What Mobility Means for Customer Service

By MARTIN HILL-WILSON

Exploring mobility from the perspectives of both the consumer and the customer service team...

Let’s talk consumer first...

The level of smartphone ownership in both the UK and US populations is north of 50%. Tablets are not as ubiquitous but are nonetheless owned by around 1 in 5 consumers. Websites have gone responsive as a result and app mania continues.

Competition for consumer eyeballs is intense. Successful brands have already discovered what it takes to keep an app in active use and thus benefit from a direct digital connection with a customer. They’ve been fast to recognise the difference between a downloaded app and one in active service.

If you venture into the world of mobile UX, you quickly discover just how tough it is to make interaction and information services work on these reduced screen sizes. Designers these days need a Zen like simplicity in their approach. This is an important lesson for customer service operations that see an opportunity to drive their self service agenda by offering a mobile window into their service portfolio.
We know what we want

As users, we instinctively recognise the unique benefits of each type of mobile device we own.

Smartphones have always been carried around with us and are therefore useful for any 'on the move' service interactions. We are also fully empowered and in a service context they allow us to exchangeably consume information via live voice, text or video. So our smartphones can only partially imitate.

This means we are taught to use our preferred airline seat by responding to either voice or visual prompts according to whichever feels is the easiest way of making our choice.

The same goes for our call centre. We can scan the options faster than a mouse. For example, if you are empowered version of a traditional 'switchboard' options menu, the customer avoids any effort to deteriorate. We have just been told.

A polished mobile call centre app should offer greater freedom to choose now what the customer wants to connect to. Callbacks are passé. A voice command to switch to a tier 3 support option can provide immediate access to the chosen service. In these and many situations the customer finds the best solution to the situation.

Sometimes the option of 'click to join' is best, too. Imagine a voice command to switch to tier 3 support, without the call centre app for the digital economy!

So smartphones are really our most flexible tools and, although those screens really are a lot as it was. Or are they? Maybe a screen cannot be looking at.

This is when tablets really score. Their screen size and high resolution makes browsing a true visual pleasure. This is where the purchase research that is often conducted via a tablet.

Maybe it is no coincidence that 60% of mobile commerce is completed on the devices where we can settle down and really focus on decision making.

Some of us of course enjoy the luxury of both a smartphone and a tablet. Or perhaps we don’t want a simpler life and we use both devices side by side. Remember when we needed a blackberry for work and something else for personal use?

So for any of these reasons, we often choose so called 'Phablet'. Apparently the merging of something you got when cross breeding a smartphone with a tablet! I’m not sure I can’t speak for someone else. But I guess this trend is being taken advantage of.

So how important is mobility right now for customer service operations?

The evidence is all around us.

- Steve Jobs takes the credit for first popularising the ‘post pc’ tag. Remember some economics have gone straight to mobile and missed landlines entirely
- A major travel business I know is busily re-inventing itself as a digital enterprise with smartphones and tablets as the interface. Elsewhere, the feeling is that BYOD (bring your own device) is now too embedded to be ignored
- I recently read that the first iPad-only university opened in Holland. You tested lagging around a bagful of textbooks

However we don’t really move much past laptop benefits if we are remaining tied to vehicles or locations in order to get online. For many of us, either home or our place of work provides guaranteed connectivity with a laptop or tablet. But we are now breaking free to roam further.

Enabling technologies such as WiFi, 3G and 4G are increasingly filling in the gaps for a seamless connected experience. We are still at the point of noticing new connectivity. In the Underground, on a plane, on a train stop. But as this happens, the more we will expect it as another utility.

Of course it all depends where you are in the world.

As you may have heard, Google is leading the charge on Project Loon. Bunches of balloons traveling on the edge of space, designed to cast a wide, affordable and high bandwidth internet signal that will bring people back online after disasters.

Most recently, an association of brands has teamed up for the same reason. Facebook has partnered with Ericsson, MediaTek, Nokia, Opera, Qualcomm, and Samsung to launch internet.org. Its start-up strategies include a commitment to providing new data services for internet.org, with the potential to fund connectivity.

So hopefully in the not too distant future, we really will be living in a connected world as we move the dial towards a hundred percent inclusion.

Help, my call centre’s gone walkabout

I started by saying I wanted to talk about mobility from both the customer and organisational perspective. Here are some closing thoughts on organisational implications.

From a mobile user perspective, a pure cloud call centre has to be built to provide the same experiences as the voice enabled digital web browser on a voice enabled device. The mind that is increased, imagine having hands more on your phone!

Not only does that make home working a no-brainer, but it could also mean using a voice enabled digital call centre for customers. Not sure if anyone does it yet. But it could mean learning how to shoot the second generation. Or imagine a product expert from a brand you’re selling enrolled as a tier three support option.

That’s one way to break free of constraints. By pushing the boundaries of who can be included.

Here is another one. In truth this one attracts me even more, simply because of the ‘wow’ factor.

Imagine you are doing ‘Red Nose’ day. Why not raise your profile by taking your call centre for walkabout up and down Oxford Street? You can take inbound donations. Also collect from the crowd. Even record the calls. All while creating social buzz meandering in loose formation. For free. Imagine Hare Krishna rebooted for the digital economy!

Takeaway
Mobility is here to stay. Yet at a breakfast seminar I hosted a few months ago, the feedback was that customer service adoption remained low. Is that true? Are customers really not using their smartphone or feature phone when making contact? Or are call centers yet to fully focus and lack awareness of this behaviour?

You tell me.

Images courtesy of FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Keep the Perspectives Coming!

Get our top articles delivered right to your inbox, every other week.

Yes, sign me up for this & future emails.

Please correct the fields marked above.

Confirmed!

We're delighted to begin sharing the latest articles from Perspectives—directly in your email inbox. Look for your first installment soon, and thank you for subscribing!

Armed with the latest article from Perspectives, direct to your inbox, every other week.

APIs

- Nexmo, The Vonage API Platform
  Cloud-based building blocks for developers
  See communication APIs
  Try Our APIs
  Experience the magic of Nexmo APIs for yourself with our free demo
  Try our APIs now

Resources

- Perspectives Blog
  Best practices, key insights, and industry updates showcasing how cloud communications can inspire your business goals

- Publications
  The latest whitepapers, eBooks and thought leadership to keep your business ahead of the curve

- Multimedia
  Sign up for a business communications webinar or check out our latest videos and infographics

- Case Studies
  Interested in Vonage success stories? See how our cloud solutions deliver better outcomes for your business.

- NewsRoom
  Keep up on the latest happenings at Vonage with our corporate blog, latest press releases, Vonage in the news, and more.
Referral Program & Customer Perks

Awards

FROST & SULLIVAN

2018 Competitive Strategy Innovation and Leadership Award

2018 TMCnet Product of the Year Award

Case Studies

Ready for takeoff with unified communications
Private Jets Inc

Personalized solutions, proactive care
MEDXM

Partner with Us

Channel Partner Programs
Earn competitive revenue on our comprehensive communications solution and grow your business with help from our stellar support and training.

Technology Alliances
Join us as we continue to expand into new areas and build alliances with like-minded innovators.

Referral Partner Program
Create a new revenue stream within your current business model. You bring the referral, and we do all the heavy lifting to make the sale.

Already a Vonage Partner?
Login

Get Vonage
1.844.324.0340

HAVE US CONTACT YOU
SIGN UP FOR A WEBINAR
BUY NOW