



## The 2011 Transformation Agenda: A Blueprint to Achieving 'Outperformance'

### Innovating Customer Contact Centers

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The economic downturn of 2009 allowed contact center managers an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to do more than merely handle customer inquiries, resolve problems and take orders. When empowered, many contact centers proved adept at retaining customers and generating incremental revenue. Contact center agents are increasingly being viewed as an enterprise's last line of defense in retaining customers. Marketing managers now reach out to their contact center teams for help to meet revenue generation and customer retention goals.

Consumers are vital to the survival of any organization. An organization's relationship with the customer begins with the purchase of its product or service, and it is crucial that it pays attention to the customer response to its product and thereby maximize the 'moment of truth'\* opportunities.

The growth in social media and 'peer to peer'-based networks like Blogs, Facebook, Twitter has opened up a new online channel for customer interaction:

- According to various studies, social media accounts for one out of every six minutes spent online in the US.
- Businesses are paying Twitter USD 120,000 to sponsor a promoted trending topic for a day – that is up from USD 25,000 to USD 30,000 when the feature was launched in April 2010.
- Studies show that tweeting or posting on Facebook often gets consumers quicker resolutions to their issues than calling the customer service number – making customer communities one of the best support channels an organization can have. The sheer number of customers is larger than the number of support personnel, and best of all they are free to the organization.
- Further with the growing penetration of smart phones and tablet computers, consumers have 24/7 access to online social channels and mis-step / delay in response can impact a brand's saliency – if not monitored continuously.

Users say they are more likely to buy if a business answers their questions on Twitter.<sup>1</sup>

#### Mobile is one of the fastest-growing platforms in the world:

- With 40 percent of U.S. mobile subscribers regularly browsing the internet on their phone and a projected 12.5 percent of all e-commerce transactions going mobile by the end of the year, it is a channel that you need to be aware of.
- According to Google, mobile Web traffic will surpass PC traffic by 2013.

Hence, companies need to proactively develop a strategy to respond to the 'tsunami' of customer service interactions that would result, and protect against malicious and / or competitive campaigns in the online world.

Continuing with our series on *Customer Experience Innovation*, this article discusses innovation within the customer experience by *Innovating Customer Contact Centers*. *Customer Experience Innovation* is one of the four key management disciplines identified by the Corporate Executive Board towards achieving 'Intelligent Growth'. How Customer Contact Centers could 'Outperform' to achieve 'Intelligent Growth' is outlined below.

\* The term 'moment of truth' was first articulated by profound management thinker Richard Normann, in 1984, and later popularized by Jan Carlzon, who managed the Scandinavian SAS Airlines from 1981 to 1994. He used the term in his book titled *Moments of Truth* (pub. 1987) to mean those moments in which important brand impressions are formed and where there is significant opportunity for good or bad impressions to be made. Moments of Truth are any – and every – interaction with the customer. They are the heart and soul of the experience customers have with the businesses they patronize. They are also the singular most influential source of customer dissatisfaction.

<sup>1</sup> <<http://techcrunch.com/2011/05/29/users-say-theyre-more-likely-to-buy-if-a-business-answers-their-question-on-twitter/>>



## Key Imperatives and Action Plan for Enterprises to Achieve 'Outperformance' through Customer Contact Center

Enterprises today are looking at their contact centers to become value generators and relationship enhancers through every interaction for breakthrough revenue growth. A post-recession survey of customer loyalty drivers, *Customer Experience Diagnostic; Sales Executive Council Research* pegs the sales experience at 53 percent to the total percentage of contribution to customer loyalty.

At WNS, a leading Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) company, our approach is to move away from the 'one-size-fits-all' concept and draw up clearly defined short-term and long-term goals.

- **Re-evaluate the processes both upstream and downstream.** While innovating processes upstream, keep in mind that communication channels play a central role in the overall contact center strategy.
- **Customize the service delivery to improve the overall customer experience.** Lean is the latest buzzword and organizations across the globe are working towards achieving Lean processes.
- **Intelligent technology and an intelligent workforce** will play a crucial role in delivering a seamless customer experience. Leverage technology to support multiple customer service channels – voice, Web and social media.

Given below is a detailed strategy to enable contact centers to innovate and generate value and incremental revenue to an organization:

### ■ Short-term Strategy [90 days]

#### Improve the channel strategy

Traditionally, organizations would define, regulate and own communication channels to react to customers' queries. However, with the increasing use of newer communication channels and Internet-based social networking, customer expectations about service have undergone a sea change. Today, customers define, regulate and own the channels of communication rendering the contact center strategy at the core of a customer-focused enterprise. Most customers have access to phones, making it the primary channel of communication. However, organizations must deep-dive and understand the preferred mode of communication of customers. There is a need to create multiple interaction channels. WNS has partnered with multiple clients to improve their communication channel strategies. Continuously monitoring and re-defining the level of interaction with customers over multiple channels has helped improve customer experience and led to incremental sales revenue.

A recent survey by Nielsen Online showed that social networks and blogs are now the fourth most popular online activity, ahead of personal email. Hence, it is critical that

enterprises empower their contact center frontline agents with access to these conversations and provides working guidelines to drive their response to customer issues posted on networking sites. According to a recent *IBM Global Business Services Executive Report*, as of May 2011, there were more than 500 million active users on Facebook. Companies must engage in training contact center staff on social media guidelines.

#### Customized service delivery

The service levels and traditional metrics need to vary on the basis of customer demographics. The key is to market, sell and service at the right time. Introducing specialist desks with differentiated service levels will improve the overall delivery of any contact center.

- **High-valued customers:** These are customers who purchase high volumes regularly. Be proactive with these customers and save them time, effort and money. Analyze trends and proactively reach out through the preferred mode of communication to help unlock a great deal of value.
- **Hand-holders:** These are customers who might be willing to pay more if the organization were to pay them more attention. Traditional metrics like Average Handle Time (AHT) might not be a good measure in the case of these customers, as they require contact center agents to spend more time with them for added value.
- **First contacts:** First impressions are vital and can make or break a customer's opinion. Acquiring a new customer is as important as retaining the old ones.

WNS has partnered with several clients to create options and intelligence in the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) to directly route the right customers to Specialist Desks. This has helped improve customer satisfaction and resulted in incremental revenue.

#### Eliminate waste and improve utilization

Organizations must emphasize on Lean processes. Inefficient processes are costly, which is why contact centers must eliminate duplication of effort, reduce waste and rework, better utilize resources, and streamline entire business processes. One could uncover hidden value by implementing Lean and Six Sigma practices. This could start with your base operations and eventually be integrated across the enterprise. For example, WNS has partnered with a leading telecom provider in the UK and provided strong customer service / solution insights using WNS standard Business Process Excellence Transformation Tools and Practices. WNS contributed to 50 high-impact business insights, of which the telecom provider implemented 65 percent. This has improved the Net Promoter Scores for the telecom provider and the client was rated the 'No.1 Pay As You Go service provider in the UK'. (TRIM rankings)



## Automation

Technology plays a pivotal role in improving the efficiency of contact centers. One can start by automation of routine tasks, a move that will win over tech-savvy customers. Customers no longer want to contact a live agent for resolution of simple queries. Have a plan to review your simple contact types and look for opportunities to convert these into self-service options. This will free resources for handling more time-consuming, process-centric customer issues. WNS partnered with a leading travel agency and deployed online self-service options for common call drivers that resulted in significant savings for the client. The improving Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) scores indicated that customers welcomed this change.

### ■ Long-term Strategy [180 days]

A long-term strategy would require a thorough cost-benefit analysis and depend upon the enterprise vision and goals. However, every customer-focused enterprise sooner or later will have to evaluate this strategy and look at platform-based solutions.

## Predictors

Organizations must look at investing in analytical tools to slice and dice customer information over multiple channels and convert it into structured data to provide crucial business insights. This could also help in understanding softer aspects, like customer emotions and sentiments, to better manage the company's brand image.

## Integrated multi-channel Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

This can ensure that every interaction is monetized and new opportunities created and converted in real-time. CRM strategies have traditionally been designed to extract the greatest value from customers during the relationship lifetime. Today, this is fast shifting to becoming a new strategy – that of social CRM – wherein businesses must facilitate collaborative, seamless experiences and encourage dialogues that customer's value. One option is to monetize social media with time-sensitive offers that will propel them to act.

Providing an outstanding customer experience is not an option any longer. It is a strategic imperative in an era where most consumers see the majority of products and services as a commodity. Companies that do not keep up with the technology needs of their customers and allow them to interact via channels of their choice will lose business to more responsive companies. Product innovation is undeniably important, but an exclusive focus on this misses the key drivers of sales and re-purchase. Our data indicates that the selling process drives 53 percent of B2B customer loyalty; yet most companies pursue strategies that lean heavily on vague and tired concepts of relationship-building. Returns from this approach are deteriorating in the aftermath of the recession as customer buying behaviors have altered considerably.

WNS has partnered with multiple clients and re-engineered the operating framework in declining market conditions to improve sales revenue. We have:

- Developed customized sales training modules
- Introduced new metrics like increment in dollar value / sale vs. traditional metrics like percentage conversions / overall sales revenue
- Designed innovative sales campaigns and contests
- Provided cross-channel business insights to improve service offerings and provide strategic inputs to the marketing and product development processes for our clients

At WNS, we partner with our clients and help transform their contact centers from cost centers to value generators and relationship enhancers. Outperforming companies relentlessly seek to innovate their product and service lines. They combine this focus on what they sell with an equally intense focus on how they sell — targeting innovation across the entire customer experience.

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