Using the Internet of Things to Deliver Effortless Customer Service

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The Internet of Things

Today's customers are social, mobile and connected. The result is an unprecedented opportunity to engage customers 24/7 in a personalized way on every channel and on every device. And in today's world, customers expect every service experience with your company to be one thing: effortless. With these new expectations, companies need the right technology and processes in place to deliver first-rate customer service.

Enter the Internet of Things (IoT), a connected world, where companies are connecting their products with the people, processes and technology within their organizations. But the IoT is much more than just technology; it's about integrating and managing a new channel for your business. It's about transforming the service delivery model with a customer engagement platform.

The IoT channel brings with it a new set of customer expectations and responsibilities for today's company. Similarly, when we saw social channels like Twitter and Facebook explode, companies that did not have a roadmap and strategy in place experienced a loss of control over their brand. But forward-thinking companies embraced this new medium and integrated social channels into their contact centers. Companies moved to where their customers were having conversations and established processes that made it easy and frictionless for conversations and follow-up to occur.

> Today's customers are social, mobile and connected.

The Internet of Things presents companies with that same choice: act now or idly stand by. With estimates of 50 billion connected devices by 2020, organizations that choose to wait and do nothing will be faced with a much more challenging, competitive environment. As for the organizations that embrace this change, a wealth of opportunity exists. These forward-thinking companies will have a strategy in place and answers for questions such as:

- What if you could connect to your products deployed in the field?

- How could connected products improve the level and type of service you provide to your customers?

- What is the value that can be created in terms of operating efficiencies, customer satisfaction and even new revenue opportunities?

- What does a preventative/predictive customer service model look like in this new, connected world?

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Today's Connected World

1 Connected Products

This is the starting point for a connected solution, where you transform your product into a "connected product" with sensors and chips to monitor critical components. Companies today are utilizing the IoT to identify a need for service or to highlight a potential for failure. Examples of this type of monitoring include:

- ▶ Remote storage tanks fluid levels that either need to be emptied or filled on a recurring basis

- ▶ Battery life which if not monitored can result in downtime of that product

- ▶ Temperature within commercial refrigeration units to prevent food spoilage

- ▶ Product waste of pharmaceuticals/medicine

The list of products that require monitoring to prevent downtime is a long one. Once the sensors and chips are in place, the next step is the communication layer. This includes gateways, Wi-Fi or the cellular protocol needed to establish connectivity to the sensors on the product and the underlying data points. The communication layer enables you to begin pulling data from your connected product.

2 Device Platform

Now that you have enabled your products for communication, you need a device platform to store, analyze and take action on all of this Big Data. Some key considerations/features are necessary:

▶ **Open APIs**

The device platform should enable you to seamlessly connect to any product and not be limited or constrained by existing sensors or gateways.

▶ **Device Management**

Visibility

You need visibility into your connected products and to be able to manage all of the critical information such as location, device threshold levels and alarm events.

Group Management

You should be able to group your connected products for ease of deployment and secure monitoring.

Device Control

When needed, you should have the ability to control your deployed products to apply firmware upgrades or other remote diagnostic troubleshooting.

Security and Scalability

Whether you have 10 devices or 1,000,000 devices, you want a platform that has a secure, multi-tenant architecture that can easily grow with you based on your needs.

3 Enterprise Application

The exciting part for businesses today is the ability to transform all of this data from the device platform into actionable information that is meaningful to customers, employees and partners within the Salesforce 1 Platform.

▶ **Customer Service**

Proactive notification of potential product issues being communicated by the connected product itself changes the customer service model. No longer is the customer calling to initiate service, but rather the customer service department is initiating the triage process.

▶ **Field Service**

Connected products are providing a richer set of data to the contact center to ascertain if a field service deployment is necessary. And if a field service technician is required, the agent has already narrowed in on the issue to ensure the technician has the right skill-set, tools and parts on board to resolve the issue on first call.

▶ **Sales and Marketing**

Connecting to your products provides you with detailed device information on areas such as usage or replacement needs for up-sell or cross-sell purposes. This information can be used by sales and marketing as targeted leads or inclusion in specific marketing campaigns.

▶ **R&D**

As research and development focuses on their next generation product, they can now leverage actual data from deployed products to make more informed decisions as they evolve their product.

How a Connected Solution Drives Value for You

IoT solutions are here today and companies are already realizing the benefits of connecting to their products. IoT solutions drive results across your entire value chain from the customer to the company responsible for the service and manufacturing of that asset.

Today's customer is busy. With work, family and other commitments, the average person has a full schedule and places a high value on his or her time. This is why the most successful companies deliver effortless customer service as a competitive differentiator. In a 3-year study of 125,000 customers, the Corporate Executive Board (CEB) found that high-effort customer experiences created a feeling of disloyalty amongst 96% of respondents. However, the CEB also found that 94% of respondents would repurchase from a company if that company provided low-effort service experiences.

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One way to reduce customer effort is via proactive service. We are seeing companies take proactive communication to a whole new level by connecting their products in the field. Let's use the following example of a company that manufacturers and services commercial refrigeration units used in restaurants, hospitals, pharmacies, etc. The company has enabled each of these refrigeration units with sensors to communicate their health and status to the company's contact center. They have configured and set operational thresholds to communicate temperature, humidity and the status of the compressor on the unit in order to signal when one of those key data points falls out of a specified threshold.

Using the example of the compressor, the company has set up an automated process to create a Case within the Service Cloud® that is routed to a contact center agent queue when this piece of equipment begins to show signs of malfunction. The contact center agent is then able to assess the problem, review past data points from the commercial refrigerator, and attempt potential remote fix options. If the agent is unable to resolve the issue remotely, she can assign the case to a field service technician for on-site service. The contact center agent proactively reaches out to the customer to inform them that their unit is experiencing an issue and that a service technician is en route. And all of this happens before there is any product downtime or loss.

Prior to deploying the field service technician, the contact center agent knows all the details about the specific issue and is therefore equipped to select the right technician based on skill set and ensure they have the right parts for the job. Before the field service technician arrives on site, he can review the diagnostics that the unit has been communicating and pull up any appropriate Knowledge articles for review. Once on-site, he is able to make the appropriate repairs in a timely manner and on the first visit.

▶ Increase Customer Loyalty

This is an example of a low-effort customer service experience because of a connected product. The customer did not experience any downtime, spoiled food or issues with their own customers. They did not spend time contacting the supplier—in fact, they weren't even aware there was an issue that needed to be addressed since the service company proactively stepped in. In addition, the service company technician arrived on-site with a strong understanding of the issue because he had access to the critical sensor points on the unit that were continuously communicating their status. The technician resolved the problem on the first call which meant the customer did not have to schedule or wait for another visit. The customer is happy, they are highly likely to tell others about their experience, and the chance of this customer leaving to a competitor based on price only is highly unlikely. This enables the service company to increase their customer retention rates and differentiate themselves on service rather than price.

▶ Drive New Revenue

Customers are seeing the value in proactive service. If the service company didn't monitor that unit, it is highly likely that the unit would have malfunctioned and caused signifcant downtime. This equates to product loss for the customer. By enhancing the level of service, the service company can offer an expanded service program that opens up new revenue streams. In addition, by proactively monitoring and setting up certain configuration cases, companies are able to recommend up-sell or cross-sell opportunities based on what the connected product is communicating. The connected product can then automatically create an Opportunity for new products or parts needed, as well as provide information to marketing to include the customer in a new campaign. Companies are not just gathering data anymore; they are using it to make smarter business decisions to benefit their customers.

▶ Optimize Efficiencies

It is expensive for companies to deploy a field service technician. It is also a direct loss when a field service technician is deployed when the issue could have been resolved remotely. Costs are also driven up if a technician needs to make a second visit to resolve the issue. By deploying a connected product solution, organizations can improve in each of these areas and have a material impact on the company's bottom line.

Get Started Today

IoT is here today. Your competition is developing strategies and solutions to meet and exceed customers' expectations. Waiting on the sidelines puts you at a competitive disadvantage and will put you behind other forward-thinking organizations. By partnering with companies like Salesforce.com and Etherios, you can develop a comprehensive strategy for the IoT and ensure your solution is on the right path. More importantly, we partner with you to understand and define the business value that you can provide for your customers, shareholders or partners.

Key Takeaways:

✔ Customers expect every service experience with your company to be effortless.

✔ IoT is more than just technology, it's about integrating and managing a new channel for your business.

✔ With estimates of 50 billion connected devices by 2020, forward-thinking companies will gain a strategic advantage in the market.

✔ IoT solutions are driving customer loyalty, opening up new revenue streams and enabling companies to optimize their operations.

✔ Partner with an expert to help your organization to develop a strategy and roadmap to put you on the path for IoT success.

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