retweets. Retweets, for example, by personal finance guru Martin Lewis, have added 42,985 impressions.

Measurement

To calculate the ROI, BT analyses the number of unique customers, effectiveness or resolution rates and the operational cost per channel, separating out social media channels from the others.

Debatescape, a social monitoring tool, is a key factor in BT’s trends and productivity analytics

BT also measures:

- Customer preferences for individual contact channels
- ‘Net Easy’ scores
- Advocacy, sentiment shifts, and churn propensity
- Channel volume usage, uniques, posts, video views, follows and likes
- Call ‘deflection’ rates (ie substitution of social media for other channels)
Customer service staff productivity tracked on hourly-weekly-monthly bases, problem resolution rate and speed

**Results/business benefits**

BT has lowered the cost of its customer service operations by £2m a year. It estimates approximately 600,000 contacts per year are routed via social media instead of more expensive voice methods.

Customers say they prefer to deal with BT via social media and find it easier. Live chat and social media channels both registered 44pc increase in preference scores, versus a 2pc decline in voice, 7pc in e-mail and 47pc in white mail.

Customer experience is improved, leading to greater advocacy, lower propensity to churn and greater customer lifetime value.

**Key learnings**

BT says the following are essential in using social media as a customer service channel:

- Be open and transparent in your communications
- Ensure senior stakeholders are engaged, especially for ‘sticky’ moments
- Take it seriously and integrate into business processes; do not isolate or outsource customer service social media
- Be selective about where you should have a social media presence
ENDS