White Paper

How to Increase Your First Call Resolutions

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Part I

Introduction to First Call Resolution

I'm sure that the first call from any customer wasn't intended to last too long or that it needed a second call before the issue was resolved, but it happens! So, what did it take for the customer service world to understand that all it takes for first call to be the only call the customer makes is to utilize self-service?

Certainly, the introduction of the internet and its many tools enabled support teams to relieve the stress of all the calls that they received as well as the costs connected to them. The tools used these days include online chat support tools, video tutorials, and new products like WalkMe, which serve as a digital GPS for the web.

This evolution primarily consists of technology having a heavy influence over customer services and support! What did we do without it, huh? People used to see this as a lost cause, but now it is something inspiring and revolutionary.

Part II

How to Measure First Call Resolution

People seem confused on how to measure first call resolution. This insecurity on how to quantify the success of call center interaction results in the continuing degradation of customer care quality in the business world, and it also increases the disdain that customers have for call centers in general.

This is unfortunate, because there really is a sure-fire answer to how to measure first call resolution. This only seems like a mystifying topic because of the presence of the human element, which often brings about some serious uncertainties into any equation. However, it’s not really as big of an issue as people imagine.

So, let’s take a look at how we might measure first call resolution so that this may be demystified once and for all. This will hopefully make it possible for companies to improve the dreadful call center experience so that everyone can keep their mental health intact.

First, let’s look at the anatomy of a support call. It essence, it consists of three parts: the initial exchange, statement of the problem and Q&A, and finally, resolution (either positive or negative) of the issue at hand. Each of these three aspects needs to be measured independently first before they can be examined as a whole.

First, the initial exchange involves a greeting and confirmation of the right department being reached, as well as the practicality of the two parties communicating. If clarification is needed more than twice on a single aspect (name, department or understandability) during this initial exchange, then the call was probably destined to go wrong and this will most likely be the root of it all. Poor communication is a serious issue with call centers. Although this may seem slightly politically incorrect, it is absolutely paramount that call center personnel be highly fluent, if not native speakers, of the language in question. As a rule of thumb, would you entrust the individual you are speaking to to teach the language to someone else? If so, they're probably qualified. Otherwise, they are not qualified for the customer service arena.

The second aspect involves stating the question or problem. This refers to the sequence of bi-directional questions and answers between the customer and the agent. During this process, if a question was difficult to ask or answer between either party, to the point where the question took as longer to explain than answer, then the call's level of success for resolution is diminished

Customers cannot help the fact that they are flustered or not the best speakers, so the fact that their questions or answers are not the most clear cannot be held against them. However, the agent's inability to work with this in an efficient manner is an issue that needs to be addressed. Sadly, this is mostly something that is learned over time through practice and intuition.

Finally, the resolution, which is not always positive, needs to be measured. If the customer feels that their question or problem has been addressed properly, it means no further resolution must be sought with a future call. If the problem cannot be fixed, then the customer will leave the conversation feeling like can't fix the problem or may try calling again at a later date.

If the problem can be fixed, then it's obvious that the problem should be fixed or that the question needs to be at least answered. This one's a bit of a given, but the negative resolution from a moment ago is often overlooked as being a resolution at all.

Now that we've dissected the call, let's assign a measurement for the whole of the call. A call will start out with 10 points, the more points remaining at the end, the better. The problem with section 1 costs two points. The problem with section 2 costs four points and the problem with section 3 costs nine points. A successful call should retain at least six points after it is ended in order to be considered acceptably successful. The third issue costs all but one point because it does not become a first call resolution if it is not solved here.

This is just a simple method for how to measure first call resolution, and it's not one that the call center employees should be aware of, but it's a great metric for improving the nightmare that is thought of when considering telephone customer service.

Part III

How to Improve First Call Resolution

One thing you can guarantee is that you need to answer your customer calls; it's the basis of customer service. The first call is the most important one, and if you can resolve the issue in the first call, you are on to a good start. Let's explore First contact resolution.

The First Time:

How much does it cost to receive a support call from a customer? SupportIndustry.com's 2009 Service and Support metric Survey says that it can cost anywhere from $10 to $24. Customers need to call, and if their issues are not resolved within the first call, then the cost increases with each following call. As the call volume grows, customer satisfaction declines and the money that could be saved is going down the drain.

Here are some tips for improving the coveted FCR.

Hire and Train:

Hiring the right support representative isn't easy. It takes a certain kind of person to with customers. You must find a way to determine if your employee is able to handle the pressures of customer support. The support staff will have to handle emotional customers, intricate product explanations, as well as proper protocol. These reps must be trained about your product or service while being able to diffuse the situation.

Create Knowledge Bases:

Create a knowledge base containing accurate details about the products/services, solutions to known issues, steps for troubleshooting, tips from qualified support reps and other customers (via online forums), and anything else that can help solve a problem.

This knowledge puts answers immediately at the representative's fingertips, which not only improves first call resolution, but can also speed up the handle time as well.

Give Authority:

Give the reps the power to provide support. In other words, if the rep doesn’t have complete power to make decisions, they can’t provide the best customer support and will possibly have to make a second call to the customer, which will end up costing more money.

Give Support:

Don’t leave your team hanging! Give them support if they need it. The rep needs a support framework in order to continue to learn and improve. They will need encouragement, acknowledgement, and a scale that tells them how well they are performing overall. All levels of management, including the CEO, will want to find ways to help improve success ratios, whether it's with further training, better tools, awards, or other types of motivation and assistance.

Take Advantage of New Innovative Customer Support Technologies

Human beings have always tried to innovate and create new technology that performs task faster and cheaper, and the area of customer support is no different. Technologies such as LivePerson, Zendesk, and Zoho have always been the center of attention for managers of customer support in various industries. An interesting emerging innovative customer support software tool is WalkMe.

WalkMe gives businesses the ability to simplify the customers' online experience and eliminate user confusion. Think of it like a GPS, but instead of giving driving directions, WalkMe™ guides customers to successful self-tasking, even though the most complex processes.

Through a series of interactive tip-balloons overlaid on the screen, tasks are broken down into short, step-by-step, guided instructions, which help customers act, react and progress during their online experience. As a result, WalkMe™ reduces incoming support requests, increases self-service adoption and lowers service costs. Moreover, WalkMe™ reduces customers' frustration of waiting for assistance, and eliminates the need to follow video tutorials or dig through tedious Q&A pages. Another important factor is that implementing WalkMe™ does not require integration or modification to your website or any prior technical knowledge.

Ultimately, you need to make sure you have the right keys to success. Hire the right reps, train them properly, and provide them with knowledge and support. Keep in mind that not every call will be resolved with just one phone call; there will always be issues that need to be escalated or followed up on. However, when you have a higher first call resolution rate, your reps will have more time to deal with the bigger problems that are more time-consuming and can bring more money and better quality to the company. Customers who get their issues resolved on the first call are more likely to become loyal customers, even more so than those who never even encounter a problem. Take the right steps to help your company grow and become the best it can be.

About WalkMe

WalkMe™ helps customer support managers to increase self-service adoption, reduce incoming support requests, and lower service costs. Leveraging the *WalkMe*™ interactive self-guidance technology, support managers can insure their customers have a simple, smooth & burden-free online experience, eliminating customer confusion and frustration.

Through a series of interactive tip balloons overlaid on the screen, tasks are broken down into short, step-by-step guided instructions, which help customers act, react and progress during their online experience. As a result, customer support managers can empower their customers to self-task successfully even through the most complex processes. Moreover, *WalkMe*™ reduces your customers' frustration of waiting for assistance, shortens the time it takes for support personnel to handle an incoming request and strengthens your company's support reputation.

About the Author

Stefanie Amini is Marketing Director and Customer Support Specialist at WalkMe. Stefanie is the lead author and editor of a customer service blog – "I Want it Now", that focuses on the main KPI's of the customer service business. "I Want it Now" takes a sharp and extensive look at the issues that connect with the generation of people who demand customer gratification, immediate responses to complaints, and real-time feedback. In short, those who want answers NOW.

Ms. Amini is a regular contributor to leading industry media and has been featured in premier publications such as ICMI.com, WinTheCustomer.com, The Counselor, CXJourney and CustomerThink.com