

## Telecommunications Industry - What is The Objective of Online Self Help

Websites are a vital component for customers to understand, customize and extend their services in a way that is both convenient and efficient. As a result, industry executives are now more willing to invest in the online customer experience. Online Customer Service (OCS) solutions can improve the quality of user interaction and, consequently make a real difference in customer retention and growth.

All telecommunications companies provide websites but how effective are they? That depends on the intended use and benefits, so it is imperative to speak with industry executives to uncover those goals and objectives. The results of those interviews are summarized as follows:

### Call Efficiency and Optimization

The majority concur that it is realistic to expect good Help systems to solve only the simpler issues, and that customers with more complex problems will continue to pick up the phone. Call centers can best resolve difficult issues with customers, and the goal of many providers is to maximize the efficiency of the call centers by providing effective self serve in key areas for less complex problems. The goal for many

*“Our key goals are to satisfy the online customer, to divert low-value calls, and to entice the online customer with the benefits of self-service”*

companies is to reduce call volumes, but in general it is also to concentrate resources on more complex issues that benefit from telephone agent interaction.

### Service Differentiation

Many see customer service as a competitive differentiator, and consider the improvement of online self-help and dialog options as another way of improving brand image. With a growing trend towards customer retention, any system which reduces barriers and enhances satisfaction will help. The type of content most

likely to be provided online is guidance on advanced normal tasks such as networking, data backup, and call features. These are often provided as FAQs, and address items such as rebooting the computer, unplugging the telephone, recycling the modem, and renewing an IP address. Some of these functions are also provided by an increasing number of automated online tools (such as Desktop Doctor from Comcast). Customers with trickier troubleshooting tasks tend to go to the telephone very quickly. Some companies are adding “paid for” value-add services to supplement “free support” for those customers that require this additional level of help. AT&T and Verizon are starting to rollout these services while other companies are tapping into third-party solutions such as Geek Squad.

### **Up-selling and Personalization**

Finally, many organizations see the Help area as a means of up-selling. The key is to know the customer and to offer better personalization: more relevant recommendations and improved service follow from a clear understanding of the customer, what they already have installed or purchased, and their potential problems. This is especially important in the light of the wide array of preferences that customers have, so a 'one size fits all' approach will be less successful.

Whatever the organization's goals, the success of the Help system will depend on four key factors: the quality of content, how it is presented, how easy it is to reach, and how easy it is for customers to get in touch if they cannot find what they need. This report applies a consistent benchmark methodology to ten websites in order to evaluate how well they allow customers to solve their own issues online.

# THE CUSTOMER**RESPECT** GROUP

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The Customer Respect Group is an internationally recognized leader in the creation and measurement of benchmarks in the arena of online customer experience and respect. Benchmarks have been shown to provide an invaluable means to consider comparative performance, learn from the leaders and take advantage of strengths. The Customer Respect Group has objectively measured websites since 2003 and has amassed a huge database of knowledge and data.

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