



Creating problem solvers

How to transform a call centre into a knowledge centre.



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In the old days customers would call you
to find out your shop address.

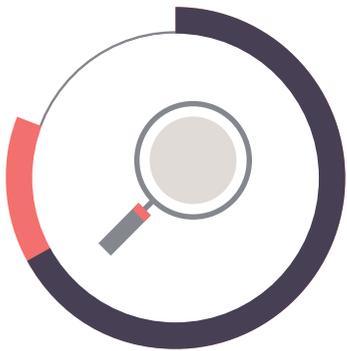
Nowadays they call you because they've got
a problem. And you need to fix it. **Now.**

Welcome to the world of Omnichannel Support

Customer support is no longer the sole domain of your call centre.

Your customers have phones, devices and computers and they're not afraid to use them. With 24 hour access to review sites, online forums and social media **91% of customers prefer to self-service their problem than call your customer support centre.** [\(Source\)](#).

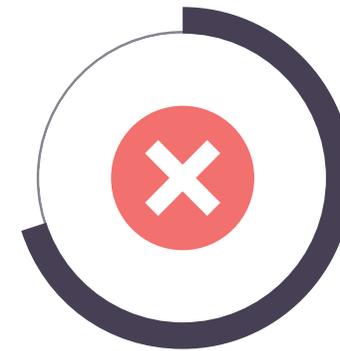
Just look at these numbers:



Customers looking for help on a company's website has grown from **67% to 81%** in three years. [\(Source\)](#)



Online community forum use has jumped from **31% to 56%**. [\(Source\)](#)



70% of customers expect your website to include a self-service application, and if not they'll go looking for answers elsewhere online. [\(Source\)](#)

Your call centre is now the escalation point, not a primary service channel.

So your customers are getting smarter, or at least they are getting better at self-service. They know Google and they're not afraid to use it. But the calls are still coming in thick and fast, your agents are busier than ever. The difference is your customers are now demanding more from your agents. They're not calling with the simple stuff any more, they want answers to complex problems and they want direct access to expert knowledge.



Transforming your customer call centre into a knowledge centre offers compelling advantages:

- Take customer service to the next level
- Increase first call resolution
- Reduce training time and costs for new staff
- Create opportunities to cross sell and up sell
- Improve job satisfaction for your agents
- Increased call efficiency
- **Slash call centre costs**

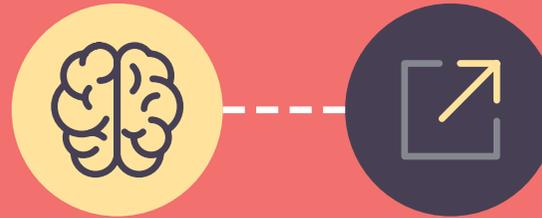


67% of customer churn is preventable if the customer issue was resolved at the first engagement. ([Source](#))

The image shows the front of a vintage car, focusing on the central grille and two round headlights. The grille is a dark, rectangular mesh with a brass or gold-colored frame. Above the grille is a brass hood ornament. The headlights are round with brass-colored bezels. The background is dark and slightly blurred, showing parts of the car's body and wheels.

“Most people spend more time
and energy going around problems
than trying to solve them.”

– Henry Ford



It's a question of culture

A knowledge rich call centre cannot exist as an island.
It requires an ecosystem of supportive technologies, inspiring
business values and metrics that leave no doubt in your agents
mind – your culture is all about knowledge sharing.

**Let's take a closer look at the elements that create
a knowledge-sharing culture.**

Put your values where your mouth is.

Your company values say a lot about who you are and what behaviours you would like your staff to demonstrate. The words themselves may only have a limited impact but when values are linked to your strategic goals, your job descriptions and your individual KPIs you send a strong message to your team about the type of behaviours you expect to see.

Plant the seed for a knowledge-sharing culture to grow with values such as:

- **Collaboration** - Together we are stronger
- **Relationships** - We're here to work with each other and with our customers
- **Resourcefulness** - We will always find ways to improve
- **Partnership** - We work towards a common goal
- **Continuous improvement** - We keep trying, always
- **Growth and learning** - We actively pursue knowledge

Now that you've got the 'vibe' translate your values into actionable tasks and metrics:

- How often do they post questions or answers to your Wikis or forums
- How often do they attend information sessions
- What is their First Call Resolution rate?
- What are their customer satisfaction rates?
- What is their call handling time?

Lead from the top down to empower from the bottom up.

A shared trait of successful knowledge-sharing companies is vocal staff. We're not talking about loud speakers and aggressive talkers, rather the ability for all staff members, no matter their age, seniority or experience, to voice an opinion and share ideas.

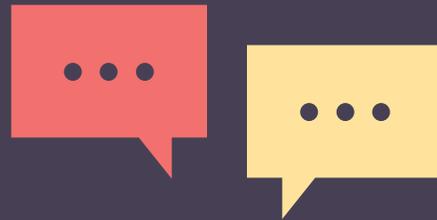
To encourage this behavior leadership needs to be flipped. No longer about top down mandates, your leaders need to be mentors, coaches, servants and enablers. By empowering staff who are closest to your customers, you'll hear what's really going on in the trenches and have direct access to the knowledge your customers have and the knowledge your support staff need to service them.

However, to be successful, knowledge sharing needs to go both ways. Research shows that leaders who encourage knowledge sharing, but aren't perceived to share knowledge with their team are considered hypocritical and may be resented. Walk the talk; a leader who models the behavior they're asking for will be trusted.

Be clear about how knowledge will be used

If your staff are uncertain how their knowledge will be used they will be reluctant to share it. Make it clear that knowledge shared is for the greater good, the collective benefit of the team and your customers.





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Case study: Southwest Airlines

Southwest Airlines is famous for its outstanding customer service, high profitability and above average staff retention.

Their foundation of their success is a staff base that is empowered, rewarded and encouraged to share knowledge internally, problem solve for customers and reach for common goals – their call centre is a knowledge centre that puts customer satisfaction first.

Shared goals

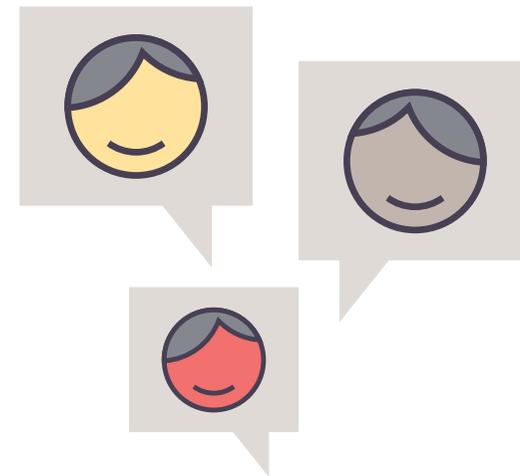
All Southwest employees share three common goals, no matter what their position – Safety, On-time performance and Creating Satisfied Customers.

Shared knowledge

Every employee at Southwest is trained in the overall work processes. They understand the links between what they do and what others do in the business. Shared knowledge enhances coordination and the emergence of innovative ideas.

Shared respect

When delays occur there is no attempt to blame staff up or down the hierarchy, everyone takes responsibility for how they can solve the problem. The contribution each person makes to the overall operation of the business is acknowledged and respected. And since each employee values the contribution of others, there is an inclination to act productively to achieve the larger organizational goals.



Focusing on solving problems, not laying blame

When problems arise there is a temptation to avoid blame and point fingers somewhere else. Southwest Airlines, through their shared goals, knowledge and respect have turned this around. Southwest employees are actively encouraged to report problems as soon as they arise so that - as a team - they can figure out a solution. They acknowledge that laying blame is not an efficient use of their time, but finding solutions is.

Building relationships within.

Jody Gittel, who has extensively studied Southwest Airlines says that for Southwest's leaders, *"Taking care of business literally means taking care of relationships. They see these relationships - with their employees, among their employees, and with outside parties - as the foundation of competitive advantage, through good times and bad."*

Southwest's 10 relationship goals are:

1. Outstanding business leadership
2. Invest in the front-line leaders
3. Hire and train for relationship excellence
4. Use conflict to build relationships
5. Bridge the work-family divide
6. Create positions that span boundaries
7. Use broad performance metrics
8. Highly flexible job descriptions
9. Partner with unions
10. Build the supplier relationships

Build a specialist army

The era of product specialists is gone.
Your call centre staff now need to be
company specialists.

Let's face it, in this day and age your customers are only going to ring you if they've got a concern they can't easily fix themselves or online.

The last thing they want to hear from your agents when they call is "That's not my department" or "I'll transfer you to the right person." A frustrated customer will not be a customer for long, and not only that they'll shout their displeasure from the social media rooftops. Every phone call is now a potential PR disaster and your agents need to be armed to stop any negative fall out before it happens.

You have a knowledge-sharing culture in place, now you need to enable your employees to share that knowledge with your customers. You need to build a knowledge army, employees who specialize in everything.



84% of consumers are frustrated when the agent does not have information needed to resolve an issue. [\(Source\)](#)

Hire the right staff

Forget the old way of giving voice to seniority. These days it is recognized that no matter how much work experience staff have, their aptitude will matter more than their time on the floor. That's not to say there isn't wisdom that's gained through experience, but the ability to add insight to knowledge, a desire to problem solve and a empathetic manner cannot always be taught. Create opportunities for agents to share their insights through internal Wikis, internal chat and information sessions.

Support their knowledge journey

If your employees have the right aptitude they can be taught the details.

Customers can call with issues at any stage of their journey. From pre-purchase to onboarding or even years after their initial purchase. For this reason it's important for your staff to have exposure to all areas of the business and every customer touch point. The more they understand the mechanics of how your business functions, the better informed they can be.

Knowledge sharing during the customer journey.

What your customers need at each stage of their journey.

AWARENESS

Connect with the Product team

What can you do for me?

CONSIDERATION

Connect with the Product team

Why are you different to your competitors?

How much does it cost?

When can I get it?

ACQUISITION

Connect with Finance, IT or Dispatch teams

How do I purchase?

How do I get started?

When will it be delivered?

Do I need an appointment?

Can I install it myself?

When will I be billed?

SERVICE

Connect with IT or Servicing teams

Something is broken, help me!

LOYALTY

Connect with the Marketing team

What else can you offer me?

Employee incentives are a great tool for rewarding staff behaviours you'd like to see. Whether they're weekly, monthly or quarterly, they don't have to break the bank – but they do have to be desirable. Consider cash rewards, profit sharing, vouchers, lunches and team social events for hitting knowledge sharing targets such as:

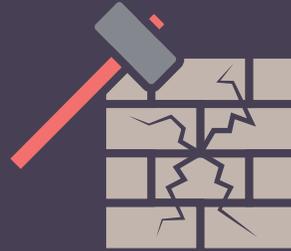
- Number of posts to internal Wikis and Forums
- Attendance at information and training sessions
- First Call Resolution Rates
- Customer Satisfaction Rates
- Call-handling time
- Number of complaints resolved

No matter what incentives you choose, verbal and written feedback is equally as important. A global Gallup study showed employees who received more praise were more productive, more engaged, and more likely to remain with their company compared to those who did not. These employees also receive more customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Hearing praise releases dopamine in the brain – the chemical responsible for making us feel good. Dopamine has been linked to creative problem-solving and innovative thoughts. [\(Source\)](#)

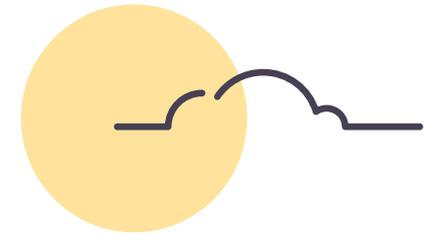


81% of employees said that they're motivated to work harder when their boss shows appreciation for their work. [\(Source\)](#)



Create a knowledge sharing environment

The layout and design of your office space will have a direct impact on the ability of your staff to share knowledge, problem-solve and be productive. Tech companies like Google and Pixar now actively create workspaces that encourage 'chance encounters' between staff. By removing physical barriers between teams and individuals it's hoped that these encounters will feed a culture of open communication, cross-functional trust and knowledge sharing.



Natural Light

Research shows that those who work in offices with windows are more likely to sleep better and have higher critical thinking brain function than those who work in windowless offices.

Open Plan

Removing physical boundaries to cross-functional encounters is a key step in creating an office environment that celebrates knowledge sharing.

Breakout areas

If open plan design is not realistic, and let's face it in some contact centres silence is golden, then create breakout areas where small groups can sit and brainstorm, share ideas or build relationships over activities unrelated to work.

Create watering holes

Google workers are never more than 45 metres from food – the aim being that no matter where they are in the office there is always an opportunity to sit, drink or share a meal with a colleague and build fruitful relationships. If your organization isn't large enough to boast its own Google sized restaurant or cafeteria, weekly staff lunches, paid for by the business, have been proven to break down existing silos and drive collaboration. Some research suggests the ROI on providing lunch to staff is as much as 150%.

Make technology work for you

When it comes to sharing information between employees, it is essential to get them the information they need fast.

A study by McKinsey and Company showed that 20% of employees time was spent looking for internal information or tracking down colleagues who can help. That's a fifth of their work week spent searching rather than doing.

When it comes to sharing information, technology is your best friend. A well-structured intranet is a great resource for formal documentation and business to staff information sharing – such as sales results, new product releases and policies. Less formal are Wikis. If built well these repositories of documents, questions, answers and stories are easily searchable and can be contributed to by anyone in the business.

Whether via the Intranet or the less formal Wiki information needs to be easily accessible, searchable and have an owner.

Messaging apps such as Slack and Yammer are also a great way to connect employees. Post a question on Slack, tag in an expert and get an answer before you have time to make a coffee. As with everything human it's important to understand that mistakes will happen. The wrong information may get posted. But with mediation and supervision from subject matter experts and call centre supervisors.

For contact centre staff software that allows on call chat to supervisors means your agents can ask questions to experts without transferring a call and resolve customer issues smoothly.

External information sharing

Your customers are already talking about you, sharing tips and reviews of your products and sending a whole lot of their knowledge about you onto the internet. So why not add a level of control to the conversation?

Social Listening

Social listening tools allow you to see where your name is being mentioned on social media and what the sentiment is like. At the very least, social listening tools let you discover what common pain points are with customers or what features are missing – and at best they're an opportunity to step in and correct issues before they get out of control.

Forums

Forums such as Whirlpool are common places to see what kinds of challenges your customers are facing. They provide call centre staff with unique ways to solve customer problems (other customers may already have posted creative answers online) as well as showing where the knowledge gaps are in the community.

Add an extra layer of control by creating your own branded forum. This option gives you direct access to your customers brains. But, as with anything online, without mediation and administration forums can become a pit of off-topic abuse and complaints. To be effective they must be monitored and managed – see our best practices on the following page.

Best practices for customer forums

1. Put the needs of the community first

The forum is there to serve your customers, not you. Let the conversation flow freely, even if the sentiment is negative. By being open and appreciative of customer conversations you will access more of them. Try to shut down any negativity and the conversations will move elsewhere.

2. Proactively manage the community

While it's important to let conversations happen naturally **within the forum**, helpful advice and a zero tolerance for abuse or spam will keep the forum fresh. If questions are left unanswered or users feel unsafe to voice an opinion, they will leave. This is one reason it's essential to have logins to the forum and connect forum users to your internal CRM.

3. Feed the beast

In the early stages of forum development get your staff heavily **involved**. By seeding information and answering questions where they can you'll attract more users. Eventually your forum should reach a tipping point where your expert customers can take control and you can sit, listen and learn.

Online feedback

Another online tool to tap into customer knowledge is the feedback form. MyStarbucksIdea is an excellent example of a brand tapping into customer knowledge and ideas to create a community of advocates and innovators.

The simple online form gives users the opportunity to make suggestions for improvements or new products. In the original launch of the page, the community could vote for ideas and ask questions. In total over 2,000,000 votes were cast and 277 customer ideas were launched. However, over time the community outgrew itself.



It became too large to effectively manage, abusive messages became rife, ideas were duplicated and brands other than Starbucks were discussed. Having gained the audience they wanted, Starbucks reverted to a simpler feedback form, removing the conversational aspects of the community. Because of the dedicated audience, the feedback form is still regularly used, but the quality of the responses has improved. Starbucks now can have their cake and eat too - getting direct access to customer thoughts without needed to manage the muck.



Metrics to measure knowledge sharing

You've created the ecosystem for knowledge sharing to thrive – a trusting, open culture, supported but technology and incentivised. So how can you measure the success of your knowledge sharing measures?

First call resolution

Questions asked per month

Customer satisfaction rate

Number of open/closed queries

Customer effort scores

Number of forum users

Number of posts to internal Wiki

Number of unique visitors

Number of answers to external forums or Wikis

Bounce rates

As customers demand more and more in terms of service from their providers; are you prepared to meet the challenge?

Transforming your call centre into a knowledge centre requires a little tweaking of systems, a shift in the culture and a step-up in your training. But the end results include better customer satisfaction, improved staff retention rates and a reduction in call centre costs. If knowledge is power, then it's time to transform your call centre in the power centre of your customer experience.



We are Noojee and we can help make your knowledge centre journey a reality.

We develop high performance, cloud-based contact centre software that links to any VoIP call centre service, no matter the location.

Our software makes managing a call centre team simple. Quick and easy to set-up, it gives you the power to monitor, track, and keep your finger on the pulse for all your inbound and outbound call services.

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