Guiding customers to self-help tools, making the technologies easy to navigate, and providing users with options to obtain human assistance can strengthen loyalty and business outcomes.

Inside

InContact .............................................3
Moving at the Speed of Customers

IntelliResponse .....................................4
The 7 Realities of Online Self Service

TeleTech ................................................5
Help Customers Help Themselves

VoltDelta ................................................7
Voice Self Service in the Cloud
As new technologies and channels continue to emerge, customer interest in the use of self-service tools has skyrocketed. The Web self-service space alone has grown from $600 million in 2011 to $1 billion in 2012, according to Gartner. Customers increasingly want to have access to self-service tools, including IVR, chat, mobile, and Web to resolve questions or issues with products and services.

A growing number of customers want to use self-service tools to obtain answers to their questions or to resolve issues they are encountering with a product or a service. Self-service tools are particularly popular for certain types of issues that customers want to be able to handle on their own, such as checking an account balance online, paying a bill through an IVR system, or finding information about how to resolve a product issue through an online forum.

Self-service technologies offer benefits to customers and companies alike. Companies gain by providing a cost-effective alternative to live agent support. According to Forrester Research, call center support can range from an average of $6 to $12 per call or more while a Web self-service interaction can cost a company less than 10 cents to support.

Still, any operational cost savings generated from customer use of self-serve technologies can deteriorate if the tools aren’t intuitive or are otherwise difficult for customers to navigate. If this occurs, customers will flock to the call center to resolve the issue with which they’re confronted.

Poorly designed self-service experiences can also have a detrimental effect on the customer-company relationship. Customers who are unable to answer their own questions using a company’s self-service tools will become frustrated with that company and seek out competitors that are able to satisfy their requirements.

“In order for companies to attract and retain customer trust, they need to provide customers with good intent – doing the right thing – and by demonstrating competence – doing things right,” says Martha Rogers, Ph.D., founding partner at Peppers & Rogers Group. This includes a company’s ability to provide customers with easy-to-use self-service tools that can help them find the information they’re seeking, adds Rogers.

Self-service tools must also be designed with the customer journey in mind. In some cases, customers start down a path where they elect to use a self-service tool (e.g., Web self-service) but they require assistance in using the tool or encounter a technical glitch and need to connect with an agent. For these reasons, it’s important for self-service tools to be designed to provide customers with an “out” or an ability to click to call to speak with an agent or some other way to receive human assistance to help them resolve an issue.
Self-service tools shouldn’t stop there. Simply providing a customer the ability to call into an 800 number if they encounter a challenge with a self-service tool doesn’t help them if they have to start their journey again from the beginning, whether this involves entering a series of prompts on an IVR system or if they have to repeat the same information to a customer agent.

Designing the customer-centric experience

Because different customers have different preferences and needs, it’s helpful for contact center leaders to know the types of self-service features and support that customers are seeking. By using analytics to drill down on information that customers share about their preferences and channel behaviors (e.g., text analytics for information shared in chat exchanges with agents or through online surveys), companies can craft the types of self-service features that are sought by different customer segments (e.g., high-value, low-touch).

One company that has benefitted from this type of customer-centric approach is Swisscom. The Swiss telecommunications provider wanted to increase the number of customers who could find answers to their support requests online or through its mobile app. At the same time, the company also wanted to deflect calls to the contact center in order to reduce support costs and to make its contact center operations more cost effective.

To help accomplish these goals, the company implemented a customer feedback platform to help it better understand the type of support customers were seeking and the snags they were encountering when searching for online assistance. One of the initial surveys revealed that less than half of customers who first sought support online were able to find the information they needed to answer their questions. The majority of those whose support questions were not answered online called the contact center for help.

After analyzing customer feedback, Swisscom modified its online content to meet its customers’ needs, added missing information, and improved site navigation. Within a year of optimizing its online support content, Swisscom increased the number of support requests handled online by 65 percent, an increase of 15 percent since the initiative was launched. This led to customer support cost savings of approximately $3.2 million within a year.

Identifying how customers want to use different types of self-service tools, along with the types of issues they’re most likely looking to resolve can help companies ensure that they’re providing customers with the kind of functionality they’re looking for. Doing so can strengthen loyalty and business results.

In the pages that follow, discover how the latest Web self-service technologies can enable both customers and customer service employees to use the system to enhance the customer experience. Learn best practices for encouraging the use and reuse of voice self-service platforms. You’ll also find out the realities of online self-service that may be placing your company’s business at risk. Finally, observe how cloud contact centers can offer companies the flexibility and agility to provide customers with relevant and personalized self-service experiences through the channels they prefer.

Understanding Customers’ Self-Service Preferences

As this chart from an Accenture study of customers’ preferred methods of interactions with electric companies illustrates, there are certain activities (e.g., resolving billing issues) that many customers prefer to handle directly with an agent whereas customers prefer to resolve other types of issues such as bill payment and change of address using self-service tools.

* Only in deregulated market. Base: All respondents

If you are a contact center leader or someone who is responsible for some aspect of customer service, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does our organization have the flexibility and agility to respond to evolving customer demands and market shifts?
- Can our organization easily and quickly add self-service support through the channels our customers prefer to use?
- Are we offering a variety of customer support options based on the needs and preferences of our customers in the most cost-effective manner?

If you’re uncertain about your responses or your organization’s capability to meet these challenges, then it’s time to consider building the contact center of the future, today.

The contact center of the future needs to be agile enough to adapt quickly to changing customer expectations and channel preferences for obtaining support. This includes the ability to provide customers with self-service capabilities across their channel of choice, including Web self service, IVR, kiosks, virtual agents, etc.

Customers are increasingly seeking self-service options for resolving certain types of issues, ranging from checking an account balance, to examining FAQs, to finding the answers to commonly-asked questions. A 2012 study of more than 13,000 consumers by the Customer Contact Council, finds that customers prefer to use self-service channels such as the Web (57.7 percent) over phone-based interactions with agents (42.3 percent).

### Breaking free of legacy shackles

Because of these evolving customer preferences, contact centers require the flexibility to add self-service capabilities across new channels as they emerge. Catering to customer service preferences in the future requires that companies undergo process and technology transformations. Legacy, premise-based systems are too rigid and time-consuming to add self-service support capabilities; however, Cloud contact centers offer companies the dexterity to add self-service capabilities on the fly. Meanwhile, updates to self-service platforms can be automatically updated via ‘the Cloud’ without the need to involve enterprise IT resources with maintenance or software upgrades.

Providing customers with the self-service tools they want, and in the channels of their choice, can help bolster loyalty. Customer allegiance can be further strengthened by using analytics tools to identify the types of issues customers use self service for, and the channels that different customer segments use for self service (e.g., high-value customers for transaction verification).

Even though customers are increasingly opting to use self-service tools, they also demand that these tools be intuitive and easy to use. Companies can customize self-service tools to better meet customer needs and preferences by analyzing customer feedback (e.g., online surveys) and unsolicited sentiment (e.g., social media comments) to pinpoint what customers like or dislike about self-service and then use those insights to take appropriate action.

Delivering highly-engaging self-service experiences that are crafted based on customer input demonstrates to customers that a company is listening closely and has their best interests at heart. When companies demonstrate this level of customer-centricity, customers will reward them with repeat business, and referrals to their friends and family.

### Evaluating Customer Support Costs by Channel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer Service</th>
<th>Approximate Cost Per Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call center technical support</td>
<td>$12 and higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call center CSR</td>
<td>$6 and higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web chat or callback</td>
<td>$5 and higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email response</td>
<td>$2.50 to $5 and higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web self-service</td>
<td>$0.10 or less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

### About inContact

inContact helps contact centers around the globe create profitable customer experiences through its powerful portfolio of cloud-based contact center software solutions. The company’s services and solutions enable contact centers to operate more efficiently, optimize the cost and quality of every customer interaction, create new pathways to profit, and ensure ongoing customer-centric business improvement and growth.

For more information, please visit [www.inContact.com](http://www.inContact.com)
Forrester Research shows that eBusiness leaders must dramatically revitalize their online self-service experience in 2013, just to keep pace with evolving consumer expectations. This white paper outlines seven key realities of modern online service that expose the gap between customer expectations and website performance.

1. Customers have grown tired of your old online help tools
Customer satisfaction with today’s most common Web self-service features is abysmal. Consumers do not want to use online help sections or FAQs.

As more companies rectify this by deploying next-generation self-service solutions and virtual agents, fewer customers will tolerate antiquated self-service help tools.

2. Customers now expect a superior experience online, not just a good one
Exceptionally positive online experiences are now setting the bar for what customers expect when they visit any website in search of answers. According to Forrester, 70 percent of online consumers expect businesses to try harder to provide superior online customer service.

3. Consumers are impatient and protective of their time
Consumers cite “valuing my time” as the most important thing a company can do to deliver a good online customer experience. Yet most websites are hard to navigate and provide multiple answers rather than a single, swift path to resolution.

4. Customer service has gone mobile
Nearly 88 percent of U.S. adults own a mobile phone. What’s more, digital tablet sales are predicted to outpace sales of PCs by 2015. Convenience and ease-of-use are the hallmarks of these mobile form factors, and websites that offer experiences contrary to these attributes will only raise the ire of today’s increasingly impatient and unforgiving mobile consumer.

5. Social media is increasingly embraced as a customer service tool
Back in 2009, just 1 percent of consumers used Twitter for customer service; this number jumped to 19 percent in 2011. Delivering a consistent positive service experience across multiple channels is critical—especially today, as consumers are not shy about using social media to publically complain and vent frustration.

6. It’s not just younger customers who prefer answers online
Forrester cautions against assuming that it’s only younger consumers who gravitate toward online service vs. the telephone. In fact, consumers spanning the ages of 18 to 45 are equally likely to prefer online channels for customer support.

7. Dissatisfaction online = hijacked revenues
The impact of the self-service experience on revenues should not be underestimated. Forty-five percent of U.S. online consumers agree with the statement “I am very likely to abandon my online purchase if I cannot find a quick answer to my questions.”

These seven trends underline the urgent need to revitalize the online service experience offered by most companies. Web self-service and virtual agent technologies that deliver enhanced customer experiences are currently underutilized.

Where Do You Go from Here?
How can your organization improve the online customer experience?
Begin with an honest assessment of the self-service experience on your website.

Ask yourself these three questions...

1. Is there a single, highly visible starting point for self-service activity?
Your customers want their self-service journey to begin immediately and move swiftly to completion. Looking at your home page or most highly-trafficked customer service page, ask yourself if the average customer would be able to identify the clear starting point for any customer service-related task in a matter of seconds.

2. Is issue resolution generally a multi-step, or a single-step activity?
When looking for information online, customers want a single, accurate answer that’s accessible in one step. Any content page that offers more than one alternative answer, or path to an answer, requires your customer to take additional steps. On your website, when results are served, is the customer presented with a single answer, or multiple results to sift through?

3. How will you measure how your site is performing in this area?
A quantitative assessment of your self-service performance is the first thing you’ll need to establish any improvement to the self-service experience. The FREE Online Self-Service Assessment Tool created by Forrester and IntelliResponse is vendor-agnostic methodology you can use for scoring your site’s performance and charting a path for improvement.

Book your FREE evaluation by sending an email to eval@intellireponse.com

About IntelliResponse Systems
IntelliResponse is the leading provider of virtual agent technology solutions for the enterprise. With our patented Enterprise Virtual Agent (EVA) solutions, websites, mobile and social media channels can all be transformed, empowering customers to ask questions using natural language and delivering an effective and engaging online experience.

For more information, visit www.IntelliResponse.com
Help Customers Help Themselves
Achieving Economies of Scale with Self-Service Technology

Superior customer experiences exist in a paradox. While company leaders go to great lengths to grow their customer base, service delivery centers must absorb the increases in the number of customer service requests. The more growth, the more unruly the situation can become to effectively manage higher volumes of customer inquiries and deliver service excellence.

In cases where volume increases are accurately forecasted, the service center can brace for impact, ramp up service employees, and add on more training to meet service demands. While this process can achieve high-quality customer experiences, it often comes with a significant financial cost.

On the other hand, unexpected volume spikes can cause service levels to drop below acceptable standards and can quickly damage the customer experience, resulting in lost customers and lost revenue. After some time spent suffering these perils, most organizations eventually launch a quest to reduce service costs and improve performance. This usually involves a cost-reduction effort with a focus on achieving new levels of operational efficiency and doing more with less. Thankfully, technology can play a big role in helping customer care leaders to achieve positive results. Specifically, organizations can move beyond simple operational efficiencies by leveraging web self-service technology to facilitate two major competitive advantages:

- Increasing the efficiency of service employees
- Achieving economies of scale

Since service employees are essentially at the mercy of the tools they use, performance shortcomings tend to be pervasive and additional training rarely helps. In these situations, it’s common for widespread confidence downturns to permeate the service team. When this happens, escalation is often the result and service performance plummets. Overcoming these issues is a matter of empowering employees to be better informed with self-service technologies that are proven superior in terms of consistently returning the accurate and reliable information required to deliver superior customer experiences.

When investing in self-service technology, look for solutions that:

- Can be deployed across desktops, websites, social media networks, and mobile devices
- Provide a consistent answer message across all major interaction points
- Deliver concise, accurate answers (rather than a series of search results) to the most commonly asked questions
- Provide executive level reports as well as detailed, per-question analytical data
- Easily integrate with your existing knowledge management systems

TeleTech’s One Right Answer solution has a proven track record of increasing performance in the service delivery center by 20 to 30 percent, and reducing first-level call escalations. In fact, a $50 billion retailer of technology and entertainment products and services used One Right Answer to deflect 5,000 service inquiries each month to self-help resources. The company saved $400,000 in service costs each year. Other companies have implemented One Right Answer and recognized the following results:

- Increased service employee effectiveness by 50 percent
- Improved Net Promoter® and customer satisfaction scores by up to 80 percent
- Deflected more than 30 percent of customer inquiries to less expensive service channels

Maximizing Cost Advantages with Economies of Scale

When it comes to using self-service technologies to maximize cost advantages, there are two parts to the discussion:

- Focus on reducing service delivery costs
- Focus on reducing the volume of customer service requests

These are two different efforts that produce different cost reduction outcomes, but the key is to use them together. An organization that successfully reduces service costs will achieve a small degree of operational efficiency. Upon achieving this new level of efficiency, many organizations are content to stop there. But, by also focusing on reducing customer service volumes, further cost savings are within reach. One additional cost advantage is a hot buzzword in many industries: economies of scale. This brings up an important truth, which is sometimes misunderstood and therefore worth explaining clearly:

Achieving operational efficiencies does not automatically achieve economies of scale.

While one might assume that substantial cost reductions automatically
bring with them scalability, this is actually a misconception. The following scenario helps illustrate this.

**Operational Efficiency vs. Economies of Scale**

Assume the contact rate of an organization’s customer base is 14 percent. Also assume the organization undergoes substantial cost-cutting efforts and achieves significant operational efficiencies, which reduce service costs by a substantial amount.

So far, there’s nothing wrong with this scenario per se. However, consider this ripple:

While great efforts were made to reduce service costs, assume no substantial effort was made to reduce the contact rate. This means that, after the operational efficiencies were achieved, the customer contact rate remained unchanged at 14 percent.

In this scenario, the service delivery center can only enjoy the financial benefits of the newfound operational efficiencies as long as the organization does not increase the number of customers. The moment the customer base grows, costs increase (see chart).

Operational service costs can be reduced, but if the contact rate is not reduced, the operating cost per customer stays the same, remaining at 14 percent. In other words, as the customer base grows, operating costs also grow in proportion. **Economies of scale are only achieved when the operating cost per customer decreases as the customer base grows.**

Therefore, focusing on service efficiency alone does not achieve the complete cost advantages that are attainable with scalability. When using self-service technology to maximize cost advantages in your service delivery center, operational efficiencies (while critical) are merely one half of what should be a full two-part initiative: reducing service costs and reducing the volume of service requests. Thus, companies should deploy self-service technologies both for their digital customers online and also for their internal service employees.

While the modern contact center may always be forced to deal with the paradox of growth and service volume, next-generation web self-service technology can help ease this burden by enhancing service employee efficiency and by creating sought-after economies of scale.

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**Operational efficiencies of the organization**

This scenario demonstrates that operational efficiencies do not automatically produce economies of scale. **Economies of scale are only achieved when the operating cost per customer decreases as the customer base grows.**

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**About TeleTech**

Celebrating its 30th year in operation, TeleTech and its subsidiaries help the world’s most successful companies design, enable, manage, and grow customer value through superior customer experiences.

TeleTech’s One Right Answer solution empowers organizations to effectively address customer questions by delivering “one right answer” regardless of the thousands of ways a question may be asked.

Learn more at [www.teletech.com](http://www.teletech.com)

*Net Promoter is a registered trademark of Satmetrix Systems, Inc., Bain & Company, and Fred Reichheld.*
So, a cloud-based voice recognition solution is a no brainer, right? The answer for many organizations in the recent past has actually been an emphatic “NO,” because they believe the technology is not capable of understanding accurately.

Has anything changed? The answer now is “YES” for voice automation solutions. Some cloud solution vendors are demonstrating more effective dialogs, improved design, and call processing power.

**Why Now for Cloud-based Voice Service?**

Putting a player in a position where he will best succeed is the hallmark of a good coach, and a successful team. This analogy is also true for speech technology. How is this being done today?

**Dialog Design**

Voice User Interface designers have become laser focused on delivering caller success, fast. To get the best results, leverage the design expertise of your chosen voice automation vendor.

Cloud contact center vendors typically employ Voice User Interface designer expertise which can help optimize an automated interaction. To illustrate this point, visit our website to compare examples of poorly designed automated voice interactions as well as more enhanced dialogs that achieve the same goal with superior efficiency and satisfaction.

**Personalization**

Tailoring voice automation to every caller does not mean you need a complex system. Data derived from the ANI (Automatic Number Identifier) can be used to personalize customer voice self-service interactions. For example, VoltDelta’s 511 phone-based travel and weather information platform remembers the stretch of road motorists called from, and then asks if they want to hear traffic conditions for that route which reduces call handling time.

**Simply More Accurate**

Beyond improvements in speech recognition engines, grammar design and associated techniques are now working to better understand what callers are saying. For example, VoltDelta’s patent-pending CrystalWAVE technology uses multiple simultaneous grammars to not only increase comprehension, but also to minimize vague responses.

**Operational Costs**

Speech-tuning costs were once onerous, especially for anything associated with “natural language.” Due to the use of multiple, simultaneous grammars (e.g., CrystalWAVE), and more targeted voice automation, this is not the case anymore.

**Answer Every Call**

Most vendors claim scalability. However, some organizations are discovering their hosted vendor is only scalable until calls spike. VoltDelta’s “billion call” per year infrastructure is especially tuned for these occurrences.

**Encourage Voice Self-Service Use, and Reuse**

**Proactive Engagement**

Customers may shy away from using voice self service because they had poor experiences in the past. One way to encourage use, and reuse, is to be proactive by contacting customers at key moments of truth using an outbound IVR application. Examples include:

- Auto insurance companies use automated outbound calling to gather more information about a claim via a voice survey.
- Transportation companies make use of outbound calling to notify customers that their meter is about to expire.
- Banks notify customers of bill payments, low balances, or strategic opportunities, such as switching from a savings to money market account for higher yields.

**Automation to Agent Integration**

Efficiencies and satisfaction can be gained from automating part of the interaction, as long as the platform provides the integration necessary for a comfortable transition from automation to agent. Many hosted solutions support both channels, but lack a truly converged approach. Efficiencies and cost savings are realized when:

- Agents hear a recorded keyword or phrase that occurred in the voice automated channel prior to receiving the customer’s call, so she is not asked to repeat information.
- The automated system sets a caller’s expectations by informing her that an agent will need additional details, such as an account number, to complete a transaction.
- Calls are recorded as a unified experience through any transfer, along with capturing a video of the agent’s screen.

**About VoltDelta OnDemand**

VoltDelta OnDemand is a global provider of voice recognition automation and virtual contact center solutions. Organizations around the world partner with VoltDelta to deploy contact centers and home agents, enable self-service with patent-pending speech technology, and communicate with multi-channel support. Over 2.4 billion calls per year are processed within the VoltDelta OnDemand infrastructure. For more information, please visit www.voltdelta.com twitter.com/VoltDeltaNews youtube/VoltDeltaChannel
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