

Implementing Self-Service Technologies.

When choosing self-service technologies, the focus should always be on satisfying customer needs. The business that asks the question ‘what does my customer want?’, and actually listens to the customer’s response will invariably be more successful than one that imposes technologies for cost cutting reasons. The question of whether to pursue self-service OR assisted service across the board is also largely irrelevant, as this can be tailored on a customer by customer basis. This is not a ‘one size fits all’ – offer both self-service and assisted-service and allow the customer to choose which they prefer.

Which automation technologies to deploy will depend on your customer demographic. For example, retired pre-baby boomers are unlikely to respond particularly well to web automation or SMS – they often prefer face-to-face or phone. Generation Y does everything by SMS, to them speaking appears to be hard work (do I have teenagers?). IVRs are not particularly useful to people who spend a lot of time in their cars – speech recognition is more appropriate in this case.

Automated systems that are deployed need to be designed carefully to reflect the culture and image of the business. This includes the voice talent and language used in any IVR or queue messages, language used in SMS messages, and the presentation and functionality of web pages.

For companies that do decide to offer self-service capabilities, there are still ways to cross-sell and up-sell. In an IVR you can include a (very brief) message at the end of the transaction – something like ‘have you heard about our new widgets? Press 8 now for more information.’ On the web site, the customer could be redirected to an advertising page describing the current specials at the conclusion of their transaction. Broadcast SMS is starting to gain acceptance for marketing purposes, and is less intrusive than a phone call at meal times.

It does raise the importance of accurate customer data. We have all been annoyed by untargeted marketing – ‘would you like fries with that?’, or call centres ringing to ask people without mortgages to participate in a home loan comparison. I have had people become quite indignant when I refused to allow them to clean and rejuvenate the tiles on my metal roof! It becomes more important to accurately tailor and target your marketing to customers who may actually have a need or desire for the product or service you are offering. The more targeted the campaign, the better the success rate and the less chance you will damage the relationship between you and your customer.

Steve Pels is the Director of Contact Centre Action – a consultancy specialising in assisting call and contact centres with customer service improvements, staff retention, workflow improvements, cost reductions and technology acquisitions.

Phone: +61 (0) 414 593 819
Email: spels@ccaction.com.au
Web: www.ccaction.com.au