PART 3: SOCIAL CUSTOMER CARE

Interview with Jay Wolcott,
VP, Social Media Engagement Product
Interactions LLC

The number of conversations that are happening about brands across social media channels is increasing on a daily basis—and more and more of these conversations are originating from customers with questions and concerns. In fact, Gartner estimates that by 2020 90% of companies will use social for customer care.[1]

For companies looking to succeed in customer experience, getting social care right is critical. But many companies struggle with implementing effective and efficient social care policies. That's why we sat down with Jay Wolcott, VP of Interactions Social Media Engagement Product, to discuss best practices for implementing the right kind of social customer care.

[1]Gartner Report, 'How to Manage Social Media Engagement', 2017

JAY WOLCOTT

VP of Interactions Social Media Engagement Product

Jay Wolcott, is VP of Interactions Social Media Engagement Product, an AI-enabled platform. As the former Founder and CEO of Digital Roots, Wolcott launched Digital Roots in 2009 with a clear vision to provide the most advanced social media engagement and insights platform and has since grown the platform to support some of the world's largest brands and most progressive social media operations.

1. RECOGNIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

Why should brands care about providing customer care through social media?

JAY WOLCOTT: For many consumers—particularly millennials, social is increasingly becoming a preferred care channel. In other cases, social may be used as a method of last resort for consumers who have been unable to resolve their issues through other channels. Either way, social media represents an important opportunity for brands to improve their reputation. Being proactive by responding to concerns voiced over social is an opportunity to save a possible lost customer, and intercepting conversations that are taking place pre-purchase can be a way to gain new customers.

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2. ACKNOWLEDGE THE CHALLENGE

Why do some companies find social customer care challenging?

JW: Social customer care can be challenging because consumer expectations are so high. For instance, 60% of customers who use Twitter expect a response within the hour.[2] And up to 88% of customers are less likely to buy from companies that leave social complaints unanswered. So companies have a vested interest in getting things right the first time in order to resolve customer complaints both quickly and effectively. Unfortunately, many companies have set up inefficient processes that either result in taking too long to resolve an issue, or don't align with customer expectations—both of which ultimately lead to frustration.

3. SET YOUR SWIM LANES

What are some of the other major challenges companies face when setting up social care processes?

JW: At most companies, there are multiple departments that have various responsibilities for different social channels. This can make it challenging to define who is responsible for what. To solve this, we recommend defining your 'swim lanes:' put together a detailed social plan that defines departmental responsibilities in order to eliminate confusion and inefficiency.

[2]Twitter, https://blog.twitter.com/marketing/en_us/a/2015/research-four-ways-brands-can-build-customer-service-relationships-on-twitter.html

> **"**...put together a detailed social plan that defines departmental responsibilities in order to eliminate confusion and inefficiency.**"**

4. START BY LISTENING

Where is the best place for a company to start if there are currently no social customer care strategies in place?

JW: Currently, there is a significant amount of social data that goes completely untapped—primarily because conversations that are happening on social about your brand are not always directed at your brand. But your brand should be sure that you are managing the customers who are talking directly at you, through your established social accounts.

Social listening is one of the most popular ways for brands to start getting involved in social. This involves establishing a team that actively listens to social media conversations related to your brand and engaging when you find a question or complaint related to your products and services.

5. AIM TO BE PROACTIVE

What is proactive social engagement and why do companies need to master it?

JW: Proactive engagement is the most active form of social media participation. It involves discovering and engaging with both customers who are discussing your brand but not addressing comments specifically to you, and customers who are discussing a relevant brand, product or service.

Proactive social engagement offers companies the strongest opportunity to increase both customer retention and revenue. By being proactive, companies can actively seek out new leads and consumers who may be experiencing issues with their brand or product. Resolving these issues quickly and early can lead to improved loyalty and ultimately increased revenue.

6. RESOLVE ISSUES WITHIN SOCIAL

What's one major mistake companies often make when first setting up social care?

JW: When responding to customer care issues via social, it's important for brands to recognize that their customers expect them to resolve the issue within that channel. This means that you shouldn't respond to a Tweet by asking a customer to call your 1-800 number. This adds another step to the issue resolution process and will only frustrate your customer in the long-run.

7. FIND THE RIGHT TOOL

What are some major disadvantages of traditional social listening and engagement tools?

JW: There are a lot of tools available for managing social customer care—and the right ones will make the overall process much easier. Unfortunately, most traditional social listening and engagement tools rely on user-generated rules, searches and popular keywords to identify engagement opportunities. This can make information discovery and prioritization very challenging, as it causes users to either have to look at too much information, or to miss opportunities because of the limitations of this kind of search. Over time, these systems are also very inefficient because they never learn from what users are doing or adapt to user preferences.

8. INCORPORATE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

What are the advantages of tools that use artificial intelligence to manage social customer care?

JW: Artificial intelligence is a powerful tool that offers the ability to take a lot of the manual processing out of information discovery and responses in social customer care. By allowing automated workflow and routing, AI can increase efficiency and allow your team to accomplish more in less time. It also aids in the development of the kind of rich insights and reporting your company needs to prove that social customer care processes are working.

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Analytics-based tools that utilize AI also enable scalable solutions, because over time machine learning and natural language processing algorithms are used to literally teach a machine how to understand the language used to construct a response. For brands that need to tackle heavy customer engagement through social, an analytics-based system is the best way to ensure comprehensive coverage. This results in less manual searching and more time engaging with customers.

9. MAKE SOCIAL PART OF YOUR OMNICHANNEL STRATEGY

What role does social customer care play in the larger customer experience challenge companies are facing?

JW: It's important to remember that social media is just one important component of your brand's overall digital and omnichannel strategy. In order to provide the best possible customer experience, social needs to be integrated with your traditional customer care channels, escalation procedures and tools. The ideal is to develop a common customer experience 'brain' that can benefit from all the data it sees—whether that comes from emails, calls, or social posts—to provide the most efficient and enjoyable customer experience.

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ABOUT INTERACTIONS

Interactions provides Intelligent Virtual Assistants that seamlessly combine artificial intelligence and human understanding to enable businesses and consumers to engage in productive conversations. With flexible products and solutions designed to meet the growing demand for unified, multichannel customer care, Interactions is delivering significant cost savings and unprecedented customer experiences for some of the largest brands in the world. Founded in 2004, Interactions is headquartered in Franklin, Massachusetts with additional offices in Indiana, New Jersey and New York.

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