

The Future of Customer Service

A Forward-Looking Playbook for Customer Service Leaders and Their Teams



5 Trends Will Transform Customer Service

Forward-looking customer service and support (CSS) organizations are shifting from a reactive strategy designed to limit costs to a predictive strategy that delivers additional value to customers.

Five trends will drive this transformation and expand the scope, impact and responsibilities of service.

Consider these changes:

- ✓ CSS will deliver personalized experiences while also balancing increased customer privacy concerns.
- ✓ CSS will respond to requests from machine and connected devices in addition to human customers.
- ✓ Customers will look beyond company-owned channels, using service information from third-party sources and websites to resolve their issues.

This guide helps CSS leaders adjust their strategies and investments to build toward a compelling vision for the future.



Source: Gartner

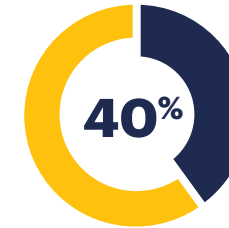
Become a Value-Driven Function



What's happening?

A recent Gartner survey finds that the most common priority for service and support leaders in 2022 is “growing the business.” To do this, leaders must reach beyond the first-contact issue resolution mission of today to redefine the strategy, processes and technology to equip teams to generate revenue and drive retention.

Strategic Planning Assumption



By 2025, 40% of customer service and support functions will use value enhancement as a primary way to measure the function's success, up from 17% in 2021.

Source: Gartner

What to do about it



Enable reps to deliver value to customers:

- Deploy real-time conversational analytics to ensure reps guide conversations to enhance customer value.



Leverage a zero-based budgeting approach:

- Reevaluate current service investments based on how much they improve customer and organizational value.



Shift how the function tracks and measures success:

- Move away from traditional measures of customer satisfaction to a Value Enhancement Score.

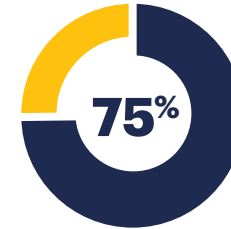


Balance Personalization With Privacy

What's happening?

Seventy-one percent of B2C customers and 86% of B2B customers expect customer service to be well informed about them. At the same time, customers are increasingly concerned about how their personal data is used. The inherent tension between personalized experiences and personal privacy will increase, complicating efforts to deliver relevant service in a context of customer trust.

Strategic Planning Assumption



By 2025, 75% of the world's population will have its personal information covered by modern privacy regulations.

What to do about it



Prioritize transparency in customer privacy settings:

- Inform customers about the personal information you use, why you're using it and how they can manage it.



Make ethics a core component of your data management strategy:

- Create data use cases based on how they benefit the customer, not just the company.



Collect the minimum data required through the least invasive methods:

- Limit data collection to what the organization needs to deliver timely resolution and added value.



Give customers better control over how their data is used:

- Clearly delineate consent management and preference settings by functional area and use case to avoid conflating uses of data.

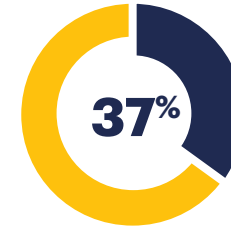


Account for Machine Customers

What's happening?

Customers are becoming increasingly comfortable with virtual personal assistants (VPAs), and products are becoming increasingly intelligent. Advances in conversational artificial intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT) will enable these products and VPAs to evolve into machine customers who act on behalf of their owners, resetting expectations about what constitutes a low-effort experience.

Strategic Planning Assumption



By 2025, 37% of customers will try using a digital assistant to interact with customer service on their behalf.

What to do about it



Prepare for machine-customer-initiating inquiries:

- Catalog the use cases where machines could make inquiries on behalf of a human customer.
- Create objective auto-responses to simple inquiry use cases that would satisfy machine customers but also build a feedback loop to human counterparts.



Understand how the customer experience (CX) needs of machine customers differ from those of human customers:

- Collaborate with CX teams to develop machine-centric personas and journey maps.

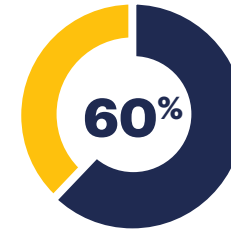
Prepare for Expanded Paths to Resolution



What's happening?

Customers continue to use and trust unofficial sources of information to address service issues. Think: Reddit, YouTube, etc. This erodes control over customer experiences, yet could also help customers access trustworthy peer-to-peer support.

Strategic Planning Assumption



By 2025, 60% of customers will seek service in third-party sources of information not owned by the company.

What to do about it



Identify sources of information about your products and services:

- Manually review known sources and use social media listening tools and search analytics to identify unknown sources.
- Evaluate both the quality of the information and its impact on the customer journey.



Determine why your customers visit third-party sources, to optimize company-owned resources:

- Gather natural customer language from search terms and third-party materials.
- Use this language to optimize company-owned channels, resources and search engine optimization.



Update internal knowledge management to educate reps:

- Tell customer service reps about the third-party channels customers use and the information they find there, and develop a plan to address the perceptions customers may bring to service interactions based on third-party experiences.



Partner with internal stakeholders:

- Work with legal, communications, marketing, product and sales to evaluate the opportunities and risks of linking to or integrating third-party content on company-owned channels.



Fully Capture the Voice of the Customer

What's happening?

Service and support leaders are heavily investing in emerging voice of the customer (VoC) technologies to complement traditional, but not comprehensive, survey-based feedback. These new VoC data collection methods deliver timely, actionable insights to improve service interactions in a way that requires little to no customer effort.

What to do about it



Mitigate VoC adoption challenges:

- Iteratively implement new VoC technologies.
- Hire (or develop) staff with the data analytics skills needed to leverage new VoC technologies.



Do not abandon surveys completely:

- Use surveys to answer important questions that are hard to infer, like which aspects of the service experience matter most to customers.



Establish a closed-loop process to act on insights:

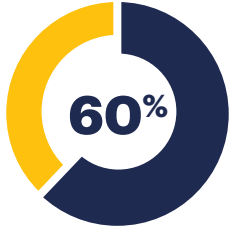
- Identify representatives from service, product teams, IT, data, operations, and sales and marketing who will have oversight over the entire VoC life cycle and can take timely action in response to insights.



Create visibility across the organization:

- Use newsletters and other communications/media to promote your VoC strategy and its results.

Strategic Planning Assumption



By 2025, 60% of service organizations will adopt analytics technologies to supplement traditional surveys by analyzing voice and text interactions with customers.

The Value-Focused CSS Organization Is Coming. Are You Ready?

In a few years, best-in-class service organizations will be delivering not only **better** customer service experiences but also **different** experiences, with radical flexibility around:



Where service happens — often outside of company service channels



Who initiates service — increasingly machines, not human customers



When service happens — before the customer even knows there is a problem





Why service happens — to help the customer get more out of the product

These changes will transform CSS and the roles and responsibilities of its leaders. Use this guide to stay ahead of the curve and develop your strategy for building the service and support organization of the future.

How Gartner Helps CSS Leaders Adapt and Stay Ahead

Drive market-leading growth in today's changing landscape by delivering high-quality service experiences built around a customer-centric strategy. We'll help you do it.


 Diagnostics and benchmarks


 Guides and toolkits


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How Gartner supports you as a client


Diagnose current state

 Assess your functional maturity with **diagnostic tools** that identify strengths and weaknesses and guide strategic priorities.


 Review your existing customer service strategy with a **Gartner expert** to identify areas of optimization and improvement.

Develop your plan

 Develop a customer value enhancement strategy to succeed in the coming decade with our **latest research** to help drive customer retention and loyalty.

 Leverage the **Gartner one-page strategic planning template** to define program objectives that will lead to success.

Execute and drive change

 Utilize **Gartner Customer Service & Support Score**, a strategic planning tool that evaluates the maturity of your customer service and support function using objective, peer-based performance standards.

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