HARTE HANKS

7 tips to modernize your self-service customer care

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Introduction

The customer service era is now at the forefront of reshaping the full customer experience.

The current landscape shaped by the pandemic calls for innovation. Now more than ever, consumers are critical of the brands and businesses they support. The shift to digital gives the power back to the people and raises the standard.

Now the challenge continues. How do businesses make customer support more efficient and cost-effective without sacrificing quality? Is it possible? Yes. Is it easy? No.

Leveraging technology to improve and maximize the self-service help center leads the way in this effort. With these 7 tips from the customer care and technology experts at Harte Hanks, you can begin the journey to improving your self-service customer care and raising the bar for your overall customer experience.

7 tips to modernize your self-service customer care

1. Showcase trending search topics

Trending search topics is a useful feature that presents the most frequently searched queries. Often, visitors intend to search for one of the trending topics, eliminating the need to type anything into the search box. This feature helps reduce customer effort within the first few moments of the interaction.

Additionally, on the back end, companies use this trending search feature to understand their customers' most common recent issues. Since the trending report is in real time, it can uncover potential issues before they become larger problems.

One streaming client detected a problem with their service on a particular device from the data compiled through the trending search feature. They were able to begin troubleshooting the issue immediately, reducing the time to resolve the issue with their partner and to get customers back to viewing quickly.
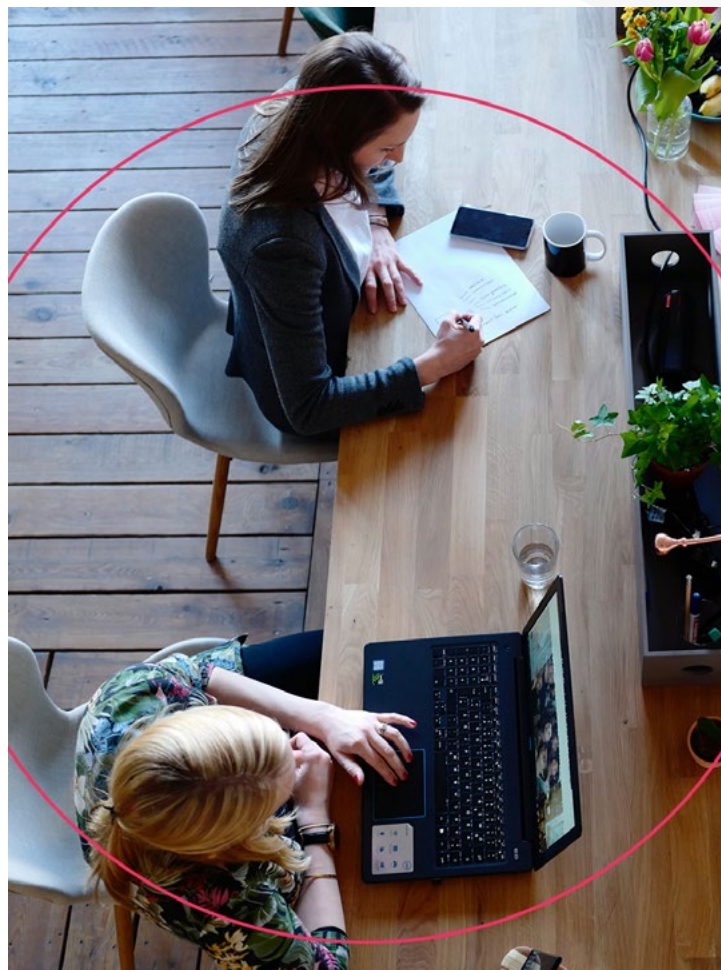
2. Develop engaging content

Consistent and reliable help center content builds trust with your audience. Providing helpful content your customers can refer back to whenever is most convenient and without speaking to an agent builds trust and satisfaction. According to a recent report from COPC, 61% of customers would use a self-service solution if it could resolve their issues.

Consider taking content a step further by providing not only useful content, but content that is truly engaging and visually appealing. Rich media, such as infographics, how-to videos, animated instructions, and more can be added to enrich existing content. Content that is fun allows customers to experience entertainment during the resolution process, while also learning more about the brand.

Requesting feedback is an important step to ensuring your content is effective. One of the best ways to get customer feedback is to simply ask the question at the end of each article, "Was this article helpful?" Include a way for the customer to leave feedback if an article did not meet their needs or if they feel the existing content could be improved.

3. Analyze data to predict customer behavior

Accurately predicting customer behavior gives you an edge over your competitors, but how do you leverage data to make accurate and useful predictions? The key is to identify what content works and what content doesn't.

As a base, start with metrics like site visits, total number of clicks and customer satisfaction scores. From there, take the next step with article ratings (see tip #2), number of channels to resolution, search topics and customer journey mapping, and exit percentage to improve existing content and find content gaps. We define exit percentage as the percentage of

customers who find the answer on their own rather than contacting an agent, where a high exit percentage indicates successful self-service support.

Once you identify any gaps, use that information to develop new and more engaging content. Understanding when your customers switch from your self-service support to another channel, especially to an agent, provides a unique lens into where there may be room for improvement.
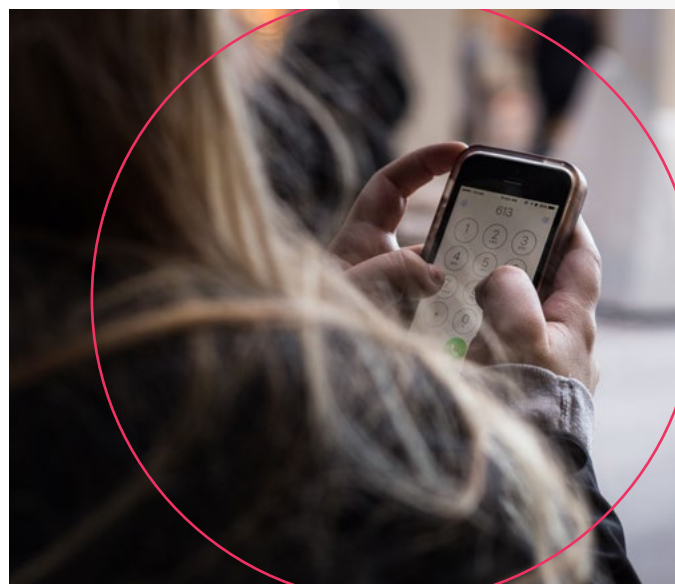
Additionally, you can predict what questions your audience will have after resolving the issue at hand. Use metrics like first interaction resolution for your help center to understand when your customers need more information. By collaborating with subject matter experts about this data, you can proactively resolve your customers' next question before they even know what it is.

This can be achieved by referring back to your customer journey to inform content creation. For example, suggest the appropriate related articles when multiple interactions and channel switching show there are common follow-up questions. Once you master this process, you will reduce customer effort and improve first interaction resolution.

4. Implement chatbots

Chatbots have quickly become key elements of self-service customer support. They make it easier to resolve customer issues while eliminating a significant amount of manual work for live support agents. According to COPC's Global Benchmarking report, chatbots are the second most used self-service technology, and 83% of customers had their issues resolved using the tool. When your customers need a quick answer without searching through articles, the chatbot is an excellent tool to point them in the right direction or provide answers to common questions.

Keep in mind that chatbots are not human replacements, but rather human augmentation. While you can easily program the tool with plenty of useful self-service answers, they can also suggest the best alternative channels to resolve the issue at hand.

Chatbots allow more of a multi-tasking customer support experience. Customers can still get their issues resolved while on a business call or watching their favorite show with a few strokes of their keyboard.

5. Leverage trends to identify and prevent issues early

Almost every customer support interaction has two solutions. The immediate solution is to solve the customer's issue, but when you dig a little deeper you can often find a solution to prevent the problem from occurring at all.

For example, creating content for commonly searched issues can prevent further escalation and result in a more effortless customer experience.

Similarly, using trends to identify product issues can save money and decrease customer frustration through early detection of product defects, ineffective packaging or other concerns. Prevention ensures that the problem is identified and solved early.

This approach worked for a top electrical appliance company to save money and avoid headaches for their customers. By monitoring and responding to product reviews, they identified a packaging issue that caused the product to arrive dented. By noticing the issue early, they saved money and avoided customer disappointment. Ultimately, they lowered their negative reviews by 33% in less than a year by continuing to monitor reviews and responding when they noticed trends.

6. Automate channel recommendations

Businesses are scrambling to keep up with the growing needs of customers everywhere. Seamlessly meeting customers through the channel they prefer at every level of interaction involves companies offering customers numerous ways to interact. Multichannel journeys are becoming common. According to a recent study, approximately 60% of corporate respondents stated that more than 40% of their customers use multiple channels to get a single customer care issue resolved.

When you offer multiple channels, it can be confusing for the customer to choose the best one. Make it easier for your customers by suggesting the best channel for their specific issue through automated channel recommendations.

For example, if a customer wants to sign up for a streaming service, a phone agent is the preferred channel since there is a sale at stake. But if they're canceling, you might send them to automated chat or email, where the agent cost is lower. A complicated billing question may be best answered with a live agent, while a question about how to set up the service on a new device can be solved with a simple self-service article.

Additionally, while live chat or phone may be the preferred channel for some issues during the contact center's hours of operation, the digital help center extends support to 24/7 availability. Automation seamlessly directs the customer to the appropriate channel based on which channels are available at that particular time, meeting the expectation for always-on support.

Providing channel recommendations guides your customers to the best channel for their inquiry, and automation takes the burden of determining that channel off you and the customer.

7. Integrate systems

Integrating the back-end tools necessary to provide multichannel solutions involves maintaining all the information needed for the customer lifecycle in one place. Your customers will no longer wait while the agent switches systems to answer their question. It also empowers your agents with details about every previous interaction to best help the customer in that moment without retracing their steps.

In the automotive industry, connecting car sales data with the sales and marketing CRM prompts car maintenance updates and reminders, suggests new services at the appropriate checkpoints, and offers next-vehicle suggestions to build customer loyalty.

Conclusion

After a satisfactory resolution, your customers care most about customer service being quick and easy. Empowering your customers to self-serve through their preferred channel allows a simple, positive customer experience. Using the 7 tips to modernize your self-service customer support, you will only improve that experience for your customers. While the customers walk away satisfied their issue is resolved, the agents are empowered, costs are lowered, and customer satisfaction increases. Win, win, win.

About Harte Hanks

We are The Customer Company

It takes a deep understanding to know that being present and responsive can make or break a company. By analyzing customer data and building an in-depth help center, companies are given countless opportunities to address a customer's needs. That's why it is imperative to reach them through the channel they prefer for an effortless customer experience.

Harte Hanks is a technology solution provider inside a customer care organization. We don't build technology and then walk away from it. We customize and launch solutions specific to our clients' unique programs. As products and support needs evolve, we continue to develop appropriate support solutions.

The Harte Hanks help center solutions begin with a base technology we know works. We launch quickly and affordably with a base set of features, or we create a completely customized solution to address all your interactions.

Harte Hanks creates a behavioral index of your customers based on your company's most recent customer insights using our wide breadth of experience across many industries. This insight allows us to enable your customers to resolve the most common and straightforward issues with the least amount of effort through self-service customer support.

Harte Hanks is distinctly unique in our service delivery and in the types of relationships we build with our customers. Our customers will tell you we have a strategic approach to addressing their business objectives. Each solution is specifically designed to meet the exacting needs of our customers to ensure that each engagement is deployed and managed as an extension of their business, providing them the ability to expand and grow their operations in a manner that matches their own business standards and philosophies.

We survey our clients often. Here's what they say about how our culture is different:

1. We act as leaders in our space vs. order takers. We believe in innovation and make recommendations to our clients on how to improve.

2. Everything we do centers around delivering both excellent and efficient experiences for our clients' customers.

3. We foster a culture of collaboration and teamwork with plenty of recognition.

4. Our client relationships, employee attrition and employee tenure are all better than our competitors. We focus on highly engaged, deep relationships with our clients.

From purchase to delivery and everything in between, we partner to seamlessly manage experiences with our clients' customers.

Contact us

Big or small, consumer or B2B, we love a new challenge – so contact us and let's chat about what we can do for you.

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