



The future of customer service

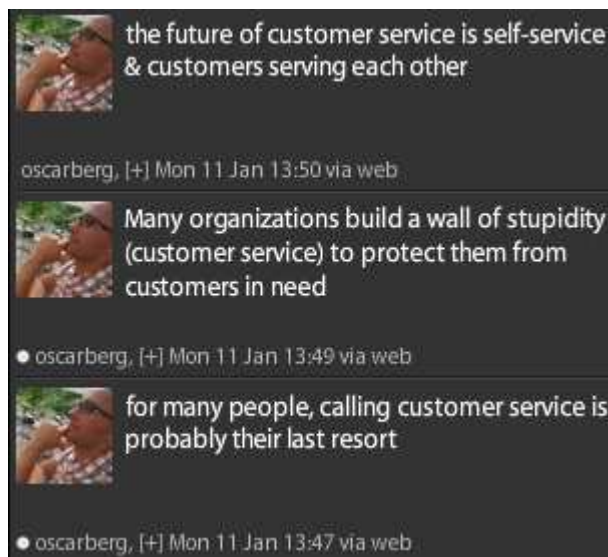


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Enterprise 2.0 and social media allow for new approaches to interact with customers and for various new forms of community building. Will the result be better customer service?

Over the past few days, a couple of messages in our information stream got our attention.

The first was this short series of tweets by Oscar Berg ([@oscarberg](#)), a brief recap of the thoughts most of us have. As the timestamps suggest, you have to read this from bottom to top.



The second was this blog post by John Sviokla, [Better Customer Service Through Transparency, Tribes, and Talent](#), exploring some of the ways the new evolutions can help us to improve customer service.

Both messages touch on the subject of customer service and how new technologies and approaches such as social media and enterprise 2.0 can provide new ways to address the challenges of excellent customer interaction.

Of course, both Berg and Sviokla are right. New patterns emerge that allow for additional, innovative ways to interact with the customer and prospect communities. New opportunities become available for self-service, self-support and community building.

However, will all of these result in better customer service?

As John Hagel describes in his brilliant post [Relationships and Dynamics - Seeing Through New Lenses](#), perhaps this is once again an example of how our western "object thinking" clouds our view. We see a problem (poor customer service) and a solution (social interaction) and we link the two together.

Unfortunately, these new forms of social interaction will not be the cure for poor customer service. Poor customer service is the logical result of the wrong attitude and culture, lack of vision and short-term thinking. None of these issues go away because of the availability of new tools or approaches.

No, the "solutions" that we perceive in this new space of social interaction are simply examples of the intelligent use of the new tools and methods that become available by companies that are addressing the customer interaction challenge with the right mindset. However, without this right mindset, these solutions will not deliver the value we might hope for.

We think perceiving solutions for the problems we face, but we only see the outcome of a system that is not having these problems. ***Solutions are the consequences of doing things right.***


Cure the system and the solution becomes available, but not the other way around. The solution will not cure the system and therefore, for the foreseeable future, customer service is unlikely to improve.


About the author



Marc Buyens is analyst, management consultant and owner of Xpragma. Marc started Xpragma in 1999 after a 20+ years career in the IT sector. Today, he provides advice, training and mentoring services focusing on the intersection of technological evolution, organisational change and business strategy: a messy world of unfulfilled promises.

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