

Building a Voice of the Customer Strategy for Contact Centres

How Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd used real time customer feedback to turn customer experience into profit.

Although progress has been made by South African companies to recognise that the voice of the customer (VoC) and employee (VoE) is critical to its success and sustainability, it is still challenged by feedback silos, technologically impaired processes and a lack of holistic VoC programmes. Customers are left feeling frustrated, either because they have not been asked for any feedback, or when asked feedback was given, with no follow up response.

All businesses are challenged – in one way or another - with the demands of increasingly knowledgeable customers; customer expectations changing continuously and attracting and retaining talent in a global competitive business environment where multichannel stakeholder communication resonates. With traditional feedback channels evolving, companies are forced to either adapt or stay behind.

In South Africa, customer feedback efforts suffer from a fundamental flaw. Although businesses have taken measures to listen to their customers, they fall short on acting on that feedback. Collecting customer feedback and not acting upon it is a wasteful activity – a high satisfaction score might make businesses feel good, but at the same time an opportunity is lost to drive constructive business and or product change.

Multichannel, multi-disciplined - the modern contact centre is a platform of staggering complexity. Characterised by cross-department integration, multi-channel communication support, and underpinned with 21st century IT, several operational, cultural and technical obstacles are evident and needs to be addressed with key focus on cost, resource and time constraints.

It is therefore not surprising that from a strategic perspective the incorporation of an end-to-end VoC programme with the contact centre is becoming a business necessity.

Step 1: Laying the foundation

Companies use Voice of the Customer (VoC) programs to collect and analyse customer feedback, make customer experience improvements, and track the results of those improvements. The VoC programme team is seldomly responsible for implementing the changes required – they are not the people who own the website, customer care contact centre or product design, for instance. There is a limit to what they can do - which is trying to convince others that the feedback data collected is important and should be listened and acted on.

To address this, your VoC programme strategy should start with proactive management and

leadership. Top management need to focus on the outcomes of feedback and the activities that should take place to address it – actionable insights. It is futile to collate VoC data if no-one believes in it with no cross-silo control and dissemination.

A product-centered approach is, by default, the conventional choice. Many companies find it challenging to restructure their businesses around the customer, having been organised traditionally around products, price or geographies. In a customer-centered approach, the business' objective is fundamentally about providing value to the customer. Customers perceive value when they get what they want, conveniently, at an acceptable price.

However, the total value of a customer cannot be determined from a single transaction. The real measure of customer value is discernible over time. Therefore, it is imperative to listen to the customer throughout their buying journey to determine their lifetime value.

If top management doesn't comprehend that listening to the customers' needs and wants is the key to lasting success, and if the company is doing "OK" nonetheless, it may be difficult to move forward.

This is still the biggest fundamental obstacle for successful VoC programmes realisation.

Step 2: Setting goals and metrics

A proper VoC programme will require investment whether it is financial, resources or time. In order to capture and maintain the attention of top management, your goals must be tied to corporate financials. Top management does not really care about an "excellent customer satisfaction" rating. Therefore goals must be quantifiable and comply with the SMART principle (Smart, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-

bound) for example using metrics such as Net Promotor Score (NPS) and Customer Satisfaction (CSI) scores.

In addition, businesses should seek financial targets. VoC programmes can generate new revenue, increase the success rate of new product to market, reduce cost of sales, decrease costs of poor processes and increase customer retention, so it's important to find a way to set goals around these areas.

The VoC strategy must be aligned to supporting the business goals. It must reflect the requirements of the respective stakeholders so that they can clearly see how the program will directly contribute to their unit and equally how they will play their own part in the programme.

Step 3A: Map the customer journey

How does your customer really experience your business? What decisions do they make during their purchasing journey? Companies must take some time to really understand how customers experience their business, and put the processes and channels in place to monitor, measure and report on those experiences at the key touch points.

Not every fragmented touch point is critical to customers - some does not take priority at all - customers are still content without those interactions being great. Every organisation has limited resources; therefore proposed improvements to your customer experience must be prioritised so that the actions you take have impactful results.

Step 3B: Building the VoC strategy - going back to basics

All too often, much effort are placed on the technical aspects of implementing a VoC

programme across different channels and touch points, but fails to embrace a coherent change plan for front-line staff which enables and empowers them to respond directly to customer feedback. Front-line staff need to be engaged and supported through cohesive training and coaching in order to take ownership of the customer enquiries. Technology alone will not fix anything. The old adage ‘garbage in = garbage out’ still applies – consumers react well to honesty and genuine customer care.

A VoC programme is not a once a year market insight survey. It needs to capture customer feedback in real-time. Its insights should be challenging and viscous. It must demand that the company changes to incorporate its findings into the management heartbeat of the business.

While customer feedback can appear to be a scary, unsettling and disruptive influence in your business, it is essential you have a robust strategy to guide your VoC journey. Without one, your programme will stall.

Step 4: Act, review and enhance

Acting is the analyses of the data you gathered throughout the listening process and using it in your decision-making process - at this stage, the return on investment should be realised.

Lost customers can be won back, customers can be kept longer, more referrals can be generated, product improvements can be prioritised correctly and investments can be directed in the right business areas.

Change in business is hampered with a tendency to over-analyse results and a prolonged discussion of proposed actions. Rather than a green field-approach,

implement a priority mechanism to focus on critical areas that have a positive impact on customers – closing the loop with individual customers as well as building a foundation for longer-term profitable opportunities.

It is imperative that you review your goals and revise them regularly. Examine all aspects of the programme with a cross-functional team of experts, to seek continuous improvements, to re-focus on new issues as they arise and to adjust your priorities along the way. Sharing the results widely across your company will increase visibility to what customers are saying.

Here are a few ideas in order to ensure that your integrated customer feedback initiative delivers what is intended to – i.e. meaningful business change:

Act quickly. Responding quickly to a customer’s concern as it has a significant impact on the probability that the customer will return and buy again.

Focus on the overall experience. Do not only seek feedback limited to a product, service or department. Ask the right questions to gauge the overall experience including communication, user interface, and pricing.

Acknowledge customer feedback. Do not forget to thank customers for the feedback given.

Loyalty. A loyalty programme is a good way to reward customers for sharing their feedback.

Action taken on feedback. Always give feedback to your customers on how, when and what you are doing about feedback received.

VoC Program is a project. Creating action logs as part of a project helps maintain momentum and focus on improvement actions.

Realisation. Share with your customers how their feedback helped the business realise positive results in processes and service offerings.

Post-action follow-up feedback. Initiate a follow-up feedback to ensure that they acknowledge your focused efforts and share their comments.

Customer feedback is a two-way street – involving your customers in the process improvement journey.

A Success Story - Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd and Touchwork partnership

A. Business Requirement

Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd Consumer, South Africa stepped up to the challenge to improve their Voice of the customer strategy. Enabled with top management support, the business set its goals to measure the customer service provided by their consumer care team. Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd SA wanted to ensure that any negative feedback was followed up immediately and that this was used as an opportunity to train team members.

B. Solution Integration

Using the Touchwork Voice of the customer solution, Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd was able to send customers that have recently interacted with the consumer contact centre a Text message (SMS), requesting them to give feedback on their experience with their

interaction. Mobile numbers and opt-in permissions were obtained during the call centre interaction. The main reasons Text messaging (SMS) was chosen were:

High open rate of Text messaging (SMS) (98% - Frost and Sullivan)

High penetration of cell phones in the South African market (>100% - Cellular News)

Immediate real time response from customers
Easy for the customer to respond

Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd also addressed customer grievances regarding high call costs when phoning the call centre from a mobile phone by providing the call centre number as well as a Text message (SMS) number on their product packaging.

C. Results - Benefits realised

Since the start of the VoC relationship, Touchwork have worked as an integral part of Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd Consumer Care centre team - achieving operational excellence across and beyond the customer touch points and striking the appropriate balance between efficiency and effectiveness.

With the Touchwork VoC Solution integrated, the Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd Consumer Care Centre can provide an efficient way to deliver excellent service at reasonable costs – without sacrificing the human touch – and drive future revenue, thus turning customer experience into profits. By responding to customer complaints timeously, consistently and keeping customers involved throughout the process, Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd were able to manage and close the feedback process effectively and consequently increase their competitive advantage.

With a positive response consistently over 91% and an average response rate over 60%, the method of asking for feedback from customers via text messages (SMS)

highlighted that customers wanted to engage even when they had a positive experience.

“TxtandTell has brought us into the “real time” space with focus and efficiency. Not sure how we managed before!”

– Laura Nel

(Head: Corporate Affairs – Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd, South Africa)

Conclusion

Tough economies, global markets, and on-the-fence loyalties have made it harder than ever to get and keep people committed to your business. But building a comprehensive VoC program isn't easy. It involves complex challenges, such as collecting customer and employee feedback in real time across multiple channels and tailoring reports for diverse internal audiences. Nothing can erase these challenges completely, but the right strategy can help overcome them.

About Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd

Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Limited has been in South Africa since 1930, manufacturing and distributing a full range of consumer and over-the-counter products from their factories in East London and Cape Town. Their Head Office is based in Cape Town.

The fundamental objective of Johnson & Johnson (Pty) Ltd is to provide scientifically sound, high quality products and services to help heal, cure disease and improve the quality of life. This is a goal that began with the Company's founding in 1886.

About Touchwork

Touchwork is a global leader in mobile actionable intelligence solutions that help organisations worldwide capture, analyse, and act on information in real-time – anytime, anywhere. Touchwork's enterprise solution puts the right information in the right hands at the right time. In doing so, organisations can achieve first class customer experience and field service performance; reduce costs and liability; and generate revenue and gain a competitive advantage.

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