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The Value of Customer Support Across Your Organization

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In Today's Personalized World, Customer Experience Is an Organization-Wide Priority

As customer experience becomes a key differentiator for businesses in today's competitive landscape, customer support is increasingly seen as a driver of revenue and a significant contributor to reducing churn.

Companies putting a deliberate focus on improving their customer support function are seeing increased customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, which in turn lead to higher revenues and reduced costs.

However, customer support can't exist in a silo. It takes a company-wide, integrated approach to equip support agents with the knowledge they need to deliver the quality of service your customers demand.

Similarly, support has unique insights into challenges, opportunities, and trends related to your customers and should be sharing this valuable intel with other departments as part of a holistic effort to improve customer experience.

When integrated throughout the organization, customer support can provide insights to help:

Customer success
Understand any history of support issues, communicating any red flags that could indicate a customer may not renew.

Sales
Recognize common challenges, use cases, and buyer personas, providing information to help overcome specific prospect objections.

Marketing
See first-hand how customers are using the product and what challenges they're having in order to improve content, collateral, and messaging.

Product teams
Identify and address any product-related issues before problems become widespread, passing along feedback on user experience and desired features for future releases.

From customer success to marketing, product development to sales, collaboration and information sharing across departments is key to meeting the expectations of today's B2B customers in an environment where options abound and competition is fierce.

Let's explore what this looks like in practice.

All Consumers Demand Better Customer Support
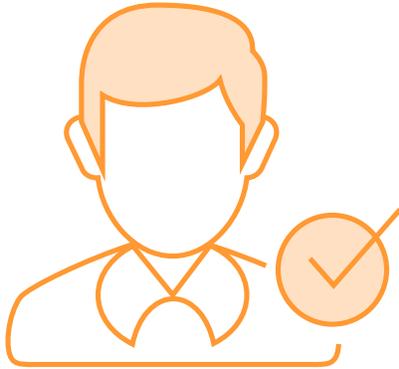
Consumers expect flawless customer support in their private lives, and it's clear they now expect the same level of service when an issue arises with products they use in their professional lives. As Accenture has noted, "B2B customers want the same level of hyper-personalized service as they receive in B2C channels."

In response to these changing buyer expectations, B2B companies are tasked with offering personalized, exceptional, and timely customer support. However, in the complex, constantly evolving tech ecosystem that most professionals operate in today, it's challenging for CX agents to navigate the ever-increasing amount of information needed to provide this level of support as it is spread across more and more siloed systems.

Think about it: Workers experiencing an issue take unexpected time out of their busy day to contact customer support. They want confidence that the individuals assisting them deeply understand the product, their particular use case, and their concerns.

B2B support professionals must realize the costs to the customer of products that aren't functioning properly, including lost time, resources, productivity, and in many cases revenue.

The Important Role Customer Support Plays
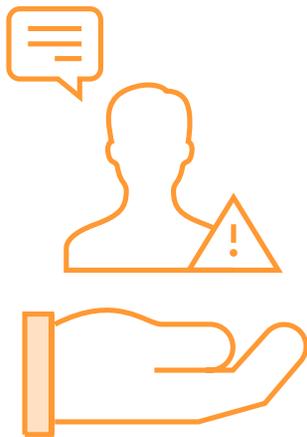
Your organization's customer support agents spend their days talking directly to your consumers. Their intel is unparalleled when it comes to issues that need attention, and they must be able to socialize that information appropriately within the company. Many organizations spend large amounts on market research, yet don't fully utilize the valuable intelligence that comes from real-world, long-term users of their products — their current customers.

According to Accenture, 50% of B2C companies capture and share learning from customer feedback, while only 38% of B2B companies do the same. Both have room for improvement. And this insight should go beyond simply classifying the type of problem any given caller may inquire about in an automated system and then analyzing trend data over time.

Instead, customer insight gained through the support team should reveal the human problems behind technical issues. Qualitative analysis can be the key to truly understanding the needs of your customers and solving their problems, keeping your offerings relevant and timely with new and returning buyers alike.

Customer Success

Perhaps no two departments *should* be more closely aligned than customer success and customer support. Let's start by distinguishing the two:

Customer Support

Support agents are typically reactive and help solve one-off product issues, answer common questions, and provide technical support and guidance.

Customer Success

Success agents take a proactive approach to building strong relationships with customers. They seek to deeply understand the customer's own business, needs, and goals. Why? Success professionals recognize that when customers accomplish their goals using your product, they're more likely to renew and easier to upsell. They serve as the customer advocate within your company.
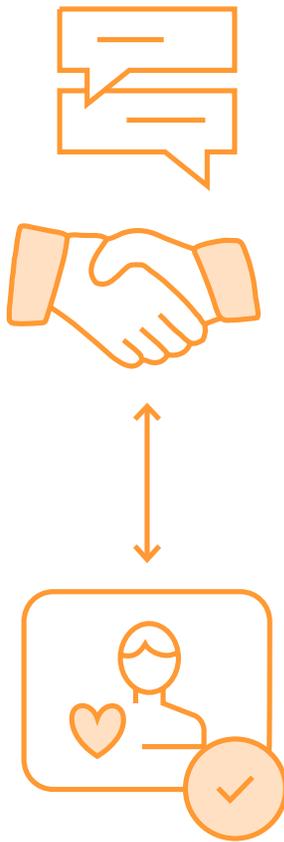
Clearly, they're both on the front lines of ensuring a positive customer experience in which users are successfully achieving their desired results. Accordingly, communication between these two departments should be open and ongoing.

Oftentimes when a customer cancels or declines to renew your product or service, there were early warning signs that the relationship was headed in the wrong direction. It's vital that customer support share any early churn indicators with the success team so they can proactively reach out to the customer and reassure them that the issue has been or will be resolved.

Overall, these two departments come together to paint a holistic, 360-degree view of the customer and their product usage. While support may provide quantitative data (e.g. 12 customers called within the same week with the same issues), customer success is better able to provide the qualitative insights needed to better understand why some customers show stronger adoption and success with your product.

The symbiotic relationship between these two departments can have exponential effects throughout the organization when they are closely aligned, intel is shared, and clear lines of communication are established.

Sales

Customer Support and Your Sales Organization

There's no doubt that the sales and customer support teams need each other. Sales is charged with bringing in new customers, and customer support is responsible for ensuring the product is working as expected and quickly fixing any issues that arise.

Both should be tasked with delivering the best possible experience with your company – before and after the sale. In order for both groups to be successful, they need to share intel and learnings to ensure the right customers are set up for success from the start.

A Symbiotic Relationship

The sales team relies on customer support when it comes to closing deals. They may need to verify that your company provides what the prospect is looking for or can help in a specific use case. They also need the customer support team's help when it comes to understanding the typical user persona and common issues they could face. Understanding which customers succeed (and why) can help sales make better deals with organizations that will make the most of your company's offerings and help ensure they are a long and loyal customer.

Similarly, the support team relies on sales to bring in customers that are a good product fit. This can sometimes be a struggle if certain sales team members feel pressured to close deals and meet quotas. But both sales and support have a vested interest in minimizing churn, and these efforts should begin long before the customer needs to contact support.

Right-fit clients that have aligned expectations from the beginning of the relationship will work with support more easily when it comes to troubleshooting any issues that may arise and are more likely to remain long-term customers.

A Strong Start
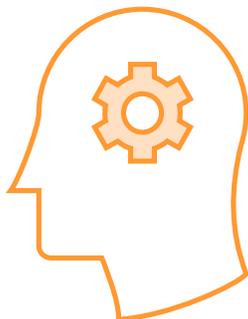
It's not uncommon for customers to need support as they begin setting up and implementing your solution. It's during these first interactions where they start to truly gauge the customer experience and develop their view of your company.

When sales hands off customers that are a good fit, along with integral information about who the customer is, why they made a purchase, who the decision makers are, and how they want to be treated, the customer support team will ultimately be more successful in resolving any issues that may arise.

Marketing

Customer Support and Your Marketing Team

Your marketing team is tasked with putting together messages that resonate with current and prospective customers, driving them to align themselves with your brand and purchase your products.

The only issue? The marketing department is rarely customer facing. This can impact how well their messages align with customers' true pain points and experiences. That's where customer support comes in.

The customer support team often has a better understanding of customers' problems and what they really want from your company's product or service. This intel is priceless for the marketing team, who can use it to get ahead of common issues or by publishing blog posts or other content that address these issues.

Similarly, the information obtained by customer support can help align messaging and ensure marketing is focusing their efforts on key features and benefits most often used by customers.

Customer support can also help identity larger marketplace trends for the marketing team. If similar issues continue to arise with many customers in a particular industry or vertical, they can alert the marketing team, who can respond with messages that address those needs. They can create trend pieces to attract new customers or content to help existing customers use the product more effectively.

Product

Customer Support and Your Product Development Team

While sales and marketing can surely benefit from customer support's knowledge, the product development team is perhaps most in need of this front-line intelligence.

Customer support is often the first internal group to know when an issue arises for clients and can identify these problems before they become widespread. Customer support can also help connect product development with individual customers to help diagnose specific issues inside their systems.

Customer support can provide insight to product development on the user experience of a product. They know how customers use the product, what they like and don't like, and what they hope to see in the future. Additionally, customer support can provide vital knowledge during transitions and upgrades as to what's working, what isn't, what customers adopt easily, and what they struggle to accept.

Achieving Company-Wide Integration

It's easy to call for integration between internal teams, but execution tends to be more difficult. Every employee is busy putting out fires, meeting deadlines, taking on new projects, and more.

Integration must be an intentional effort, one that's backed by key stakeholders across the organization. If all parties don't see integration as necessary, you won't be nearly as successful.

Here are some suggestions for aligning internal teams to better support your customers.

Share information

Silos often exist because employees in each department don't understand what other teams do or how they're structured. Share information openly and make communication a priority. Create an organizational chart that highlights the structure of each department and make sure everyone in the company has access.

Along with the organizational chart, teams should be able to call up information across systems at a moment's notice. For example, the customer support team should know if the product development team is troubleshooting an issue or implementing a fix in real time.

Also, encourage job shadowing. Have a member of customer support sit with a member of product development for a few hours to watch how they work, and vice versa. Giving each group a first-hand look into what the other sees each day can help ease tension and open up a dialogue.

Finally, send weekly updates of big wins, issues, and trends. Examples might be problems the customer support or success team uncovered, how the product development team is managing the fix, how marketing can offer support with messaging, and what sales should watch out for on their next prospecting call.

Hold weekly check-ins across departments

No one wants to have more meetings. But a weekly check-in that's 30 minutes at most will allow each department to share pertinent information that's valuable for others to hear. This can help ensure that everyone gets (and stays) on the same page.

Select point people

Have one person from each department be responsible for communicating updates and issues to the point people from other departments. Making this the responsibility of a single person helps ensure the information gets shared and each person brings relevant knowledge back to their team.

Set goals

Instead of merely setting specific goals for sales, marketing, product development, customer success, and customer support, consider what cross-team goals could be applicable in your organization. Maybe sales, customer support, and customer success have shared goals around customer churn or customer satisfaction. Or perhaps there are joint goals around upselling, with rewards for all involved.

These goals must be specific to your organization, but it's important to consider how cross-team objectives can help different departments work together more effectively — for the benefit of customers and your bottom line.

How Squelch Can Help Pull Everything Together

Internal alignment is absolutely necessary to help your organization meet its business goals. Information must be communicated often and be readily available at a moment's notice.

That's where Squelch comes in. Squelch is the customer experience optimization solution that instantly delivers the most relevant, context-rich intelligence to your agents when and where they need it most.

Your support and success teams won't have to dig for information when answering a customer question. Instead, they'll be able to rely on insights from sales, marketing, product development, and more to resolve issues, improve efficiencies, and ultimately ensure every user finds value in your product. Integration will be easier than ever and accessing the information will be lightning fast.

AI and machine learning allow Squelch to learn what information really matters within a company as well as how it all fits together. By providing this insight into how customers respond to your products, we help showcase additional value within customer-facing teams.

Ready to learn more about Squelch?