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Voice of the Customer Programs:

From Listening to Action

There is always a natural disconnect between gathering information and taking the proactive steps to actually do something with that information, and voice-of-the-customer programs have traditionally fallen victim to it. Collecting customer feedback data is easy enough with modern survey tools, but all too frequently the information isn't acted on in a consistent, organized, and focused manner.

In the following contributions from our experts, you will find advice on how to generate systemic insight-to-action progress that will keep your customer experience efforts on course in an ever fluid and dynamic environment.

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Voice of the Customer Programs: From Listening to Action

BEYOND DATA COLLECTION

For many, "Voice of the Customer" means data collection. Multiple-choice customer surveys with feedback charted, graphed and presented becomes the output from a data analyst, and then … nothing seems to happen. "Dead end data" from customer feedback efforts is not an isolated phenomenon. The Temkin Group notes that while more than 75% of organizations make the effort to solicit feedback, well under 40% actually make changes based upon customer insights.

Today's Voice of the Customer (VOC) programs are plagued by "reporting only" results. Software solutions consolidating and presenting survey data may seem attractive initially. Unfortunately, organizations often make a common mistake: they assume customer experience (CX) *awareness* equals *action*. Departmental silos of focus, accountability avoidance and more can work against the best intentions of any "reporting only" VOC program.

DRIVING ACTION FROM INSIGHT

To drive effective action from VOC insight, you certainly need continuous feedback across multiple channels of communication from your customers. You also need a digital method for compiling the data and sharing it across the enterprise. Finally, you need a framework that addresses how to fix problems for individual customers, how to make it better for everyone else, how to drive continuous improvements, and how you might strategically innovate to deliver a better CX.

To make the leap from simply reporting on CX issues to driving corrective action, define:

1. Organizational Outline – Establish an internal persona map identifying who will have visibility to customer feedback. Some CX solutions offer features such as real-time alerts based on text and speech analytics. The key issue is to think expansively about who should receive this type of dynamic information; it's not just about the frontline staff and their managers!

Guide your decisions by the impact each data recipient will have in driving action. Departmental boundaries and roles (such as executives, managers and frontline staff) should all be in play. Presentation format is critical: consolidated statistics and high-level trends will engage senior executives, while a deeper level of detail is necessary for frontline managers.

Takeaway: Define who should receive customer feedback to drive action, and present it to match each recipient's specific needs and interests.

2. Process Plan – The rubber meets the road when you begin building daily action plan frameworks for each persona. Here, actions should be defined with a frequency and cadence carefully aligned to each role. Mapping out action steps helps achieve clarity, consistency and focus.

A CX process plan for an operations or frontline team manager might include:

- Steps to take when a CX alert flags a specific issue (issue tracking, response)
- Using team huddles to engage the frontline (CX alert reviews, frequency)
- Improving performance with 1-on-1 coaching (how to present feedback evidence)
- Encouraging a culture of CX optimization (performance recognition, awards)
- Shift close wrap-up (review the CX delighters and detractors most recently encountered by the frontline team)

Takeaway: Outline action steps customized for each persona. Make sure to define frequency and cadence to promote ongoing engagement.

3. Prescriptive Performance – Detailed playbooks ensure your process plan fuels action towards CX improvement. A playbook takes the process plans designed for each persona and adds prescriptive detail on exactly how to execute each step.

The goal is to offer helpful and engaging action guidance, rather than a hard and fast script.

For example, use flowcharts in team huddles to guide action steps. Include what to do for planning, how to prep for daily huddles, how to gather the team, and how to wrap up. Describe where to get needed information for effective team meetings. CX software that consolidates customer feedback from a variety of sources and channels can be especially valuable as a tool for supporting action. Estimate timeframes for each step to help scope expectations for effort.

Takeaway: Go a step further to define the detail within each process step. Keep your personas' focus in mind to tailor long-lasting CX action and performance.

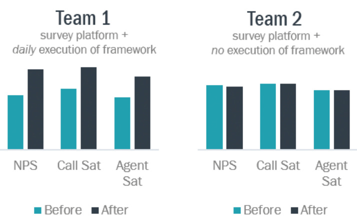
DOES THIS REALLY WORK?

There is, of course, significant effort involved in crafting processes and playbooks for each persona. Some may argue they have no time for team huddles and CX issue reviews, especially for frontline employees – opting instead to 'show them some reports, and maybe drop the hammer for poor performance.'

Recent Convergys research shows this attitude does not lead to CX improvement.

Case Study: Although a group of customer service agents already had access to customer feedback data, their performance needed improvement. To test the effectiveness of a new insight-to-action program, Convergys divided the group into 2 teams. Team 1 piloted the new program, which included a corrective action loop with steps outlined in plans and detailed in playbooks. Team 2 continued with business as usual – they could continue to check in on dashboards and performance statistics, but nothing more.

Results over a three-month period revealed a telling result. Team 1 significantly outperformed Team 2 on key metrics, improving their NPS scores alone by 8-10 points, plus gains in their customer and agent satisfaction scores. Team 2 saw no change in performance.



It's important to note that both frontline teams had identical *access* to survey results in reports delivered by a VOC software platform. Clearly, performance improvement isn't just about access to more data, or even digitally sharing feedback across an enterprise – measurable results require a framework for action.

VOC FOR CONTINUOUS ACTION

A "put the fire out" reaction can happen when declining satisfaction scores and customer churn become too painful to ignore. Analysis, reports and directives to make improvements based on insights from customer feedback may actually yield some results, at least in the short term. Unfortunately, CX gains will quickly erode without a framework for sustainable action.

Instead, you need to have a clearly defined framework for continuous CX improvement. It is important that all parts of the organization understand, and are executing against, a similar process.

1. Foundational Fundamentals – Core goals, objectives and CX measurement standards are key. However, one of the most important components for ongoing CX action and improvement is a governance model. Getting other parts of an organization to care about CX – beyond the CX team itself – is an almost universal challenge.

A cross-functional steering committee helps break down the corporate silos that tend to inhibit CX action. Another tip is to empower a CX champion: someone who guides the steering committee and can help provide motivation and overcome obstacles.

Takeaway: Establish a CX foundation for goals, measures and a governance model spanning the organization. Shatter barriers based on a lack of CX interest with cross-functional steering and CX champion leadership.

2. Insight Inputs – Define the ongoing customer feedback information to be included in your VOC program. To continue to support action from feedback, you need a comprehensive approach. Qualitative feedback across multiple channels with verbatim richness is essential to identify root cause more effectively. But remember: it's not just about more survey data.

Insight inputs should include learnings from customer follow-ups. Coaching topics and results are great sources for CX evidence for action. To drive ongoing improvement, define your insight inputs to take advantage of the corrective CX actions you are taking on specific issues.

Takeaway: Make sure to capture and combine rich customer feedback, and define all associated correct actions. Use this broad perspective to create a culture for CX optimization.

3. Enduring Effort – You need to define a continuous CX framework your team can follow to encourage ongoing CX optimization. This prescribed format will make it easier to identify common issues from insight inputs, conduct root cause analysis, and create solutions that deliver measurable results.

Examples of steps to include are a process to filter quick-fix CX issues from those needing further investigation; an outline to focus attention on the "why" for a CX root cause analysis; identifying people, process and technology gaps; developing solutions with business case change; a champion for change; and tracking and reporting on results. You'll achieve consistency, and even enthusiasm for ongoing action, when everyone understands an established CX optimization process.

Takeaway: Make it easy for everyone to contribute towards CX improvements, with a commonly understood process for optimization.

STRATEGIC INNOVATION

There is great opportunity to take advantage of your CX processes for action and improvement as ignitors for strategic value. New awareness of the state of your CX – and most importantly, your most impactful levers for improvement – instantly become strategically valuable.

VOC insight-to-action isn't just about problem resolution. You can gain insight for competitive differentiation, product modifications and new services from action-based evidence.

CONCLUSION

Creating results from your VOC program requires more than capturing and reporting on survey data, and customer feedback software alone is not enough to incent change. Avoid common pitfalls by designing action steps meaningful for specific roles in your organization. A CX framework for corrective action, continuous improvement and strategic value that spans your organization is a powerful resource for both insight and action.

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6 Tips for Presenting Meaningful Customer Interaction Data to Just About Anyone

Understanding the customer has always been critical to success and growth for businesses in any industry. As advances in technology have empowered customers and increased their expectations, and both the cost of losing a customer and the value of retaining a customer has increased, the need for accurate, ongoing customer insights is greater than ever.

Traditionally, businesses paid huge fees to market research firms to tell them what their customers wanted. Today, more businesses are realizing they have the complete voice of the customer—a goldmine of customer insights—sitting uncultivated in their contact centers in the form of call recordings, chat transcripts, customer service emails and other customer interaction data.

Modern contact center leaders know there are powerful insights within these interactions, but the challenge has been honing the signal from the noise. New contact center analytics tools make it simple and intuitive for any business to transform their expansive unstructured customer interaction data and mine it to reveal common customer issues and trends.

TURNING CUSTOMER INTERACTION INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

But once you have extracted the data, the real challenge lies in making it actionable, in using these new insights to improve products and services or to address operational issues within the contact center and beyond. Like any technology-enabled department, the contact center faces challenges in effectively presenting customer interaction trends in a way that influences and garners approval from key stakeholders. But data-driven decision making—or "D3M," for short—is the way of the world today. And equal in value to being able to mine unstructured data via analytics engines is being able to explain it to others, including executives.

Even the most credible contact center leaders have their critical business insights go unheard if they don't communicate the information in a way their audience understands. I'm sure this isn't news to you—you know you need to deliver your ideas to others so that they understand and support them. But how do you do that when each person's background, technical expertise and vernacular vary so much?

Here are six tips for presenting meaningful customer interaction data to just about anyone across the enterprise to drive company-wide improvements.

1. Customize your message based upon your audience's motivations and priorities.

First and foremost, consider your audience's priorities and motivations when determining how to present your ideas to them.

For some people, understanding the basics of an approach is all they need to feel comfortable making a decision; others, however, may desire a deeper technical understanding. And others still—usually leadership team members—want a thorough understanding of how your ideas impact the business at large, not just the contact center. You need to succinctly fulfill all stakeholder needs if you want to gain the consensus you require.

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2. Speak the language of business, not the contact center.

As part of customizing your message, you need to translate the language of customer interaction data into the language of business. Help your audience connect what the data shows to which actions the business needs to take.

Use technical terms and jargon sparingly, and only if you're confident your audience will understand them. For instance, a deep dive into speech analytics methodology might be appropriate when presenting customer insights to peers or analysts, but executives unfamiliar with it might become frustrated and bogged down when trying to understand that level of detail. So think about your audience's level of familiarity with the terminology you plan to use. With each technical term, ask yourself if including it is truly necessary in order to convey your message. If it is, define the term up front using context the audience will understand. And if it's not necessary for your message, don't use it.

3. Don't just present contact center *data*—convey *information*.

When you deliver a presentation or report featuring only data, your audience may see the same patterns and oddities as you, but they may not arrive at the same conclusions. And they definitely won't have a clear understanding of what you want them to do because of it. So steer your audience toward the conclusion you want them to make. Don't leave the interpretation up to them—relate your customer interaction data to your message, make sure to convey why it's relevant and important, and make it clear what course of action you recommend.

Also, grab your audience's attention right from the start by presenting information in a declining order of importance. In this way, your audience immediately understands why they are there and are less likely to lose interest in what you're saying or to question the purpose of your presentation or report.

4. Be very selective in which information you present and which you omit.

It's easy to include too much or too little information in a presentation or report. Yet determining which information to include—the level of granularity your audience needs to know in order to understand and buy into your message—is just as critical as determining how to organize it. That's because using the wrong level of detail for your audience's knowledge or interest level can be detrimental to selling your message: your audience can become lost or bored easily, and lose focus on your message.

Also, when considering which information to include or exclude, know that you likely won't want to present the same aspects to your executives, for example, as you would to your peers. Each group maintains different responsibilities and priorities, and the information you present needs to specifically address those unique needs.

5. Employ data visualizations wisely to visually communicate your quantitative message.

Once you've decided which information you want to include in your presentation or report, it's time to determine your visuals. Data visualizations help your audience efficiently understand what they need to know. But the best images to select will depend on your audience. What's their comfort level with statistical graphics, for example? How can you best emphasize the information they care about? How much explanation of the data visualizations will they need?

Your data visualization should make the data you're presenting more accessible by visually communicating your quantitative message. These visual depictions of data can help your audience more easily understand and quickly draw conclusions from even the most complex contact center information.

6. Use the simplest, easiest-to-read graph for the point you're trying to make.

Make your data visualization easy to read. A well-designed chart or graph can go a long way toward making your data more impactful and easier to interpret.

The key with visualizations is to make your point in the simplest manner possible. If a basic column chart is the clearest option for communicating your conclusion, don't overwhelm your audience by using a confusing radar chart instead. Regardless of which graph type you use, remember to orient your audience to it—tell them what the graph shows and why it's important.

You also want to strike a fine balance between too many and too few visuals. When there are too few, the audience defaults to reading the slide text rather than listening to the presenter. And when there are too many, the overcrowded slides distract your audience's attention away from you.

In conclusion, customer interaction data can be confusing or seemingly irrelevant to those unfamiliar with the day-to-day workings of the contact center. To help your contact center truly impact the customer experience and the business's bottom line, present customer interaction data and insights in a way that your audience—no matter where they sit in the enterprise—can understand. ■