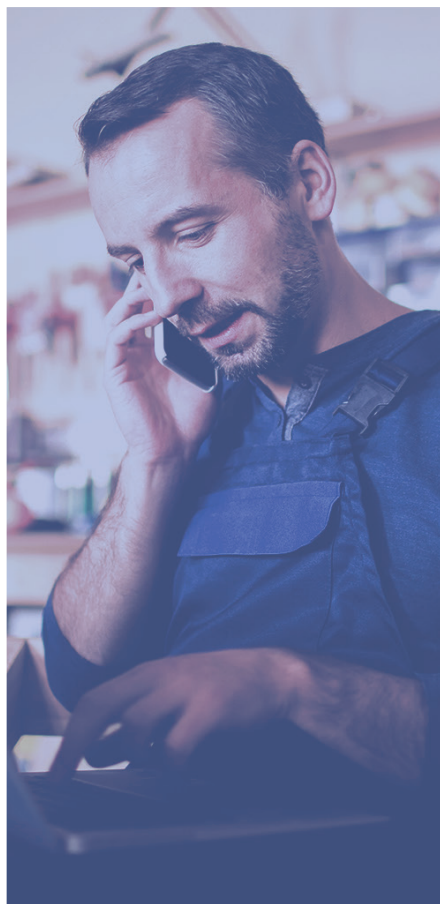


May 2020

Power the Engine of Customer Delight and Insight

A Tool for Customer Obsession Strategy in Contact Centers

By Michelle Larsen, Vice President, Customer Engagement, Somos



Customer-obsessed businesses are always listening, serving and getting smarter. Most of those critical activities happen in the contact center. It's a frontline of the brand experience – the place where customers share their needs and wants on a daily basis, where they tell you exactly what problems they have and how they're making purchase decisions. That's why brands need to empower the contact center to be an "obsession engine."

By transforming the contact center into an "obsession engine," you can harness key marketing analytics and nuanced customer intelligence to help contact center agents serve consumers in a more savvy and personalized way. In turn, these interactions can be studied at a macro level to improve the overall customer service experience, as well as product, agent, marketing and ad quality. These straight-from-the-consumer insights in turn drive further exceptional interactions with your brand. In short, when you empower your contact center to be customer-obsessed, you create a powerful customer intelligence and customer service improvement loop to drive your brand onward and upward.



Open the Door for Customers

In the modern economic landscape, contact centers are often the only human representation that a company offers to consumers—especially if those businesses are only found online. For many companies, that means contact center professionals are brand ambassadors that can make or break a customer's experience. It also means that contact centers are perfectly positioned to be key drivers of delight and amazement.

The phone and text conversations with customers that take place in the contact center are a precious resource. It's the moment when a customer is going to make a purchase, where a marketer can learn which of their ads are driving traffic, and when customers will let your customer service agents know what they actually think about your business, products and services. By investing in the contact center and its agents, companies can open the door to greater insights, higher sales and improved customer experiences.

The first step in opening the door to your contact center is making it easy for customers to connect. By placing your contact information front and center, customers know exactly how to get in touch. Now that mobile phones have become the primary way we search, it's important to make your website mobile friendly, so customers can reach you within just a few clicks, whether they are using a phone or desktop. Incorporating Artificial intelligence (AI) technology into the contact center also promises to eliminate complex phone trees and better route customers to the proper answers and agents.

While opening up your contact center to customers is only the first step in creating a powerful obsession engine, it's an important one. The easier it is for customers to get in touch, the more likely they are to call in and fuel your obsession engine with critical insights.



Empowering the Contact Center Team

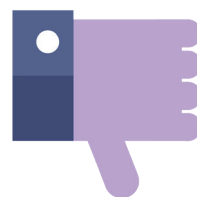
Contact center agents are really the guides and mentors welcoming customers into the brand experience, orienting them to your products and services, and empowering them with tailored information that can create an airtight, loyal relationship. With nearly 90% of companies saying they compete on the basis of customer experience, this puts the pressure on contact centers to deliver (The CX Industry Report 2018 by UserTesting).

Research validates a negative contact center experience can turn people away from a brand, while a positive contact center experience can lead to great things. Consider the following:

- 80% of people who have a good calling experience say they're likely to become repeat customers, while 60% of those people say they're likely to spend more money on current or future purchases with that company. (Invoca)
- 89% of people even say they've threatened to leave for a competitor because of a poor customer experience. (Harris Poll)
- 74% of people who have a bad phone support experience are likely to choose another business the next time they shop for that product or service. (Invoca)

Brands need to expand the role of the contact center team, educate them through continued training, and empower them with the technology to be the very best gurus of your brand that they can be. Contact center agents need to be able to deftly escort customers through the entire journey, from inquiry to purchase to loyalty. And they need to be equipped with as much background information as possible when they take calls, so they can manage the conversation smoothly and leverage helpful data insights.

This means investing in and leveraging call analytics with your agents. Call analytics can improve both customer experiences and overall contact center operations. For example, with specialized call analytics software, an agent can view relevant web history linked to a consumer that uses a click-to-call or click-to-text response. This contextual information can help contact center agents make more personalized recommendations and generally tailor the conversation around the customer's needs. Contextual information can even help contact centers route specific calls to specific agents. For instance, if a customer has been flagged as at-risk, they could be channeled to a more senior agent.



89%

of people threaten to leave because of poor experience

Analytics paired with Toll-Free Numbers can you help map the entire customer journey



Call analytics also help track the clicks that lead to sales. Analytics paired with Toll-Free Numbers can you help map the entire customer journey from ad to response, to sales, to call center performance, to business intelligence. When you embed an ad with a Toll-Free Number, you can measure the success of different ads based on content, channel, geography, demographics and other criteria. This campaign attribution data is invaluable in refining your marketing strategy, allowing you to make adjustments on the fly. Using Toll-Free Numbers also makes it easier to track offline channels, such as TV, print and radio campaigns.

Looking at call analytics from a higher level can help companies create strategies to streamline service quality, which can reduce call volumes, shorten call times and boost first-call resolution rates—all of which reduce operational costs. For example, monitoring agent performance can identify an agent that might need re-training in weak areas for a better service experience.

Over the next few years, analytics paired with AI will only further empower agents. Rather than replace contact center staff, AI promises to support agents so they can perform their jobs more easily and

efficiently. For example, AI may be used to detect subtle emotional cues from callers and suggest a course of action to agents in real time. This can help agents successfully close cases quickly and with a positive outcome.

While there is certainly room for AI to complement the work being done in contact centers, it's important to note that there is a level of processing for human problems and situations that a machine cannot yet compute. For complex questions, urgent requests or troubleshooting, people want people. The people who call or text your company are often your best customers—they convert faster and spend more—so to truly delight them during times of need, a person is probably best.

Professionals in customer-obsessed contact centers need to prioritize the consumer experience above all else. Their goal must always be to successfully guide customers through their purchasing journey, whether via voice, text or an omnichannel approach. This requires technical capabilities, savvy, acumen, and as much customer-focused information as possible.



Mining for Insights with Analytics

Recording customer calls is nothing new, but only recently have brands been able to mine those recordings for insights that could then be applied directly back into their business. New voice recognition technology is changing the game and creating a completely new type of data source, the most valuable of all: the literal voice of the customer.

While customer data comes from many places, voice of the customer data from phone calls, combined with advancing contact center technology, can provide your business with fresh, relevant, and deeply analyzed data that can fuel a customer-obsessed business model, company culture, and brand experience.

In a contact center, a speech analytics platform can recognize a large vocabulary of words, analyze tone of voice, identify relevant phrases, and even estimate the age of a caller. With the help of machine learning, this information can then be parsed for insights on agent performance, customer behavior, the customer purchase journey and service or product issues.

After identifying these analytics-based data points, marketers have valuable straight-from-the-customer insights they can leverage to improve customer service, increase consumer retention, inspire brand loyalty and reduce operational costs. For example, with speech analytics, marketing departments can make tweaks to targeted marketing strategies based on identified responses from specific demographics. They can also make real-time changes to agent scripts or campaigns based on changes in the market or customer concerns.

Speech analytics can also inform higher-level business decisions. For instance, identified reoccurring customer dissatisfaction can inform changes to products, pricing, services, or other contact center processes.

Speech analytics can empower your contact center agents and inform all levels of your business with insights straight from the lips of your consumers. By investing in analytics software, as well as the resources to understand and leverage the data you collect, you can give your obsession engine the ability to dig deeper into the wants, needs and desires of your customers.



Texting on Your Customers' Terms

Omnichannel is a buzzword often found hand-in-hand with customer obsession. Through an omnichannel strategy, companies aim to reach consumers through multiple channels with the same brand experience. In this way, customers can engage with a brand how and when they want. Omnichannel allows companies to feed their contact center obsession engine through multiple channels for more robust insights.

Today, a successful omnichannel strategy must include texting. Put simply, texting is people's preferred method of communicating. In fact, the 2019 State of Texting report by Zipwhip found that 85% of consumers want to exchange text messages with a business. However, texting remains a vacant channel for many companies. In fact, Zipwhip's State of Texting report finds that only 39% of businesses use some form of texting to communicate with customers today.

Business texting is a distinct, valuable and efficient channel that consumers want to use. Ultimately, text messages present an opportunity to delight and retain consumers—and to differentiate a business.

Texting is more than today's preferred communications channel: It's a distinct, valuable and efficient channel whose support can improve access and wait times, manage costs and reach new demographics. When your customers have the power to contact you how they want, it encourages them to have more conversations with your brand, thus driving the obsession engine with critical consumer data and insights.

Consider the following research that shows these four insights about texting:

1. Builds consumer trust, loyalty, and satisfaction:

When consumers don't have to wait on hold and can get immediate responses, they consistently rate customer experiences highly.

2. Gets a high response rate:

According to a report from Mobile Squared, about 99 percent of texts are read—most within three minutes of being sent. And a Velocify/Leads360 report found that the response rate to businesses is about 45 percent. This is a huge improvement even over emails.

3. Improves marketing effectiveness:

Zipwhip's 2019 State of Texting found that 74% of consumers said they would like to receive more text messages from businesses. What's more, Velocify/Leads360 reports that sales prospects who receive text messages convert at a 40 percent higher rate than those who don't.

4. Offers convenience that helps delight and amaze:

58% of consumers say they have tried to reply to a missed call via text. Businesses that haven't text-enabled their numbers are missing these critical points of connection with customers (Zipwhip, 2019).

Adding Text to Toll-Free in the Contact Center

Toll-Free Numbers are nationally recognizable as a direct link to a business. They are also multipurpose business tools that can facilitate the entire customer intelligence and customer service improvement loop. When your established, recognizable Toll-Free Number is capable of accepting both calls and text messages, your brand recognition and cachet will grow even stronger as well. Consider these benefits of text-enabling your Toll-Free Number:

- **Affordability:**

Toll-Free Numbers can be reserved for as little as \$15 per month with plans available for incoming call traffic, while short codes for texting can cost up to \$1,000 per month.

- **Engagement flexibility:**

Consumers who text or call a Toll-Free Number can engage with either a real person in your contact center or an application. This is in contrast to short codes, which only allow consumers to interact with an application, and local numbers, which offer only person-to-person interaction.



Feed the Cycle of Obsession

To stand out in today's market, customer obsession must be a company-wide strategy; not only from marketing and sales but throughout, from executives to entry-level employees. Each level of a brand must operate with a customer-obsessed mindset if you wish to truly delight and amaze.

By empowering your contact center to become an obsession engine, you can gain detailed insights straight from your most valuable customers that can help you improve customer-obsessed strategy in your business model, company culture and brand experience. The times of considering a contact center as a cost center are over. With investment, your contact center can become a revenue-generating, omnichannel hub with a direct line to consumers.



Michelle Larsen

Vice President,
Customer Engagement

Call or Text

844-HEY-MICHELLE

mlarsen@somos.com

Michelle Larsen is Somos's Vice President of Customer Engagement. She leads the marketing and customer engagement efforts, with the responsibility of the overall marketing strategy, including customer program development, brand management and corporate communications.

Michelle is a global marketing and customer-relations expert who connects people and products through technology. Her strategic marketing experience is rooted in both telecommunications, working with AT&T, Sprint and Verizon, and satellite communications, working for such leaders as SiriusXM and iDirect.

As a graduate of The George Washington University, Michelle holds an MBA in Marketing and International Business, as well as a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.



[somos.com](https://www.somos.com)
