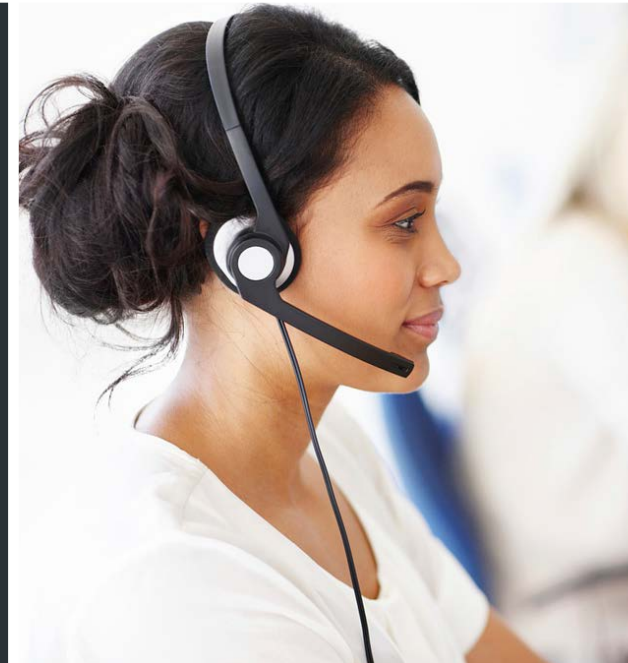




Social Media in the Government Contact Center



Four years ago, the Facebook nation was 400 million strong and regarded as an unheard of growth phenomena. Now, at over 1 billion users, it almost seems redundant to recount the remarkable growth statistics for social media channels.

A recent blog by contact center analysts DMG Consulting projected “within five years, the number of relevant social media interactions will be equal to the number of phone interactions, with 70% to 80% being service-oriented and requiring attention.”

With rising financial and budget pressures, harnessing social media interaction can facilitate migration to more cost effective service delivery models by reducing the dependence on over the counter services and telephone channels.

Traditionally, local government have invested heavily in updating their web presence and leafleting to provide citizens with real time information. However, government information is so widely accepted as compelling and “interesting” to a wide range of community groups, many citizens prefer to find, digest, and post news information – positive, or negative – on social media channels such as blogs such as Twitter and Facebook.

Social media can help local government pro-actively communicate with citizens. For example, by issuing public information notices on Twitter / Facebook on the subject of nearby congestion or road works affecting a city. Through mass communication across social media, the number of residents that travel to blocked roads could be reduced.

Integrating social media into the contact center as a core customer interaction channel is a relatively new idea.

Here are Three Good Reasons to Embrace a Social Media Contact Center Strategy

Reason #1 – Citizens have long gone Social! Government organizations need to embrace whilst managing risks.

Social media offers the ability to transform public services by leveraging and deploying new collaboration platforms and insight to improve service effectiveness. However, there are acute challenges in embracing social media which need to be overcome to harness digital service delivery.

We commissioned research with global analyst firm Yankee Group to see how citizens were viewing social channels in the context of how they interact with the organizations. The findings were pretty decisive: 70% of citizens want to interact by social media, while only 30% of organizations are ready for it in terms of customer service strategies, policies and processes.

Industry research shows that:

- 73% of public sector organizations surveyed believe digital engagement and social media can contribute towards efficiency savings¹
- 19% of public sector individuals surveyed believed the purpose for social media is to provide customer services¹
- 24% of local government councils interviewed have identified reduced face-to-face visitors as result of using social media²

Public sector organizations and citizens are saying that social media channels are important for interactions and dialog, and front lines officers could expedite delivery of services by harnessing the right tools to better deal with these new channels.

Reason #2 – Citizens have taken control of the Government's digital perimeter'

Citizen's are now driving the dialog across government service delivery - by being aware of development, issues and "potential fixes" that can complement the knowledge and insight of front-line officials.

Rather than traditional touch points such as face-to-face over the counter services, e-service and voice-only call centers, government need to recognize that the 'digital perimeter' of their organization is now the central and most important factor for citizen service satisfaction and uptake. The citizen is now in charge, and they are driving the process. You can't afford to underinvest in proactively managing these interactions.

Some government organizations rely on their communications and marketing department to handle citizen notifications and contact. While this approach provides coverage, there is a greater opportunity to expand how citizen issues are resolved to address service demands.

For local government, this puts even more importance on seamlessly integrating multimedia, social and interactive channels into your contact center - where your critical mass of citizen interaction skills and resources reside. As the number of potential social interactions involving local government increases, the volume of social channel monitoring, filtering, routing, and responding will become too cumbersome for ad hoc approaches, and too much for a marketing department to contain. Our advice - local government should look at bringing social media into the contact center.

Reason #3 – Handling social in the contact center is more efficient and effective

It has taken over ten years for email response management to become truly mainstream within the contact center industry. But with the unprecedented growth of social media, we predict that social media must become mainstream within contact centers in less than five years.

Just as email response and web chat were formally introduced into the contact center, we believe that social media should also be handled like any other mainstream customer interaction channel. For the same reasons that it made sense to add email and web chat to your contact center, handling social media in your contact center is logical.

Why?

- It makes sense to bring social media into the contact center using the same routing engine, reporting database, agent and management tools that you're currently using for voice, email and web chat channels - consistently treating social like any other important interaction media
- Contact centers are designed to manage large volumes of contacts efficiently and effectively - it can be more efficient to utilize a critical mass or pool of contact center agents to address social media, especially leveraging content automation tools as volumes progressively increase
- Contact center agents are already trained on how to:
 - listen, understand and search for answers to customer issues and queries
 - communicate, empathize and provide good customer service
 - navigate in-house CRM and customer database systems
 - work in a repeatable, structured, process-driven manner
 - potentially turn prospects into customers; cross-sell, up-sell and convert complainers into advocates
- Leverage existing investments in infrastructure, technology and processes such as agent desktop tools, automated 'listening' and categorization, skills-based routing, supervisor monitoring, and management reporting
- The contact center becomes the focal point for all live citizen interactions
- avoiding an inconsistent or disjointed customer experience



Implementing Social Media in Your Contact Center

Integrating social media into your contact center is a fairly straightforward process that we've broken into steps - here is a general example of how the solution works, as part of a unified multi-channel contact center suite:

1. Citizens write about government services, engage in dialogs with other citizens, leave comments, ask questions, and dispense both praise and complaints on social media channels
2. Automated monitoring tools sense and capture those comments, where they are categorized, prioritized, filtered and then sent to the contact center routing engine
3. The contact center skills-based routing engine finds the best available agent to engage the customer and routes the social media to the agent
4. Agent responds using their familiar agent desktop with the assistance of knowledge tools and response templates (the response is converted back to the social media site that the customer originated from)
5. Our OpenScape Contact Center software provides real-time tracking and historical reports, which are used by contact center managers and provide key customer service metrics

Our perspective

Integrating social media into your contact center helps improve customer service, whilst reducing cost, builds relationships with citizens that can save you time and resources in the process.

Can you afford not to have a "socially engaged" customer contact center?

About Unify

Unify is one of the world's leading communications software and services firms, providing integrated communications solutions for approximately 75 percent of the Fortune Global 500. Our solutions unify multiple networks, devices and applications into one easy-to-use platform that allows teams to engage in rich and meaningful conversations. The result is a transformation of how the enterprise communicates and collaborates that amplifies collective effort, energizes the business, and enhances business performance. Unify has a strong heritage of product reliability, innovation, open standards and security.

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