

Enhancing cross-channel communication in financial services

 By Wynand Smit

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Financial institutions, like any other businesses, have customers whose preferences have shifted to digital channels. While voice is still the default option for contacts, customers also want to be able to use email, chat or even social media to communicate with their bank. The challenge is bringing all of those channels into a place where information is accessible to all who need to use it.



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According to the recent *Customer Experience in Banking Survey*, getting the customer experience right is vital to South African banks as 67% of respondents would lodge a formal complaint with their bank about bad customer service. By the same token, only 28% of South Africans would change banks because of bad service, the lowest out of all countries polled. 68% of South African customers cited getting the same level of experience and service across all channels as a priority.

Following that, customers want their problem to be resolved on the first point of contact, with speaking directly with a customer service agent seen as least important. The challenge to financial institutions is getting it right, because if you do, your customers will stick around – better yet, they'll tell their friends about great customer experience.

Getting customer experience right

Your customers don't want to be kept waiting, nor do they want their calls transferred to numerous agents without problems being resolved – worse, still, they don't want to have to go into the branch to resolve an issue if they've queried something via phone or online. Channel integration can enhance processes leading to improved customer experience.

Omni-channel

Omni-channel seeks to provide the customer with an ordered, consistent experience whether the customer is communicating online from a desktop or mobile device, by telephone or in a bricks and mortar branch. One of the benefits include bringing touchpoints into one environment, the contact centre, so that agents can deal with information being updated in as close to real time as possible. This translates to agents being able to accurately access information, work off that information when it comes to outbound or inbound calls and it also means that customers, whether liaising via voice,

email or any other channel integrated into that environment are more likely to experience improved levels of service.

Omni-channel helps to move the customer journey along across touchpoints, while calls may need to be transferred between agents, the agent taking over will have details about what's already happened, so the customer won't be repeating entire conversations. Agents will also have access to all profile data, leading to an improved view of the customer and their preferences. In the financial environment, it's often necessary to have multi-layered interactions, in the case of a customer having to do identity verification checks or go through a contract; these may involve agents with varying responsibilities – the trick is to ensure that the customer gets optimal service at all points.

You can avoid the need for long hold times or repeated calls by having a call-back option in your contact centre introduced, meeting your customers' needs according to their preferences, too.

While efficiency is ideal, it must always be optimised with customer experience in mind; in the financial sector, seamless communication is a must.

ABOUT WYNAND SMIT

Wynand Smit is CEO at INOVO, a leading contact centre business solutions provider.
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