

Why SA companies must start focusing on social media as a service channel

 By [Gordon Geldenhuys](#)

19 Feb 2015

A growing number of consumers are turning to social media as their first point of contact when they have a question or complaint for a brand with which they do business. Yet too few companies have yet started to think about social media as a customer service tool - and the result is that they are missing out on some golden opportunities to build better relationships with their customers.

The implication is that social media should no longer be considered to be the job of the marketing and communications department - it should also be taken seriously by every part of the business that interacts with customers about service issues. Getting it right means that the business has an opportunity to be more responsive, personal and proactive in how it deals with customer service.

Customer demand

Since the advent of social media, customers have flocked to channels such as Facebook and Twitter to interact with companies when they have a service issue. One reason for this is dissatisfaction with contact centres and the impersonal service and sometimes slow service they deliver.

Customers are turning to social media channels in the hopes of getting more transparency, convenience and satisfaction from the brands with which they interact every day. Living up to these demands can be daunting for brands used to servicing customers through branches or call centres, but those that do it right can use social media as a powerful customer retention tool.



Jakub Jirsak via [123RF](#)

In practical terms, this means that companies need to make some mind-set and process changes to accommodate the demands of social customers. One important shift is that they need to be quicker to respond on social media than most currently are. According to research from Edison Research, 42% of customers expect a response on social within an hour, and 67% within the same day.

Deeper engagement

And not only do organisations and brands need to respond faster, they also need to improve the quality of their responses. This implies a shift away from the transactional and cost-focused call centre model to one where conversation with and

understanding of the customer take centre stage.

This means that brands also need to rethink the metrics they use to gauge customer service success. Where call centres measure success through metrics such as first-time call resolution, call abandonment rates, and time to answer calls, social media customer service may focus on KPIs such as customer retention, customer advocacy, and the quality of the conversation.

Another success factor in social media customer service is orienting the company around listening to customers. Social media is a place where customers can let you know that they're experiencing problems and give you an opportunity to set things right. If they are not heard they will go somewhere else.

Listen closely

Listening really closely is an opportunity to be proactive about service and perhaps even to please customers before they have even realised that they have a problem. Your social customer service reps can contextualise customers' problems and recommend solutions based on socially acquired knowledge.

Social media is also about creating a community around the brand - and a measure of success is how well the organisation does in creating evangelists for their brands. Good social customer service experiences are a way to showcase your service and create advocates for your brand.

Closing words

Resolving customer issues and questions through social media can be challenging because it makes your processes so public and demands such rapid response. But the risks and complexities are worth the potential rewards.

Social media can help you build more personal relationships with your customers, increase customer satisfaction, and keep ahead of potential customer service issues.

It all starts with making the commitment and a dedicated social media plan. When creating social media customer service processes, ensure that they're scalable, and keep listening to your customers.

ABOUT GORDON GELDENHUYS

Gordon Geldenhuys heads up the Social Media & Insights division of 25AM, a strategic digital consultancy and Salesforce Marketing Cloud Authorised Reseller. He is responsible for developing social media strategies and facilitating the licensing of Salesforce Marketing Cloud to companies in South Africa.

- Your brand is more than a hashtag - 17 Apr 2015
- To be successful in social media, brands must look from the customers' perspective - 27 Mar 2015
- Why SA companies must start focusing on social media as a service channel - 19 Feb 2015
- Five ways to get the most from social media - 4 Dec 2014
- Leading social media strategy from the top with a listening command centre - 28 May 2014

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>