

COLUMNS

## Customer support is your brand's untapped secret weapon

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Customer support is not just about dealing with disgruntled customers. It is much more than that. Done right, your customer support reps are in a prime position to help improve nearly every facet of your organization because they have a close pulse on your mobile customers.

Yet, a review of mobile leaders reveals that most companies have not taken advantage of this valuable feedback channel.

FAQ checking

We researched the 25 top-grossing mobile applications in the iOS and Google Play stores. What we found was startling: customer support was minimal or absent from these applications, many just offering an FAQ page or inquiry form as recourse for users.

And when we did fill out an inquiry form, only 15 percent of the iOS apps and 30 percent of the Android app actually responded.

Given that 66 percent of customers switch companies due to poor service, according to research from Accenture, the companies behind these mobile apps are positioned poorly for growing and retaining their customer base.

When you consider ecommerce apps, the situation is even more critical.

Research firm eConsultancy found 83 percent of customers required some kind of support in the process of an online purchase.

With in-app spending on the rise, businesses with mobile apps and mobile-only shops must take this channel more seriously.

Here are three ways a customer support focus can help advance your entire organization:

1. Identify upsell and cross-sell opportunities for your sales team. Every customer support interaction is also an opportunity to assess your customers' needs.

Customer support reps who are trained on your product offerings are in an optimal position to identify and flag opportunities where a customer's current products and services are misaligned with their actual needs.

By opening up lines of communications between your customer support team and sales team, you can home in on high-potential-conversion opportunities.

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Consider offering incentives that reward your customer support team for identifying upsell and cross-sell opportunities that convert and really supercharge your sales efforts.

2. Secure customer testimonials, success stories, and new use cases for your marketing team. Add authenticity to the marketing of your products and services by tapping into the voice of your customers.

Your customer support team is on the front lines to hear customer praise and learn about how they are benefiting from your product, service or app firsthand.

Customer support reps can quickly identify which services a customer is using, ask tailored questions to evaluate the use case and log that information to be shared with marketers.

To tap into this valuable stream of intelligence, regularly include support reps in marketing focus groups, and build customer satisfaction surveys that can be sent to customers following support interactions to collect customer feedback that can be leveraged for marketing materials.

3. Funnel customer feedback and product requests to your product team. While this may seem obvious, even the top-grossing mobile apps we researched provided only a few options to report app crashes or other bugs.

A series of reported bugs following a product update could drive users away, or, if given the proper channels, inform the development team about how users are engaging with the product or service so they can factor it into plans to expand or alter the offering.

Further, well-trained customer support reps can be armed with a few questions to gauge customer reception of newly launched products and features, as well as route customer-generated feature requests to product team members for consideration.

ANY COMPANY that values user experience and hopes to build and maintain a loyal customer base must orient its business to be customer-centric.

Removing communication barriers between the business and customer presents a host of opportunities to engage and grow a relationship that is profitable for both sides.

As mobile grows as a ubiquitous medium, businesses with a mobile app component need to refocus their customer support strategy to align with the current demand for quick, smart and actionable customer support.

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