

Customer Service In 2010: 5 Trends To Watch

As 2010 begins, you should be aware of these trends relating to customer service and your mobile workforce.

2 009 was a year fraught with risk and the kind of fears that force companies and managers to think deeply about how they run their businesses. The reality of the service environment is that no matter what is happening, the show must go on. With budget constrictions and rising consumer expectations, the big question from 2009 - "How can I do more for less and not compromise my customers?"

In fact, customer service managers thought beyond "compromising care" to *improving* it. Instead of seeing the economic downturn as an obstacle, industry leaders saw an opportunity to emerge stronger and provide an excellent experience while still saving money. In short, they asked - "How do I do more for less and provide more value to my customers with a profoundly better experience?"

This question underlies some of the more interesting customer service/mobile workforce trends emerging in 2010. The goal and the imperative to

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dramatically increase business efficiencies while keeping the core customer base satisfied is at the heart of customer service innovations, and we'll see them come into even greater focus as we see the beginnings of a recovery taking hold.

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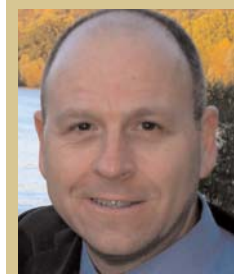
1. Higher Consumer Expectations:

Consumers will not only demand better service – they'll also expect to be in closer continuous communication with their service providers.

With the rise of social networks and the mobile Internet, service providers will need to take a more proactive approach to communicating with their waiting customers via whatever method the customer prefers. Cable, telco and other service companies should take a lesson from retailers like Amazon, Zappos and FedEx. Proactive communications and excellent customer service make a big difference to business. The companies that focus on the subscriber experience will have happier customers and improved brand reputation.

2. Implementing Loyalty Programs:

Service providers in 2010 will implement loyalty programs. Much like frequent flyer miles and credit card points, these programs reward long-time customers for their patronage and discourage them from switching providers. Recognizing the value of loyal customers, and enticing new subscribers to stay on, will be essential for retaining revenue. And frequent flyer programs have become so mainstream they're a major plot element in movies. Consider the recent George Clooney film, *Up in the Air*, about a man on the verge of hitting the 10 million-mile mark on his frequent flyer account. He's certainly not going to switch to another airline, and similar systems could be effective for service providers.



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3. eLearning Solutions Gain Popularity: The aging workforce of field and service technicians means service providers need to find a way to retain their institutional knowledge and disseminate it to a new generation of Internet-savvy employees. In

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2010, mobile Internet based eLearning solutions will be implemented to increase workforce communications and efficient sharing of knowledge within the rapidly evolving field organization.

4. SaaS Becomes Mission Critical: On-demand solutions have been growing in acceptance over the past five years, and 2010 will see them rise into full acceptance for mission-critical areas of large enterprises. Michael Maoz of Gartner, Inc., forecasted SaaS rose 18% in 2009, and expects the market to demonstrate consistent growth through 2013. SaaS continues to be a key driver of growth in the CRM market, according to Gartner, representing more than 20 percent of the market in 2009, up from 8 percent in 2005. Many companies will set SaaS as the standard approach to delivering software solutions across the enterprise, further disrupting the traditional legacy

on-premise software industry. Because of the low upfront costs and ongoing updates from providers, customer service organizations implementing SaaS solutions will be quick to innovate and improve.

5. Services Go Green: As people focus more on the environmental impact their consumption causes, service providers will place more emphasis on green initiatives. Starting with a rallying focus around reducing carbon footprints to renewable energy resources and recycling – businesses will find that more than ever going green saves money while enhancing brand reputation. In fact, Forbes magazine ran a story on the 100 Best Corporate Citizens of 2009. One of the key elements to the story was a focus on green initiatives, and discussed how going green saves money and improves corporate reputations. The report is available here: <http://www.forbes.com/2009/03/05/best-corporate-citizens-leadership-citizenship-ranking.html>.

2010 is shaping up to be a year of new beginnings. But starting anew sometimes means going back to the basics. In the case of service companies, that means renewing their commitment to superior customer service. By leveraging state of the art technologies built to maximize the potential of the mobile Internet — service providers can attain the ‘Holy Grail’ of service: enhancing the customer experience and the relationship with the customer while reducing costs. As consumers and companies slowly recover from recent tough times, leaders will seize this opportunity to develop customer loyalty through excellent service.



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TOA Technologies has been recognized by Gartner analysts as a visionary company for the past three years running, based largely on the company's completeness of vision. The innovative nature of ETAdirect has been recognized by customers, analysts and investors because of its ability to streamline the mobile workforce environment and enhance the customer experience. No other solutions in the market enables real-time predictive communications between companies, their field employees, and their customers.

TOA's solution is deployed at leading companies worldwide in a range of industries, including Cable and Broadband, Telecommunications, Retail, Utilities and Home Services.