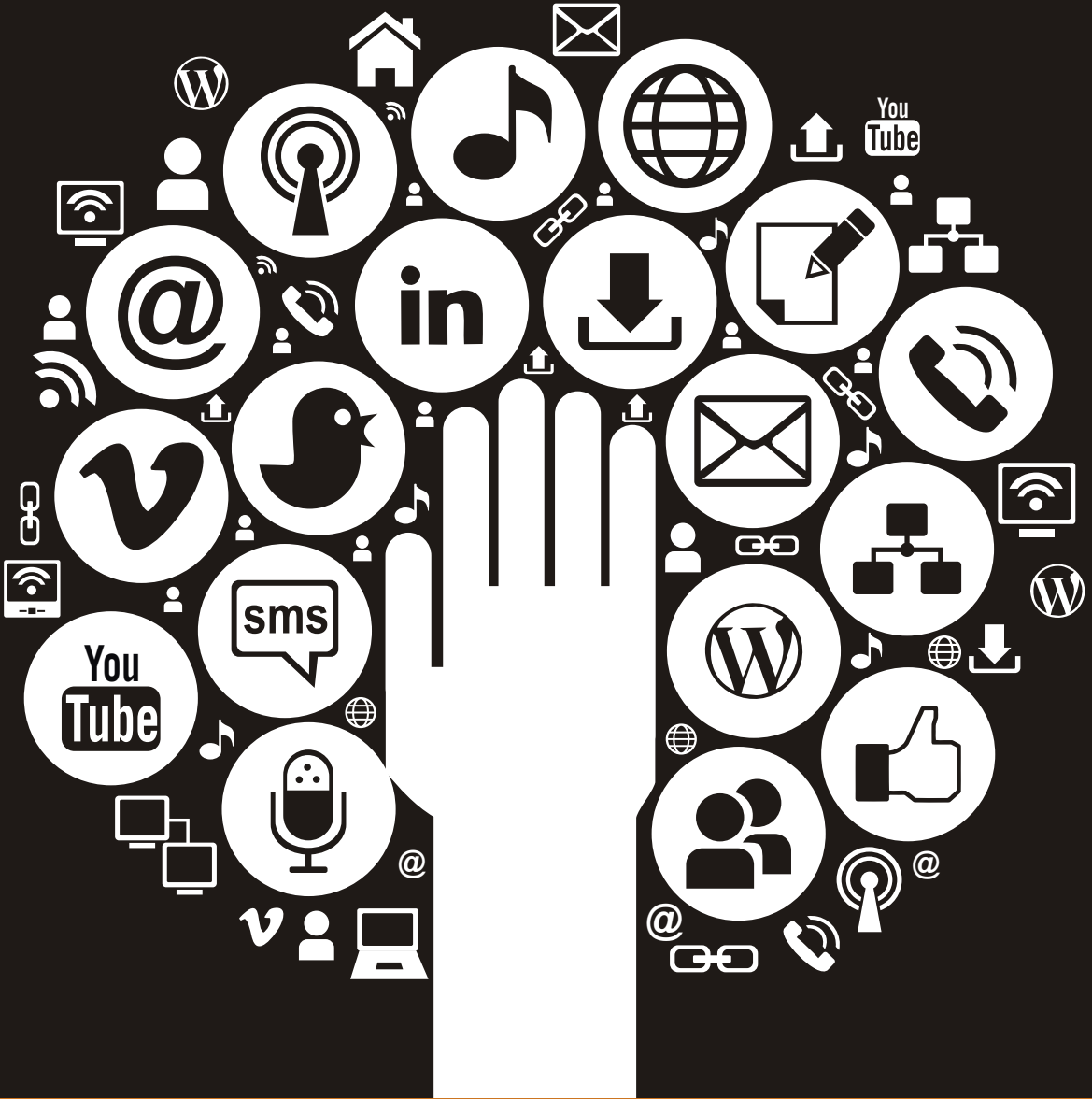


WNS

Extending Your Enterprise



Building Brands through 'Social' Customer Service

The customer has been, is and will always be king!

An anthem that every company
breathes and lives.

Shrinking wallet shares,
plethora of choices to choose
from, diminishing loyalty –
an outcome of intense
competition, are realities in
the 'globalized' world. One
differentiator that can still
ensure that companies sail
through the stormy seas of
profitability and growth is
'customer service'. Challenging
for some companies, while
innate for others.



Change Comes Calling

It was just a decade or a little more ago that customer service meant customers reached out to companies through hand-written letters, phone calls or personal visits at a company outlet.

With customer loyalty gaining all-increased importance, companies partnered with providers to handle customer engagement through phone calls. Even as organizations were looking to optimize their offshore customer service operations, technology opened up a slew of channels, including e-mail, sms, chat, video chat, smartphone applications in addition to the age-old Interactive Voice Response (IVR) that can be deployed to service customers, deflecting calls from the expensive voice process.



Recent surveys find that 64 percent of customers in the B2C industry first dock on the Website, but 83 percent are deflected to the voice process (calling) due to ineffective handling through all the new channels. The problem to solve for is to optimize channels of response, contain the customer on the Website and address his / her needs, better still, make a sale.

Enter Social Media

With companies looking to reduce customer support via calls and increase adoption of the new forms of Web-based communication, SOCIAL MEDIA has emerged as a channel with the potential to re-write some of the conventional rules. Unfortunately, most of us, including companies that have taken to it, don't see its true potential yet, and hence have not been successful with capitalizing on its strengths to the fullest extent.

Conventionally, customer service was a necessary cost to preserve brand reputation, never to enhance it. That was left to the marketing function. Social media releases customer services from such a limited role.





Social media, essentially, is a place of networking where small communities develop around shared interests. In this vast network, only about 0.01 percent are really interested in your brand — these are your loyalists and social media offers a platform for you to connect and engage them.

The remaining 99.9 percent of the network are still small communities with different interests who may occasionally have a question or a point of view about your brand.

This is where conventional marketing practices exit, and customer services enters. Customer service on public social networks is about addressing those several hundreds of questions that different communities ask about your brand or service everyday; and also absorbing the occasional feedback that they may provide to improve your brand and service proposition.

Tread with Caution

Public social networks are well, public, and hence play host to a sea of opinion flowing at all times of the day! Research indicates 59 percent customers use social media only to 'vent', while 72 percent brand choices are made basis social media feedback.

Most companies have their marketing teams handling this new channel, and therein lies a problem. Social media, being another media channel, the approach for the most part has been to develop digital adaptation of the regular marketing content and promotions, and putting it up on social channels, expecting likes and re-tweets, hoping for something to go viral.

The fallacy of this approach shows up in some of the social bloopers that companies have faced. With every due respect to the logos, I present some cases here.

In January 2012, fast food giant McDonald's tried to create some social media buzz by getting the hash tag '#McDStories' trending on Twitter. The company began by posting: "When you make something w/pride, people can taste it," - McD potato supplier #McDStories".

It all went horribly wrong when the restaurant's online critics took to the keyboard and used this as an opportunity to relay some of their most horrifying experiences of eating at McDonald's. Stories from finding finger nails in food, losing dramatic weight after stopping visits to the restaurant and even hospitalization as a result of eating McDonald's food appeared on Twitter under the same hash tag the company had themselves created. It lasted two hours before McDonald's pulled it off. Lesson learnt: Don't force conversations upon people. Engage on their terms. Be prepared for real feedback.

In Feb 2012, Toyota planned a social media campaign around the Super Bowl. Called the “Camry Effect a Friend Giveaway” — it attempted to get people on Twitter to sign up for gifting a friend the latest Camry. What may have seemed like a great campaign idea and great event finals to launch it on, where it slipped was when Toyota used conventional marketing to reach out to the most number of people.

Toyota sent the message to anyone who used the hashtag #superbowl, # patriots and #giants. It further created 10 Twitter handles to get around Twitter’s hourly usage limits. The spam it created was pretty badly panned, not only on social media but in news channels and ended with the label of being the worst Twitter campaign ever. Lesson learnt: Don’t attempt to broadcast on social networks.

Look at Nestle circa 2010. It was facing pressure from environmentalists such as Greenpeace to stop using palm oil, which apparently is a source of deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions, and endangered species loss, but things came to a head when Greenpeace posted a rather nauseating Web video targeting Nestle as a threat to the livelihoods of orangutans. Nestle apparently lobbied to have the video removed from YouTube, citing a copyright complaint and things just got worse.

Greenpeace supporters started posting anti-Nestle slogans with modified versions of Nestle brand logos on Nestle’s Fanpage, en masse. Nestlé responded with a mild threat that it would delete derogatory comments. A Nestle representative trying to address the situation with responses did far from calm things down. While all that Nestle was trying to do was to protect its intellectual property, the Web saw it is an attempt to stifle criticism under the garb of copyright and trademark violations. In the end, Nestle’s representative was forced to apologize for unintentionally snapping back at fans.

Each of those genuine customer-centric responses is like a little advertisement for the brand, made publicly and unlike conventional marketing, needs no repeating as it will be carried forward by the customer network. It is rightly called the 'multiplier effect', with its power to multiply the audience and impact of response.

Begin the Social Media Journey with the Right Framework

At WNS, we usually consult our clients on making five key decisions before embarking on media customer services using social media:

1. What social footprint would they like? Near and medium term

This helps precipitate choices around how many lines-of-businesses do they want to support with social customer services, in what all languages and determine how many social accounts may be required.

2. What social contract would they like to have?

Set the rules of engagement with the social media communities. What would they respond to, what would they let the community manage, what would they manage offline and what would they delete.

3. What outcomes do they expect?

Help clients quantify the outcomes in key metrics — social handling time, social customer satisfaction, first-call resolution at the first level to monetization of social customer services in more advanced service models and so on.

4. What SME (Subject Matter Experts) support would they need to provide?

Outline to clients on the level of expertise they will need to provide such as Legal, Corporate PR and Marketing.

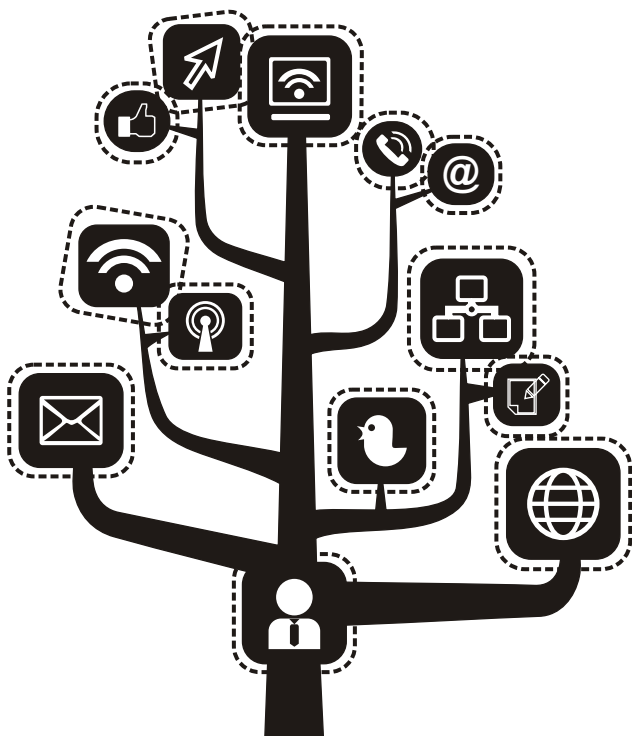
5. What social platforms would they like to build?

What themes and interest groups would the brand want to engage? What would be the underlying purpose? How would they want to engage and connect with their loyalists and those who are passionate about their brand? How do they want to converge with existing brand and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) platforms?

I would recommend beginning the journey with monitoring social media continuously for a few months to understand what is being asked and what is being said. The choice of tool is important too, and while you begin with monitoring, makes sure the tool offers some level of social customer services workflow.

At WNS, we monitor our client brands on customer themes, passion intensity, brand associations, influencers and benchmarks to closest competitors. Some of these themes and influencers, clients can use appropriately for building community platforms.

To execute customer services on social networks, it makes sense to begin with one channel — the most popular ones are Twitter and Facebook fanpage.



It is a Revolution

Contrary to whatever cynics might say or opine, social media is a revolution. It does complement conventional marketing in more ways than one.

Research shows that organizations evolved with the use of social media on an average have 178 corporate social media accounts. Not surprising, considering the maze of networks out there, the customer service lines and language-specific services that global organizations need to provide.

There are the public social networks — Facebook, Google+, Pinterest, Foursquare, MySpace and Youtube, which are broadly social / photo / video networking services and there are microblogging sites such as Twitter and Tumblr. Then there are forums, social news sites like Reddit and blogs.

There are lines-of-business or service category specific customer service desks that organizations would want to offer on social networks — customer helpdesk, technical helpdesk, specialized helpdesks such as baggage claims in travel, marketing helpdesk, PR desk and so on. Finally, language-specific desks, usually a minimum of four languages and the number of accounts start multiplying.

Last but not the least, there are a variety of social media tools — those which specialize in monitoring alone; those which specialize in campaign management; those which specialize in community management; and finally some which are emerging as specialists in customer services.

Media Circuits

For frequently consumed products such as beverages, the selling opportunity is several occasions every day. Marketers for these products, therefore, look for reminder media touch points to the customer by each of those occasions. Media circuits — a continuum of such media touch points by customer target group is every marketer's dream. Social media provides such a media continuum, with smartphone mobility it taps into customers on the go, something that conventional media like television cannot.

Some industries like travel are hugely advantaged by this. Seventy-two percent of customers while travelling log onto social media. The top five log-in destinations for Facebook are airports, with Los Angeles, Hartfield Jackson and Chicago O'hare topping the charts. The opportunity is not to advertise to them but to custom-serve their needs as they are experiencing your product or service. There is a reason why social customer service during flight disruptions is so anecdotal.

This needs a paradigm shift in the customer services mind-set. It is not about asking the customer to come to you — it is about reaching out to customers on their networks. In other words, first call resolution, reaching out to the customer. Doing it personally, not hiding behind the marquee of your brand. Just like the community town hall where the customer just shouts for help and you are there to service her.

Next, it is necessary to analyze the conversations. At WNS, we offline sample social media posts, and text mine the data for two specific purposes for our clients:

- To parse actual customer queries and complaints from non-queries or general opinions about the brand (the former is seeking a response while the latter is not)
- To classify the levels of service helpdesk we need to provide (no “standard apology and deflect” model)

The above will enable us to determine the total addressable customer traffic and help us set up a social customer services workbench with an automated workflow that can analyze social conversations in real-time and deflect conversations to different service-level helpdesks.

The solution seamlessly integrates with the behind-the-firewall customer services desk. While choosing a tool, we prefer one with a strong analytical package, multi-lingual in nature, with a single user interface to manage multiple social accounts, and one that provides the flexibility for customization.

Once you have set up a social customer services channel, it is important to continue to monitor the channels and analyze the efficacy of social media services and fine-tune it. There would be seasonal swings by holiday season and other sector-specific seasons. The social response model would have to be calibrated accordingly.

Years Ahead

Research has predicted that voice processes will shrink from current levels of 50%-60% to 27%-40%; while social media is expected to expand from five percent to anywhere between 13%-26%; and Web chat will also expand from eight percent to 12%-23%.

Research studies have all sorts of predictions on shifting channel mixes but, let's look at it intuitively. With social customer services, we are proactively reaching out to customers in their communities, addressing their problems. If we reach out to serve them, they will not need to call us anymore.

Very often, rants (a commonly used word for venting frustration in the realm of social media) are the reason why organizations want to get into social media – basically for damage control. In our monitoring research, we found the top three rants on social media currently pertain to Website not working, contact center not responding and unsolicited promotion e-mails. Once an organization begins social customer services,

these are replaced by actual customer queries — social media customer services rightfully get the chance to provide first-call resolution.

That said, the conventional voice and chat channels will remain. Some customers just like the personal touch of a voice over the phone line. Then there are certain processes which require access to customer CRM or reservations systems, and information security (Infosec) would require deflecting the social query into a one-to-one channel.

From our experience, the split seems to be about 60:40 — about 60 percent of the social media comments are directly addressable and about 40 percent need to be taken offline to the contact center due to these Infosec considerations.



Our Experience

A question often asked is about monetization of the loss of revenue of ignoring social media. Since this is a new channel and not completely tapped, all that is on offer from advisors, suppliers and the social media experts is anecdotal evidence. Here are a few facts from our experience with monitoring.

When we began monitoring, one of our clients in the travel industry with no presence in social media services, had a traffic of about 6,000 tweets a month with 480 customer complaints about issues. This client has average revenues of \$650 per transaction. So the monetization was a little over \$300 thousand on Twitter. Within the first six months of setting up the Twitter helpdesk, the queries had jumped 10X! The monetization was now over 3 Million on Twitter alone.

About WNS

WNS (Holdings) Limited, is a leading global business process solutions company. We offer industry-specific solutions to nine, including Banking and Financial Services; Healthcare; Insurance; Manufacturing; Retail and Consumer Products; Shipping and Logistics; Telecommunications; Travel and Leisure; and Utilities. We also offer horizontal solutions, including Finance and Accounting; Research and Analytics; and Contact Center. We have professionals working across delivery centers in Costa Rica, India, the Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Sri Lanka, UK and USA.

Analytics is a core differentiator for WNS. Leveraging our deep research and analytics expertise, industry intimacy, focus on operational excellence and a robust global delivery model, WNS helps leading companies make insight-based business decisions. The WNS Analytics Decision Engine (WADE™) is an award-winning solution for driving strategic insights to the C-level suite.

Write to us at marketing@wns.com to know more