

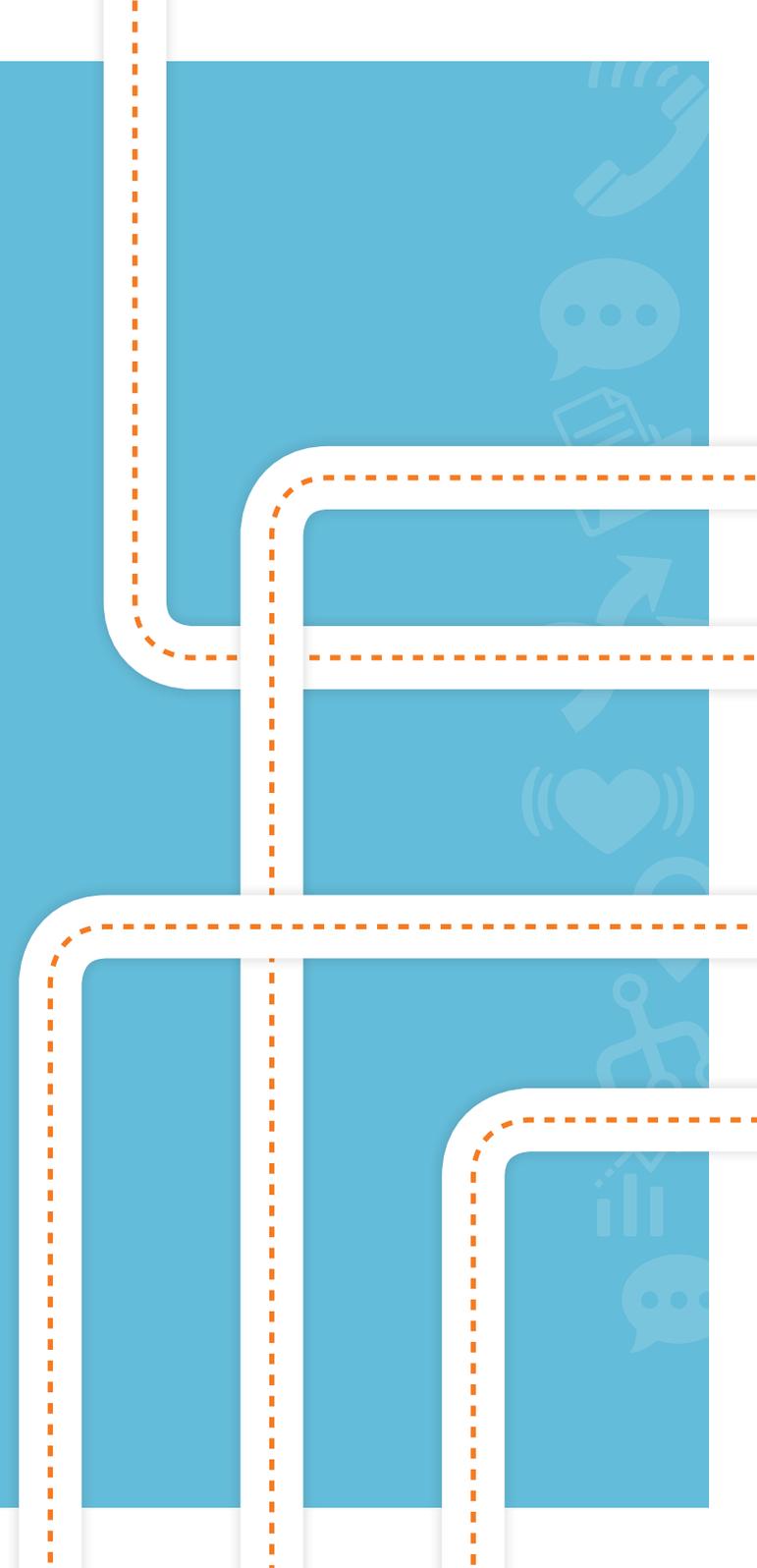


**Enghouse
Interactive**

ENGHOUSE INTERACTIVE SURVEY 2017 - WHITE PAPER

THE MORE CONSUMERS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME

Providing consumer choice in a multi-generational marketplace



KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE SURVEY



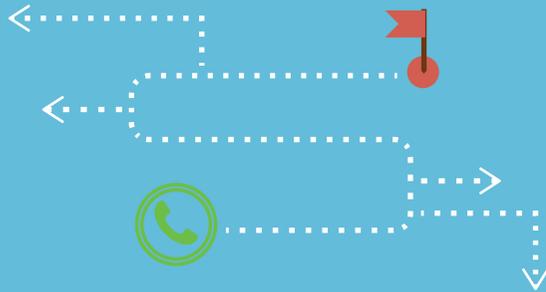
75% OF CONSUMERS SEE IT AS IMPORTANT FOR A BUSINESS to provide online communication capabilities. (50% increase from 2014)



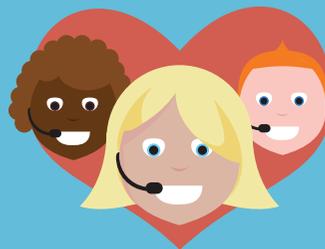
EMAIL IS NOW THE FAVOURED CHANNEL. **53%** stating it as their preferred means of contact.



50% OF US VOTE WITH OUR FEET and refuse to do business with that brand or service provider again when a brand fails to deliver.



60% OF RESPONDENTS cited the “the pass the parcel” school of customer service as one of their top 3 irritants.



When asked about the last 3 interactions with a business when they needed a resolution to an issue nearly half **49%** SAID “IN THE CONTACT CENTRE”



52% stated they got the best service results from HUMAN INTERACTIONS. (33% live agent, 19% web chat)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ENGHOUSE 2017 CONSUMER SURVEY

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WHAT MAKES HIGH QUALITY
CUSTOMER SERVICE?

The French expression “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose”, (the more things change the more they stay the same) has never seemed more apt than when applied to today’s customer service.

When Enghouse Interactive surveyed and analysed the view and opinions of 1,000 UK consumers – and then compared the results with a similar survey carried out in 2014, two main points stood out. The first was how much more sophisticated we have become when it comes to using online communications and how ready we are to use these channels to engage with a business compared with three years ago.

And yet, our desire for a timely response by knowledgeable staff hasn’t altered – we still get irritated at getting passed around from pillar to post or being “fobbed off” when no-one comes up with an intelligent answer. Also, despite the current focus on self-service, there are, in every age group, many people who prefer to speak to a real person when they have a problem; in fact, we appear to value this facility more than ever.

So today’s retailers, brand-owners and service providers must continue to provide a choice of contact options. Now older people are living longer and staying healthy and wealthy they must cater for a market comprising multiple generations. Yet, by its very nature, this market is dynamic and flexible as digital knowledge climbs upwards as we all age.

ENGHOUSE 2017 CONSUMER SURVEY

But there will always be some constants – and the need to speak to a fellow human will be one of them. It shows that exemplary customer service is timeless. Yet, the results of Enghouse Interactive’s 2017 consumer survey throws out some valuable information on how organisations can improve their customer’s experience. It also give some warnings of what will happen if they fail to do so. Here’s a summary of the key insights from the Survey:

ONLINE ACCESS IS A MUST HAVE

75% of respondents cited that it was important for a business to provide online communication capabilities, a 50% increase on our 2014 survey. And with 53% of respondents selecting email as their preferred method of communication it’s clear that whatever the target market businesses needs to have an online strategy in place to survive.

NOT JUST ANY PERSON – THE RIGHT PERSON

When human interaction is needed a massive 88% of respondents felt it was important to be routed quickly through to an expert, a 66% increase on 2014. It is clear that a large number of people value being able to communicate with someone who knows their history, has the right data readily available, and can deliver a personalised service.

DO I REALLY HAVE TO REPEAT MYSELF?

60% of respondents cited the “the pass the parcel” school of customer service as one of their top 3 irritants. Consumers expect a seamless service, regardless of their preferred channel of choice.

BUT THEY VOTE WITH THEIR FEET

When a brand fails to deliver it seems that 50% of us vote with our feet and refuse to do business with that brand or service provider again. However, although email is the most popular means of communicating with a business, when it comes to negative messages about customer service, social media is by far the most popular route to complain.

PEOPLE WIN THROUGH WHEN THERE IS AN ISSUE

When asked about the last 3 interactions with a business when they needed a resolution to an issue nearly half, 49%, said “in the contact centre”. To throw further light on this question, when asked which channel they thought would provide the best result, humans won again with 33% voting for a live agent followed by webchat at 19%.

EVOLVING ATTITUDES

Today, most consumers accept the digital way of life. However, it's easy to forget that less than five years ago this wasn't necessarily the case – the use of email, social media, web chat and so on has crept up on us, pervading the way we live and work.

This has had a big impact on customer service. In the Enhouse Interactive poll, a decisive 75% said it was important to be able to engage with a business using an online communications approach. Perhaps not surprisingly, this peaked to 87% in the 25 -34 age group.

However, what is extraordinary is the fact that in 2014 only 29% said this was important. Proof of a real change in attitude. Also, although the 2017 figures decline steadily with age, even among the 55-years-plus age range 67% say using an online communications approach is important.

Of course, there will always be some who reject current trends – and even in 2017, an unexpectedly high 21% said communicating with businesses in this way wasn't important. But again the older generation are refusing to get left behind – while in 2014, 41% of this age group said communicating in this way was unimportant to them, by 2017 that figure has dropped to just 14%.

So what lessons can retailers, banks, local authorities and other service providers that deal with many customers on a daily basis learn from these results? Namely that whatever their target market demographic, young or old, they need to have an online strategy in place – and this imperative is likely to become ever more urgent over time.



EVOLVING ATTITUDES

EMAIL IS STILL A WINNER

Yet, before we get carried away how far consumers have come over the years, there is a caveat. Despite reports that the days of email are numbered, it is by far the most preferred method of interaction, with more than half of respondents (53%) selecting it among their top three options. It was also the most popular method of communication by consumers to businesses in 2014.

Email is still used as the primary method of communication in business and most consumers, whether they use email at work or just for personal messages, feel comfortable using it. Younger consumers associate brand emails with promotions and product updates and, as they can be viewed on multiple devices, provide a useful reference when viewed on a smartphone or other mobile device.

Email also provides an easily searchable record, including the exact date and time, easily enabling the sender to keep all correspondence in the same place - particularly useful if they are making a complaint and want a record of their communications history.

Whilst email takes a strong lead over other methods of communication, over one third (36%) said they “source information via a company website”, 24% prefer social media and 19% look for web chat opportunities.

Although later answers reveal that most prefer to talk to a real person when they have a question that needs a certain depth of knowledge to answer, here only 18% preferred to talk to a live agent via telephone. In general terms, traditional ways of interacting, including email and access to a live agent via telephone, become more popular the older the respondent.



EVOLVING ATTITUDES

NOT JUST ANY PERSON

From the answers above, we can deduce that consumers are quite happy with, or indeed prefer, the relative anonymity of email and searching websites – perhaps when initiating contact or for more general inquiries. However, it is still highly important to them to speak to not just any human being – but one that is knowledgeable about their background with the organisation and understands their needs. After all, a consumer’s contact with a business may take many forms – and some such as sorting out a complex energy bill, or even applying for a mortgage – are far more multifaceted than others.

In fact, 88% of those polled said it was important to be routed quickly through to an expert, with 50% saying it was “very important”. It also appears to be growing in value over time. Back in 2014, only 55% said it was important, with 35% classing it as “very important”.

As if to hammer home the point, only 4% of the 2017 sample said this was “not important to them at all”. Do these overall results signify a growing impatience? An increasing complexity in consumer issues? Perhaps consumers now have higher expectations of customer service than they did a few years ago? Most likely it is a combination of all of these.

Interestingly, there was a broad consensus on this issue across all age groups. It shows that despite all the current focus on self-service, there are in every age group, a large number who value being able to speak to someone who knows their customer history, has the right data at their fingertips and can deliver a personalised service tailored to all this information.

It also emphasises the need for enterprises to be able to route calls through to experts within the business who can effectively resolve a customer’s queries. These consumers are asking for effortless customer service and only this “triage-style” approach will help deliver on customer expectations.



EVOLVING ATTITUDES

WHAT ANNOYS CUSTOMERS THE MOST?

However involved we are in customer service, we are also all consumers too. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that, just as in 2014, the one thing that irritates people the most is being passed around multiple agents and departments. It has happened to most of us and it's not much fun.

This "pass the parcel" school of customer service was given by 60% as one of their top three irritants. Obviously our patience wanes as we grow older, as nearly three-quarters (74%) of the 55+ age group marked it as an aggravation.

Having to repeat information, another sign that businesses don't have their interaction channels properly integrated, was the next most cited answer. Consumers now expect a seamless service, regardless of their preferred channel of approach.

Once again, these answers underline the need for customers to be quickly routed to the right contact within a business.

KNOWLEDGE IS VALUED

It seems that speed of response is the key to success in today's fast-paced consumer environment – and this can only be achieved through having knowledgeable and professional staff. When asked, in order of preference, what they value most in any interaction with a business, over half (54%) said "a timely response", closely followed (53%) by "knowledgeable staff" and (41%) "a professional approach and attitude".

These were also the three most highly-valued qualities in 2014, but with "knowledgeable staff" achieving top place and "a timely response" dropping to third position. Our time is obviously even more precious now than it was three years ago.

Answers also showed that accuracy and quality of information provided is also much more important to those in the older age range than it is to younger consumers.

THE ULTIMATE SANCTION

If fast, attentive and informed customer service is so important, what happens to the businesses and brands that fail to deliver? The most drastic action a consumer can take is to walk away and never have anything to do with the brand or service provider again. It seems that 50% of us do.

Although this figure sounds high, it is in fact 10% lower than in 2014. Is this because customer service is improving? Perhaps, although it could be that consumers now let off steam in other ways?

Almost half (47%) also discuss their experience with family and friends. So bad service can mean the loss of not just one customer, but multiple potential sales. Others (31%) register a complaint using traditional methods such as fixed-line phone or post.

However, it is interesting that, although email is by far the most popular means of communicating with a business, when it comes to negative messages about customer service, social media is far more popular. This is a worrying thought as bad experiences can send ripples that turn into waves when shared with others.

47%

discuss their experience
with family and friends.



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THE POWER OF GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

But let's turn our thoughts around, be positive and look at what good customer service can do for a business. Do consumers ever base their decision to buy from a certain business solely on that organisation's reputation for customer service?

It seems that many of us do. In fact, more than one in ten (11%) always base their purchase decisions on reputation for service. In addition, 32% said they usually do this, and 44% answered "sometimes". Interestingly, women seem to place slightly more emphasis on customer service than men.

Perhaps even more noteworthy is the finding that the younger age group place more emphasis on customer service than older people. Is this something to do with growing up with strong brands and their loyalty towards them? More than one in five (21%) of 25 - 34 year-olds said they always based their decision to buy solely on a reputation for customer service.

All these results stuck very closely to those of the 2014 survey.



THE POWER OF GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

RESOLUTION IN THE CONTACT CENTRE

When it comes to finding out consumer information, self-service is a relatively new idea. Yet it seems that most people still prefer to speak to someone at a contact centre.

When our sample were asked to think about their last three interactions with a business and where any issues they may have had were resolved, nearly half (49%) said “in the contact centre”. Others found their answers on a company website (21%), via a google search (12%), in the back office (9%) and 6% via a social media platform.

It will be interesting to see whether this changes as companies improve their self-service experience or whether the desire to speak to someone who understands remains a constant.

HUMANS GET THE VOTE AGAIN

To throw a little more light on this question the survey asked which channel would provide the best results when trying to resolve an issue or uncover information. Despite the ongoing “digitisation” of the consumer, interaction with a live agent was the most highly-trusted approach with one-third (33%) citing this. The next most popular channel in this regard was web chat, chosen by 19%.

It's worth noting though that up until the age of 34, web chat is preferred to a live agent. This preference is relatively consistent up until the 55+ age range, after which it changes dramatically with only 11% saying this would give the best result.

It all goes to show that despite demands for an increasing number of digital channels, organisations should never neglect the need for traditional interaction with a live agent and the trust this creates.

THE POWER OF GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

SELF-SERVICE - COULD DO BETTER?

However, the acceptance of self-service channels is clearly growing. Some 29% said they would be “very happy” to use them with 54% saying they would be “quite happy”.

Predictably these levels decline with age, with the marked change coming at the 55+ deadline. Whereas 41% in the 25 – 34 group said they would be “very happy” to use a self-service channel, just 14% of the 55+ group said the same thing.

So self-service is making inroads, especially amongst the young. But these results do indicate that there’s more work to be done to ensure that self-service options are simple and intuitive for every segment in today’s multi-generational market.

CONSUMERS STILL WANT A CHOICE

Overall, the 2017 Enhouse Interactive survey reveals that consumers are still diverse in their preferences and not totally predictable. Their time is increasingly precious and they have little patience when their query is not resolved quickly and accurately.

Also, consumers are changing in that they are becoming more likely to use online methods of communications, whatever their age. However, they want to maintain a choice because, if they have an important question, they ultimately like to speak to a human being who can answer them with authority.



WHAT MAKES HIGH QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE?

TOP FIVE TAKEAWAYS FOR ORGANISATIONS WISHING TO BUILD HIGH QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE:

DELIVER CONSISTENTLY GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE ACROSS MULTIPLE CHANNELS

The survey results make it clear. Consumers now expect to be able to contact organisations online – either by email or via social media or web chat. It's essential for businesses to now provide the opportunity to interact across multiple channels with a level of consistency and with fully-trained agents ready to respond.

MAKE IT EASY TO SPEAK TO A HUMAN BEING

Although a business may want to encourage consumers to find their answers on the web, doing so by making it too difficult to speak to a live agent will only cause aggravation and is certainly not the best way. Find a cost-effective way to increase voice lines but counter rising call volumes with faster resolution and shorter calls. The only way to do this is to ensure agents have a view of a customer's complete multi-channel history in front of them every time.

DEVELOP A TRIAGE SYSTEM TO PREVENT THE "HOT POTATO" APPROACH

If you've ever had to visit a hospital accident and emergency department you'll know about triage. A "gate-keeper" – assesses the severity of the case and makes a quick decision as to who should deal with it. This can work really well in a truly connected enterprise with a system that will route calls through to experts within the business for fast resolution.

MAKE SELF-SERVICE COMPELLING AND INTUITIVE

The way to encourage customers to use self-service is to make it totally relevant, compelling and easy for them to escalate to web chat or a call if their question can't be answered online.

ENABLE FLEXIBILITY

Consider how attitudes towards online interaction have changed since 2014 – only three years ago. Yet, other factors have remained the same and maybe always will. Favoured social media platforms could well be different in a few years' time, for example. Plus, as the population as a whole becomes more digital-savvy demands could be different. Nobody knows, but it pays to be ready and flexible.

ABOUT ENGHOUSE INTERACTIVE

Enghouse Interactive delivers technology and expertise to maximise the value of every customer interaction. Our core technologies include contact centre, attendant console, IVR, diallers, call recording & speech analytics solutions that support any telephony environment, on premise or in the cloud. This wide portfolio places us in the unique position to offer customers and partners a complete, fully featured solution from a single vendor.

Enghouse Interactive has over ten thousand customers worldwide, supported by a global network of partners focused on creating a richer solution for the client.

Contact us for further insights into the mind of today's consumer and their views on what makes good customer service, and to find out how Enghouse Interactive's Contact Centre Solutions can help you deliver better service to your customers, across all the channels they expect.



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