MAKING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE A PRIORITY IN A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC WORLD

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Four tips to help you make 2020 "The Year of the Agent."

When it comes to your favorite mobile or self-service experience, what apps… platforms… or companies come to mind? A few of my favorite apps are Waze, Turbo Tax, Fandango, Delta and USAA—apps that quickly and easily help me navigate and manage through the critical, complex and day-to-day, ankle-biter tasks of everyday life. Thinking about your favorite apps, what factors make using them an enjoyable experience? Chances are traits like easy and quick access to the right information and convenient, must-have guidance are a couple of them. Of course, it doesn't hurt when apps are also fast, dynamic, intuitive and designed well.

Now pose those same questions to your agents, but substitute "self-service experience" with "desktop experience" and it's likely the response will be much different. I assume it would mirror the same feedback I've received from 100+ contact centers over the past 10 years, and contains the following words and phrases: complex, cluttered, hard to learn, frustrating, disparate, not intuitive and ancient. Imagine your customers providing similar feedback about your self-service channels. Not only would your adoption rate be zero percent, but the number of customers you have would quickly trend toward zero as well.

So why is it that we accept these differences in customer versus employee experiences when both desire an identical outcome: to resolve the transaction need for a customer quickly, simply and consistently. I know what you are going to say: "There is no way our customers would accept that kind of self-service experience." Exactly! Then why don't companies offer the same respect and dedicated effort they apply to resolve their customers' poor experience to fix their employees' poor experience? That kind of oversight doesn't make sense, especially when you consider the fact that agents still handle over 60% of customer interactions!

Year after year, organizations struggle to connect the dots between the Employee Experience (EX) and the Customer Experience (CX), and quantify how improvements in EX can impact overall CSAT. As a result, agent-focused technology projects typically get reduced in scope and eventually ignored—becoming the proverbial elephant in the room. Instead of rallying around employee experience initiatives like we've seen companies do in the digital space, companies choose to over-invest time and money in quality monitoring tools to watch over agents and score their effectiveness in navigating through complex technology. My question is, where are the quality monitoring tools that should be monitoring the applications you give to your agents? How would they score the agents' desktop experience you have in place?

The situation will continue to get worse before it gets better, as many of the "easy" call-type interactions have moved to self-service, leaving a greater ratio of complex calls for the agents to manage. A recent survey by **Strategic Contact** lists the top two challenges for contact centers in 2019 as: (1) "Bad Desktop Tools," and (2) "Agent Attrition." Likely, these two reflect the challenges mentioned above, but unlike the importance placed on self-service, strategies to aggressively address these pain points never seem to make it very high on the "to-do" list. Case in point, that same survey ranked "Improve/Implement Desktop (apps)" as number nine on the priority list—way below "Implement/Improve self-service" which was listed as number two.

So what's the answer? Is there light at the end of this tunnel and can we finally address the elephant in the room once and for all? Look no further than your self-service initiatives and supporting technology and you'll see that all signs point to "yes." Stated another way, if you can provide a successful

SCOTT MERRITT is VP of Automation at Jacada and a passionate advocate of "responsible automation." He is on a lifelong quest to help companies make technology work smarter for their customers and employees.

self-service experience (without a minute of classroom training) to a customer with no previous knowledge about your technology or business, then imagine what you can do for you agents if you apply the same tools and effort.

Much like your transformation to digital before, taking a digital approach to transform the employee experience at your organization will be a journey, but it is one that provides incremental value for your employees every step of the way.

The good news is that you have done this before and may already have some of the required technology in house. Of course, technology alone is not enough to bring about change, but when combined with the right process, supporting cast and top-down initiative, anything is possible.

As you prime the pumps for 2020, the following are four tips to get you started and help guide you on the road less traveled.

1. Rebalance your focus. Self-service is and should continue to drive innovation, effort and investment, but it's only half the equation when it comes to CX. EX is suffering and it is impacting your CX. Start the internal discussion now for 2020 to focus on "Employee-First" desktop initiatives.

2. Conquer Agent Experience problems with the tools that power your Self-Service offerings. Bring those same intelligent automation technology enablers into the contact center that power your digital solutions: Automation (RPA), UX design, Conversational AI, Intelligent Guidance, Big Data, Personalization, etc. Use them to transform your agent desktop into an experience that resembles something they would get through a self-service solution.

3. Start with automation, eliminate the mundane, and make virtual employee assistants (VEAs) a reality. Harness the power of Attended RPA and AI to make intelligent virtual assistants for your employees a reality. While you may not end up with one application in the end, you may very well eliminate the need for agents to learn and utilize over 95% of the current screens they use today.

4. Build once, use anywhere. A guided interaction supported by conversational AI should be able to support both self-service and agent-facing channels, but not all intelligent automation platforms are created equal. Piecing together point solutions to connect customer channels impacts speed, scale and agility and leads to a higher TCO. Make sure your technology foundation supports "reuse" without "rebuilding" as you deploy across different channels.

To learn more about how companies are transforming employee experiences with digital solutions, stop by and join the conversation at Jacada.com. ⊕

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