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THE NEXT RETAIL SHIFT

Five ways retail customers are changing and how you can use customer service to capitalize



Mobile devices, ubiquitous connectivity, and social media have created empowered customers who are no longer loyal to a retail brand but to an experience across channels.

Retailers know these customer experiences are critical to their ongoing success. But how do they create unique experiences when traditional differentiators—price, product, promotion, and place—are increasingly irrelevant? What's more, how do retailers—especially brick-and-mortar retailers—deliver these differentiated experiences without breaking the bank?

Forward-thinking retailers are now focusing on *customer service* as the way to improve the *customer experience*. They're leveraging many of the same technologies that are driving these changes (such as ubiquitous connectivity and social media) to deliver frictionless service—retail's Holy Grail.

To service today's hyper-connected customer, retailers are choosing solutions that can standardize customer experiences across channels, including social media; empower agents with contextual customer, product, and service information; and enable customers to help themselves via web-based self-help options. And they're requiring these solutions be cloud-based because of the agility and scalability it affords them.

Learn how retail customers are changing and how you can use cloud-based customer service solutions to capitalize on these very shifts.



SHIFT #1: Purchase Path No Longer Linear

Think Beyond the Transaction

Today's consumers no longer make a straight line to purchase. Their purchase paths resemble infinite loops, crossing channels (online, in-store) and traveling through many points of influence (social media, online communities) along the way.

As a result, retailers are becoming less inclined to regard customer relationships as primarily transactional. Instead, the best companies view these relationships as a lifecycle they can cultivate. So while purchase data will still be important, the trend now is to augment it with a customer's product history, social history, loyalty data, and so forth.

The implications for customer service are clear. First, customer interactions count more than ever before. Secondly, it's more important than ever to track how a customer interacts with a retailer over time, no matter what channel. Now every touch point counts—from an 800 number to a tweet or a "like" on the retailer's Facebook page.

To take their customer service to this new level, retailers are requiring cloud-based solutions that can provide a more modern 360° view of their customer. One that enables them to see customer interactions, as well as past purchases, e-commerce, etc., across channels in a single view. Anything less puts the customer experience, and the customer relationship, at risk.

White Glove Multichannel Service

British luxury fashion house Burberry uses the Salesforce Service Cloud customer service app and Salesforce CRM to provide its online customers with the same "white glove" experience they're used to getting in a Burberry store. Features such as an integrated knowledge base, Salesforce Chatter, and a telephony system that instantly recognizes VIP callers ensure that customer questions and comments are fielded quickly and expertly.

SHIFT #2: Non-Stop Shopper

Make Customer Service Seamless

As digital convergence continues to erode boundaries between the physical and digital worlds, today's non-stop shoppers want to be able to start a conversation in one channel and continue it in another without having to restart the dialogue or repeat themselves.

Unfortunately, most retailers have yet to fully integrate their customer service function across channels. With little or no cross-channel visibility, customer interactions stay siloed. Or, as one well-known research firm put it: "Nothing says 'I don't care about you' more than forgetting a customer from one moment to the next."¹

To combat this issue, top retailers are choosing cloud-based customer service solutions that can be readily integrated with their existing business processes, systems, and information repositories. Such integration allows them to share accurate, current customer records, so customer experiences are consistent and seamless across channels.

SHIFT #3 Self-Service is the New Normal

Help Customers Help Themselves

What may have started with self-serve gas stations has now become the norm. Fueled by our round-the-clock, tech-savvy lifestyle, the desire for self-service continues to grow. In the past three years, online self-service or FAQs has grown in usage from 57% to 67%; chat has increased from 30% to 43%; and microblogging has jumped from 11% to 22%.²

The best retailers understand how critical it is to provide their customers with self-service options. That's why they're insisting on cloud-based customer service solutions that enable them to provide their customers with a host of self-service options via mobile devices and through the creation of retailer-sponsored online communities.



Such options literally let customers serve themselves on their terms, allowing them to get the contextual answers they need anytime, anywhere, while also letting them connect with the broader customer community so they can share their knowledge and learn from one another.

These same solutions also come with self-learning abilities to further ensure the underlying knowledge base improves with every customer interaction. Bottom line: customers are empowered and retailers enjoy lower service costs.

SHIFT #4 The Rise of Social Networks

Don't Beat Them—Join Them

Consumers are increasingly taking to Facebook and Twitter to share their opinions, read peer recommendations, provide feedback, collaborate, and so forth. And smart retailers are OK with this. In fact, they encourage it because they understand how social media is fast becoming the ultimate customer engagement tool, especially for millennials, who'll account for nearly 1/3 of total retail spending by 2020.³

Likewise, as social media becomes a more commonplace two-way channel for retailers and their customers, the customer service benefits become clear, too. By directly responding to a customer's question, complaint, or inquiry on Facebook or Twitter, retailers not only resolve issues faster but also provide proof to the world that they care about their customers.

It's little wonder retailers want a cloud-based customer service solution that gives them the ability to manage social interactions as a fully integrated part of their customer experience. This capability lets them extend their customer experience to the places where consumers are learning, sharing, and buying across the social web.



SHIFT #5 Always-On-Demand Customers

Empower Employees to Serve Customers in Real-Time

Customers expect efficient, effortless, and personalized service or *else*. In a study of more than 7,000 U.S. consumers, a leading research company found 52% of respondents said that they would abandon a purchase if they couldn't get a quick answer to their question, and 71% said that valuing their time was the most important thing that a company could do to provide them with good customer service.⁴

Retailers see these numbers, too. So they're making sure the cloud-based customer service solution they deploy comes with features that fully empower their service agents to solve cases with the fewest clicks—and that do it so all support requests are handled in the same way regardless if they've come in via phone, Facebook, etc.



Conclusion

Connected, informed, and empowered through mobile technologies and social media, today's consumers expect every retail experience to be effortless. To meet these expectations for frictionless service, forward-thinking retailers are increasingly focusing their efforts on improving their customer service.

By leveraging many of the same technologies driving these changes, in combination with robust cloud-based customer service solutions, retailers are able to provide a seamless and differentiated customer service across online and in-store channels—the very type of service needed to capture the hearts and wallets of today's hyper-connected consumers.

About Salesforce Retail Service Cloud

Salesforce.com is the enterprise cloud-computing leader. Our social and mobile cloud technologies—including our flagship sales and CRM applications—help companies connect with customers, partners, and employees in entirely new ways. Salesforce Service Cloud is the world's #1 customer service app. Built on the Salesforce1 Platform, Service Cloud helps retailers evolve their customer service to meet the demands of today's hyper-connected consumers. By seamlessly connecting mobile, social online, and in-store experiences, Salesforce enables retailers to deliver frictionless service that deepens customer relationships, builds loyalty, and drives revenue. Retailers worldwide rely on Salesforce Service Cloud to better connect with their customers, including Burberry, Staples, and TOMS.



See how Salesforce Service Cloud can help you

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