

CallCare



CX insights: How businesses can earn and retain loyalty from their customers

Introduction

Welcome to 'CX insights: How businesses can earn and retain loyalty from their customers' - an eBook that delves deeper into the importance of customer experience. In this eBook, we take a closer look at how customer experience can determine the relationship between your organisation and those who purchase your goods and services, plus what this means in regards to customer loyalty and retention.



The importance of customer experience

First and foremost, let's touch upon the meaning behind customer service and what it means for a business. In a nutshell, customer experience focuses on that all-important relationship between your organisation and your customers, involving each way in which a customer can interact with your business.

There are many ways in which a customer might be able to connect with your organisation, including through the marketing material a customer might see before they've even purchased your goods or services. These ways include online via your website, on your social media channels, in a printed publication or even splashed upon a billboard, all the way through to the experience they have during the sales stage when the customer purchases whatever it is that you have to offer.



A continuous cycle

Customer experience doesn't end there though. It can even extend to the post-sales stage, including the level of service your customers receive once their purchase is complete. In fact, it could be said that customer experience is a continuous cycle that, even once the customer has obtained their goods or received the services they've paid for, it starts again the next time they have an interaction with your business. For example, a visit to your website, to make an additional purchase or to leave a review, regardless of whether it's positive or not.



Room for improvement

Even though you might feel like you're doing everything in your power to provide your customers with an exceptional experience, there is always room for improvement

According to survey data obtained by market research company YouGov in August of this year, over a quarter (26%) of respondents feel like businesses in Britain treat their customers 'badly', with 22% answering 'fairly badly' and 4% choosing 'very badly'. Although the majority (63%) of respondents feel that UK businesses treat their customers 'very well' or 'fairly well', it is clear that we can do better.

The opportunity to impress

The truth is, there are so many opportunities to impress your customers along the way, it's important that as a business, you are doing everything you can to ensure you're putting in the time, money and effort needed to make sure the customer experience you're providing is a positive one from the get-go.

There's no escaping the fact that customer experience is critical for the continued success and growth of a business, and it can draw the line between whether a customer comes back again and again, or not at all. In a competitive, ever-changing business world, the loyalty of your customers is everything - and since customer experience can help drive and retain this loyalty, it's absolutely crucial that you take it seriously.



Our data

To gain insight into the importance of customer experience and the impact that it can have on the loyalty and retention of customers, we have conducted a survey of 400 call centre agents and customer service advisors from right across the UK.

Our survey respondents are made up of the following:

Our survey asked both male and female customer service agents and advisors aged between 18 and 55 a series of questions, covering four of the main areas that can have a huge influence on customer experience - demographic, adfrindustry, language and scam.

With the data we collected, we have analysed our findings to gain an understanding of how these areas may be currently impacting customer service agents and advisors, and how these areas can either make or break the customer experience.



Demographic

Now is the time for brands to be sensitive and compassionate. Many businesses will need to adjust their tone of voice in order to convey the right message, while recognising and showing gratitude to customers. Brands that focus on pushing sales aggressively are unlikely to be well received at this time. Instead, inform consumers of the steps you are taking in the interests of public safety.

Budgets at this time will likely be limited, with brands having to prioritise and re-allocate to other areas. This will see a pivot to digital marketing, focusing on online advertising, social media promotions and influencer collaborations. In particular, influencer collaborations offer great value to brands, as this allows more product positioning and honest, genuine reviews at a time when they're needed.



Call length

Call length can significantly impact customer experience, and it's often assumed that long call times can waste a customer's valuable time. However, longer call times aren't always a bad thing - especially if it means a customer does not need to call back because they did not receive the right level of service the first time round.

Call centre staff are often under a lot of pressure to keep calls as short as possible, but if employees are encouraged to address customer's queries thoroughly, regardless of how long it takes, it's likely fewer problems will arise.

Agent efficiency benchmarks

Every business has varying standards of customer service depending on who their customers are and the industry. However, there are a set of customer service industry standards that could help provide benchmarks for your staff to aim towards in regards to agent efficiency.

Call handle times

According to Call Centre Helper Magazine, call handle time is defined as the duration of one customer transaction which includes hold time and talk time, plus any additional follow-up tasks. It's thought that the length of this transaction should be approximately six minutes - however it's important to note that this can vary from business to business.

Average call handling times can be misleading in the sense that it is not always true that the shorter the call is, the better the customer service is. While efficiency is a priority, calls should not be shortened at the expense of the customer.

To improve your average call handling time without it impacting the customer, try to shave time off tasks that are completed once the customer is no longer on the phone. Instead of cutting seconds or even minutes off a call, you could try to complete follow-up tasks in a more timely manner. System features such as auto-population of customer details, product codes and other fields where data entry is required can significantly decrease the call handling time without actually making the transaction with the customer less valuable.



Contact resolution

There are many different ways in which you can approach measuring first contact resolution, such as measuring by individual channels, or even across these channels combined. However, this can become further complicated when it comes to questioning , which interaction is the customer's first contact with your business about a particular issue. It can be tricky to establish if the customer has been in touch before, whether this is via Twitter, on live chat or something else.

To be on the safe side, it makes sense to measure contact resolution based on the first interaction regarding an issue, regardless of which channel was used. You should measure contact resolution for each channel. This will give you a better understanding of the effectiveness of your omnichannel approach, as well as highlighting any inconsistencies between the different channels.

To improve your contact resolution, try to leverage the same core knowledge base across channels, giving your agents the power to ensure consistency across the board. This also makes it easier to maintain accuracy, even if your services, products and policies change along the way.

Call escalation rate

Sometimes, calls are required to be escalated to supervisor level for resolution. While this can't always be prevented, it can be limited. In fact, you should try to keep this to a limit of 10% of all calls.

To decrease your call escalation rate, you need to provide your customer agents with the knowledge they need to successfully resolve potential issues themselves without the need for assistance from a supervisor. In the situation that an escalation does need to occur, you should log the incident using a case management system so that the details of the case can be passed on without the customer needing to repeat themselves.

Difficulty rating

That being said, it seems that customers who fall into the older age brackets are the trickiest customers to deal with over the phone. As part of our survey, we asked our respondents to rank each age group in terms of how easy, or difficult, they are to communicate with on a call.

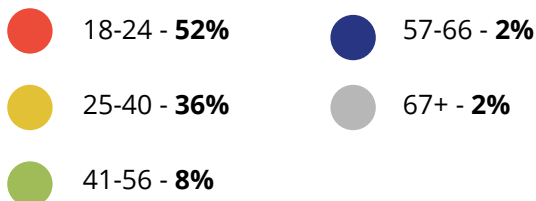
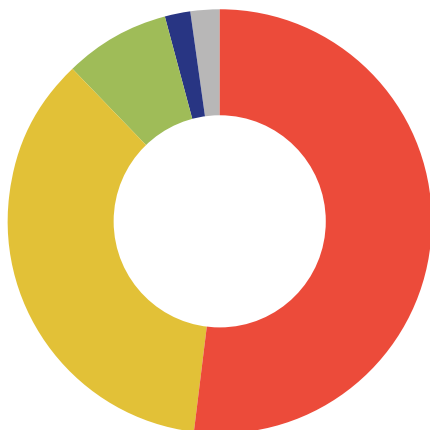
With 1 being the easiest to deal with and 5 being the hardest, our data revealed this ranking:

18-24 - 2.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
25-40 - 2.6	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
41-56 - 3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
57-66 - 3.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
67+ - 3.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Our results show that the older age groups are the hardest to work with on calls, with the 41 to 56, 57 to 66 and 67+ age brackets receiving a ranking of 3, 3.2 and 3.5 respectively. These results could go hand in hand with the fact that these same age brackets spend the longest on the phone with customer service agents and advisors - but why?

Tech-savvy

It could have something to do with the fact that these older age groups just aren't as tech-savvy as those younger than them. We asked our survey respondents to choose which age group they deem to be the most technologically advanced.



From our data, we can see that the younger age brackets seem to be considered the most 'in the know' when it comes to all things tech, with 18 to 24 year olds unsurprisingly being deemed as the most tech-savvy age group. Meanwhile, customers who are aged between 57 and 66, as well as those who are aged 67 and over, are not considered to be as up to speed with the latest tech, with just 2% of customer advisors and agents choosing each of these age brackets.

While it could be argued that using the phone isn't an overly difficult task, when it is a customer's primary form of communication for getting in touch with a business, it's likely they'll have high expectations as soon as they hit dial. So, if a customer does not possess the knowledge or have the means to contact a business in a different way, everything pins on this one single form of communication - so it's crucial that you get it just right.

Showing respect for and being patient with all of your customers is vital. The quality of customer service you provide should be addressed across all channels. Making a concerted effort to improve the experience for your customers, regardless of demographic, will significantly reduce your risk of losing their custom and instead, boost your chances of earning, and retaining, customers time and time again.

As technology improves and becomes more widely accessible, it's likely the customer service journey will change along the way. For you as a business, it's important that you do what you can to keep up with and adapt to changes in order to keep your customers satisfied.

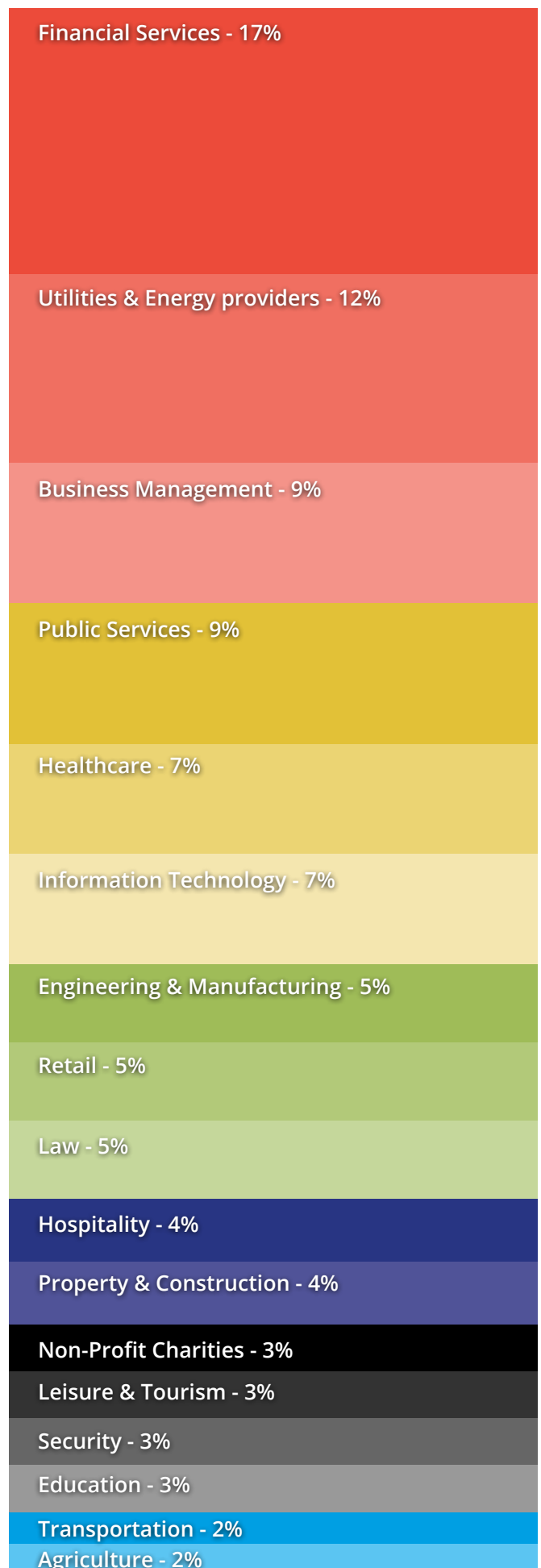
Industry

It's no secret that providing a positive customer experience is important, regardless of the industry you work in. But which industries could do with making improvements to ensure the customer experience they're offering is the best it could be?

We asked our respondents, as customer service providers and customers themselves, which industries they find take the longest to complete customer service communication. Have a look at what we found out to the right.

Our data clearly shows that, according to our respondents, the Financial Services industry takes the longest to complete their customer service communication, with 17% of those surveyed choosing this option.

This could be down to the fact that the nature of the majority of phone communications within this industry can often involve a number of security checks before the customer's query has even been acknowledged, therefore extending the time the customer is required to spend on the phone. While these checks are necessary, efficiency is everything. So, even though these checks may be mandatory, making them as streamlined as possible can help improve the overall customer experience.



Language

In today's modern world, gender inclusivity is more important than ever before, and making sure you're aware of the type of language you're using, whether it's in a business sense or not, can help create a warm, welcoming and inclusive future for everyone.

Unless they have explicitly stated how they identify, it's best that you do not simply assume a customer's preferred pronouns. Using the incorrect pronouns when speaking to a customer could cause offence. So, to avoid being disrespectful and potentially upsetting the customer, even if it is inadvertently, it's better to stick to gender-neutral language.

Awareness of gender pronouns

We asked our survey respondents how they would best describe their knowledge of gender-specific pronouns.

Over half (53%) of our respondents already considered themselves to be fully aware of gender-specific pronouns, while 19% said they have recently become more aware of them, meaning that the majority of the customer service agents and advisors we surveyed are playing an important role in making the business world a more gender-inclusive space.



- I am fully aware of gender-specific pronouns - **53%**
- I have little knowledge of gender-specific pronouns - **19%**
- I have recently become more aware of gender-specific pronouns - **19%**
- I haven't really considered this - **9%**







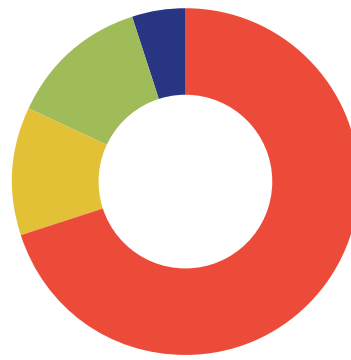
Young people: a more gender inclusive generation?

When we looked at our data in more depth, we discovered that younger people appear to be more in tune with gender inclusive language when speaking to customers, with 70% of 18 to 24 year olds stating that they feel they are fully aware of gender-specific pronouns.

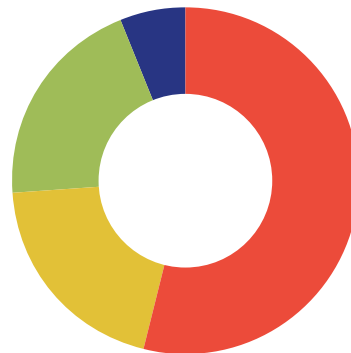
That being said, there is always room for improvement. It's interesting to see that as the age brackets of our survey respondents increases, the awareness of gender-specific pronouns decreases, with less than half (36%) of our survey respondents aged 45 to 54 years old and just 31% of our respondents aged 54 and over admitting to be fully aware of this type of inclusive language.

When it comes to customer experience, being aware of the language you're using is absolutely crucial. Making an effort as a business to avoid gendering customers without thought is a step in the right direction. In turn, it will make your customers feel more comfortable and confident enough to get in touch which, as a result, will play a huge part in the customer experience you're offering.

-  I am fully aware of gender-specific pronouns
-  I have little knowledge of gender-specific pronouns
-  I have recently become more aware of gender-specific pronouns
-  I haven't really considered this



18-24 years old



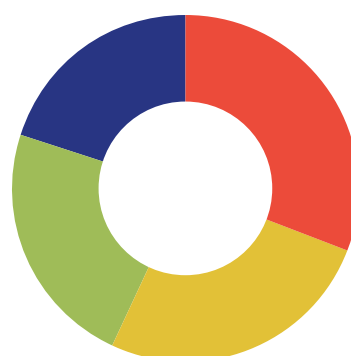
25-34 years old



35-44 years old



45-54 years old



54+ years old

Scam

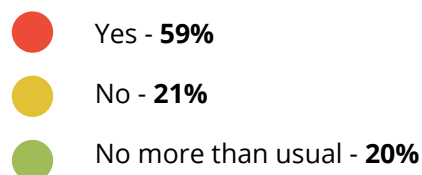
As technology improves, so does the ability of scammers to manipulate and dupe innocent people into giving up their most personal information, which can often have serious financial fallout. As a result of this, it's no surprise that some customers may be particularly wary when dealing with organisations - especially over the phone.

Finding out more

According to our survey results, 59% of our call agent and advisor respondents said they have seen a rise in the amount of people questioning their intentions as a result of the increase in spam calls. This shows that unsolicited phone calls are something that many customers are aware of, and for good reason too. Instead of offering up information at the first chance, the general consensus is that customers would prefer to find out more before getting involved in conversations with a customer service agent or advisor.

Of course, this can pose a problem if the customer experience involves communication via phone. Customers might be put off if a business calls them up, in what seems to them 'out of the blue', even if the customer has dealt with the organisation in some respect previously. What might be intended as a genuine customer courtesy call could in fact be interpreted as an unsolicited 'spam' call to the customer, even if it transpires that they are mistaken.

Do you find more customers questioning you now due to a rise in spam calls?



Keeping your customers safe: how businesses can protect their customers against scams

So, what can be done to assure your customers and keep them protected against potential scam calls, all the while maintaining a positive customer experience? We asked our survey respondents to tell us how they think this could be achieved - and the results varied.

- Two factor authentication
- Call back service
- Website information
- A dedicated fraud team
- Passwords
- Security questions
- Never ask for personal information
- Train staff effectively

Our respondents had their say when it came to thinking about the ways in which businesses can protect their customers against potential scams, with two factor authentication being one of the most popular answers.

Two factor authentication adds an extra layer of security whereby a user can gain access to specific information only after successfully presenting two or more pieces of evidence to an authentication method. This feature alone could help provide customers with the assurance they need to confirm that they are not engaging in a scam call, therefore improving their overall experience in dealing with that particular business.



Brands doing it right

So, when it comes to customer satisfaction, who is doing it right? There are multiple brands across different sectors that are renowned and praised for providing their customers with exceptional service - but who comes out on top?

According to survey data obtained by YouGov, these are considered to be the top five brands across six different industries in Q2 2021.

	Telecom Brands	Clothing Brands	Supermarket Chains	Department & Home Stores	Electronics Brands	Airlines
1	O2	Adidas	Tesco	M&S	Sony	British Airways
2	BT	Levi's	Morrisons	Wilko	Duracell	easyJet
3	Sony Ericsson	North Face	M&S Food	B&Q	Samsung	Virgin Atlantic
4	Vodafone	Clarks	Lidl	IKEA	Panasonic	Emirates
5	EE	Nike	Sainsbury's	John Lewis	Apple	Qantas

In the telecommunication sector, O2 is the most popular with a popularity of 50%, closely followed by BT and Sony Ericsson at 45%, Vodafone with 44%, and EE coming in fifth place with 42%.

Meanwhile, Adidas is in the lead for fashion and clothing brands with 65% popularity, while Levi's, North Face, Clarks and Nike follow closely behind with a popularity of 64% each.

In the supermarket sector, Tesco, Morrisons and M&S Food each have a popularity of 75%, while Lidl and Sainsbury's have earned 73%.

When it comes to department and home stores, M&S steals first place with 75%, and is followed by Wilko at 73%, B&Q at 71%, IKEA with 69% and John Lewis falls behind with 68%.

When it comes to electronics brands, Sony is at number one with a popularity of 80%, while Duracell comes in with 77%, Samsung has earned 75%, Panasonic has 72% and Apple follows suit with 68%.

In the aviation industry, British Airways is favoured as the top airline with 60% popularity, while easyJet scores 46%, Virgin Atlantic is slightly behind with 45%, Emirates following suit with 43% and Qantas earning a 41% popularity score.

Tips for improving customer satisfaction

So how can you improve the satisfaction of your customers? We've taken a look at the UK Customer Satisfaction Index (UKCSI) to give you some handy hints and tips on the changes you can make that will help enhance overall customer experience, and in turn, take your business from strength to strength.

1. Understand your customers' needs and priorities

Since your customers are your number one priority, it's important that you fully understand their needs and priorities so that you can provide the best experience possible. It may help for you to map out your customers' journey, so that you can spot where improvements can be made. It's also vital that you look at how your customers access your services, including how they contact your business for help or advice. In understanding your customers current needs and priorities, it's worth thinking about how these might evolve too, and what you can do as a business to adapt to any future changes.

2. Empower your employees

Your employees act as the link between your customers and their experience of your business, so it's important to empower your staff members to be the best they can be. As an employer, you should involve them in activities that could help improve their customer service abilities, for example. This can include training courses, either in-house or externally to improve skills. You should also enable your staff to deal with complex issues in order to add enhanced value to your team. Aside from making on-the-job improvements, you should also do what you can to protect your employees health and wellbeing, in addition to addressing subjects such as incentives, pay and management behaviours.

3. Rethink your objectives

If you're not satisfied that you're providing the best customer experience, it might be time to hit reset. Overhauling both your business and customer experience objectives gives you the opportunity to start fresh on the path to success. You might find that you need a completely new set of objectives to work towards in order to give your customers the best possible experience, or you might find that you can tweak and improve upon what you've already got in place. Either way, your customers and your business should be at the heart of your goals.

4. Seize opportunities to reduce customer effort

Any interaction with your business should be efficient and fuss-free for each and every customer. If this is currently not the case, it might be time to look for any opportunities where you can reduce effort on behalf of your customer. This can be anything from transactional efficiency to employee engagement. Ideally, your customers should be able to use minimal effort in order to get what they want, whether that's a simple task such as visiting your website to place an order or getting in touch with a query.

5. Simplify and automate your processes

While you may feel its innovative and forward-thinking, complicated processes can spell bad news for your business, which as a result, can impact your customers. Choosing to simplify and automate your processes by harnessing artificial intelligence and automation can help significantly improve efficiency of customer interactions, which in turn, will improve customer satisfaction.

There's no denying that customer experience is key to earning and retaining your customers - and it's especially important that you pay attention to the areas that could seriously impact this element of your business.

At CallCare, we can help you improve your customer journey through our call handling support. Start a conversation with us today to find out more. Join the conversation using #CXinsights.

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