NTT DATA welcomed Dell Services into the family in 2016. Together, we offer one of the industry’s most comprehensive services portfolios designed to modernize business and technology to deliver the outcomes that matter most to our clients.

Bridging the Gap Between Contact and Communicate: An NTT DATA Services Outlook

The outsourcing paradigm is shifting

Nearly every organization looks to outsourcing today, for a variety of strategic reasons that extend well beyond cost savings — whether it is the need to support business growth, access talent and capabilities or maximize business model flexibility.

And while the demand for offshore services is still largely driven by costs, the ongoing rise in intellectual capital among offshore services firms enables an increasingly quality-driven value proposition. Customer priorities tend to fluctuate — on whether quality or cost is more important; but these two factors go hand in hand, and overall, cost savings cannot be realized without attention to quality.

Organizational effectiveness is key to improving service quality. This involves adhering to and maintaining internal processes that manage human capital and projects, personnel training and a continuously evolving service delivery practice. Even if a company has these in place, in an offshore/outsourced model, a lack of communication and personal contact when delivering IT services may be perceived as an absence of organizational effectiveness.

This paper reiterates the importance of communication and personal interaction in an offshore/outsourced model and its reflection on a service provider’s ability to provide rich, high-quality services and a comprehensive customer experience.
The influx of automation and technology in service delivery
Service providers support an increasing array of technologies, services, software and devices, and are continuously looking for new ways to provide support — whether through enabling self-service and self-help, utilizing social media or implementing their own technologies. Support is changing as technology pushes providers to consider how they operate and how they can improve the way they support their customers. As technology steadily reduces the number of human service interactions required in an average day, the list of what customers do themselves is growing rapidly. Between kiosks, web-based solutions and mobile applications, most routine customer service functions are now completely do-it-yourself functions.

Despite the technological advances, IT services is still very customer focused and customer driven. With this self-serve revolution in place, it is easy to regard human, person-to-person service as a somewhat archaic commodity for which the market value must be dropping. So how do we ensure that the service delivered is still personal?

Putting the person in personal
Consider this: An employee in an office has his head down processing paperwork all day long — separated from the customer. If the customer were somehow visible to them, would it change the way the employee feels about their work? Yes. Seeing the customer in person makes employees feel more appreciated and satisfied with their jobs, making them willing to go the extra mile. And when customers appreciate the job done, employees are more likely to go off script, creating a more personalized customer service experience and adding value to the interaction. From a customer perspective, interactions that are more personal improve their opinion about the employee’s contribution, quality of service and the company as a whole.

However, in a growing business, traveling to meet with customers and team members is not always feasible or economical. Service providers should consider implementing five simple steps that promote personal interactions, including:

• Increase customer touch points — by creating a single interface for the customer, customizing segments to their preferences and by integrating sales and service channels — to enable a seamless customer experience.

• Ensure that every member of the team goes through a customer-specific onboarding program.

• Make an effort to introduce customers to team members using conferencing solutions.

• Use collaboration tools (such as online whiteboarding), shared applications and team workspaces to improve efficiency.

• Adopt social media channels, such as blogs and wikis, to help customers and team members collaborate.

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Our service delivery prototype
At NTT DATA, we believe that service providers need to look at customer service as a fundamental part of the overall service delivery — utilized as both a key tool to grow the value of the customer base and an important strategic differentiator.

To make this a part of their strategy, service providers need to:

- **Engage**: Seek regular engagement with customers and take advantage of every customer contact. Service providers need to engage the customer, proactively manage the relationship, cross- and up-sell to different audience segments and emphasize service quality as a brand differentiator.

- **Innovate**: Use multiple channels, such as Web 2.0 tools, live chats, employee and user blogs and product demos, to increase two-way interactions and adjust the channel mix to the customers’ communication preferences. This will help strike the right balance between automation and human interaction. Service providers also need to understand that the majority of investments is being directed toward front-end enhancement rather than back-end automation.

- **Integrate**: It is time to eliminate distinct silos of touch points if service providers want to maximize the value of customer interactions. Integrating the management of all contact channels will help align cost to the value of interactions and ensure that customers enjoy a seamless experience.

- **Utilize**: Customer feedback and proprietary customer data is an asset. Service providers need to have a cross-functional, end-to-end perspective on customer processes with superior service as the key driver for providing customer-centric support. Establishing transparency in customer service performance and contributing to strategic targets is imperative.

- **Maintain**: Poor service and inefficient processes are not an option, and service providers need to master the basics of customer service. Once they ensure the changes needed to establish excellent customer service are in place, it is up to them to maintain these processes alongside other critical and value-added activities.

It is important to understand these changes and expectations in order to adapt. Customer service interactions are increasingly seen as opportunities to engage more closely with customers, improving customer insights and utilizing service propositions for revenue growth. At the same time, service providers should not forget the significance and potential of the man behind the machine in customer service processes.

Truly valuable customer relationships are nurtured by a mix of human and technology channels — drawing on and integrating the strengths of each. Service providers that achieve this balance will reap the rewards as we move into the future of customer engagement.

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NTT DATA partners with clients to navigate the modern complexities of business and technology, delivering the insights, solutions and outcomes that matter most. We’re a top 10 global IT services and consulting provider that wraps deep industry expertise around a comprehensive portfolio of infrastructure, applications and business process services.