COLUMNS

Benefits of embracing the customer effort score

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Broadly speaking, a customer effort score measures how easy or difficult it is for a customer to resolve a given issue with a company's customer service team.

Have you ever waited your turn to speak to a customer service representative, only to be transferred to another agent? Have you ever waited on hold so long you that you hung up? Have you ever yelled "Agent" at a voice automation system until you were hoarse?

You are not alone.

Poor customer experiences such as that are much more common than you might realize.

In fact, bad customer interactions are putting more than $4.7 trillion in sales at risk every year.

The good news is there are simple strategies to improve how you interact with your customers.

By calculating your customer effort score (CES), you can assess how easy or difficult you are making it for your customers and work toward improving your customer experience.

What is a customer effort score?
HubSpot defines customer effort score as a single-item service metric that measures how much work it takes for someone to get what they want from a business.

In other words, it is a reflection of how much effort a customer has to expend when interacting with your company.

The idea is simple. The more effort required to reach a certain outcome, such as making a purchase or resolving an issue, the more frustrating the customer experience.

By contrast, a low-effort interaction makes for a better, smoother experience that casts your brand in a positive light.

Researchers from the Corporate Executive Board (CEB) first introduced the concept of a customer effort score in

2010.

According to their study, reducing effort is far more effective at increasing customer loyalty than trying to wow consumers with over-the-top service: "All customers really want is a simple, quick solution to their problem."

The only issue?

Many times, customer service does the exact opposite. Whether it be because of long wait times, having to repeat oneself or jumping through hoops, customers are four times more likely to leave a service interaction disloyal than loyal.

That is where CES comes into play. Tracking CES allows you to identify pain points in the customer experience, isolate troublesome channels and make immediate and long-term improvements.

Better yet, Gartner says that reducing customer effort also allows you to:

- Increase repurchase rates

- Improve customer loyalty

- Lower service costs

- Reduce employee turnover

Creating a CES survey
The first step in measuring your customer effort score is designing a CES survey a short questionnaire that asks current customers to rate the amount of effort involved in a recent interaction.

Questions normally ask respondents to choose a rating on a scale that best represents their experience.

Here are some examples of questions you might include on a survey:

1. On a scale of 1-10, how easy was it for you to resolve your issue?

2. How much effort did you have to put in to find an answer to your question?

3. How easy was it to navigate our website and obtain the information you were looking for?

Typically, businesses send CES surveys at particular moments in the customer journey. These moments almost always come after the customer has taken a certain action, such as:

- A customer support interaction like a phone call, chat or email thread.

- A transaction such as a completed purchase, downloaded white paper or subscription sign-up.

- A website or mobile app interaction. This one is especially useful, as it helps you measure your interface's ease of use and functionality.

Recency is important when it comes to gathering feedback.

It is best to immediately follow up an interaction with a questionnaire on the channel where it took place. This makes it easy for customers to fill out the survey without having to jump through additional hoops.

Calculating your score
Once your respondents have completed the survey, it is time to analyze the results and calculate your company's average customer effort score. Do not worry you do not have to be a math whiz to figure it out.

Here is the basic formula: Sum of all CES scores the total number of responses = average CES.

So, what does a good CES look like? It depends. Your survey's parameters will influence how that score is weighted, but generally speaking, the higher the number, the better.

Let us say that you have asked 100 respondents to rate interactions on a scale of 1-10, and the sum of all scores is 880. That would give you an average CES of 8.8. Not too shabby.

How to use and improve your CES
Keep in mind that there is no industry standard you have to live up to only your own scores matter.

If you find that your CES is teetering on the lower end of the spectrum, that just means you have work to do.

Fortunately, there are plenty of ways to improve CES and reduce customer effort. Let us take a look at two of the

most impactful methods:

1. *Automate tasks with customer self-service*

Customer self-service options are growing in popularity, especially among younger demographics.

In fact, 66 percent of millennials prefer self-service options for completing simple requests.

Consumers are using these alternative solutions more frequently now than just three years ago , so it is increasingly important to offer these functionalities to your consumers.

Take AI-powered chatbots, for example.

Often, chatbots can answer common support questions and handle basic requests faster and more efficiently than human agents. This frees up your contact center agents to focus on more complex issues, reduces wait times and eliminates unnecessary effort.

2. *Deliver an omnichannel experience*

Taking an omnichannel approach to customer service means offering consumers a seamless, cohesive and uniform experience across all possible touchpoints.

Customers now want to transition from one channel to another without skipping a beat or having to repeat themselves.

With a contact center as a service (CCaaS) solution, you can meet these expectations and offer a truly connected customer journey.

As one comprehensive tool for customer experience management, a CCaaS platform enables agents to interact with consumers from any channel, all in one easy-to-use desktop view.

ESTABLISHING LOW-EFFORT customer experiences helps simplify the buyer's journey.

By offering new, existing, and prospective customers a path of least resistance for issue resolution, business leaders can significantly minimize effort, foster loyalty and deliver more positive interactions.

Of course, calculating CES is only half the battle.

To truly understand and reap the benefits of a low-effort experience, organizations will need to get creative with how they optimize their customer experience strategy.

Whether it be through self-service tools or omnichannel contact center solutions, technology is undoubtedly at the center of the equation.

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