

Ventura Insight: First contact resolution

Who's counting the calls?

Great service or a barrier to customer relations?

First contact resolution - surely the pinnacle of all contact centre measures, the ultimate aim for you and your customers. Imagine every call you receive swiftly dealt with. Imagine customers who only call once and put the phone down delighted every time.

But is first call resolution really the right measure to choose? In fact just what is this zenith of all measures?

The term is banded around regularly but what does it mean?

- One phone call with one agent providing all the answers you need
- One phone call but being passed between agents to get the detail you require
- One phone call but the agent has to call you back
- Repeated calls to just one agent who eventually sorts it out

This is a concern. If there is no one industry standard for all to aim at how can you or we accomplish this benchmark? How can you compare the service? How does anyone know they are achieving it?

The Holy Grail

So what have we established so far? First contact resolution is an aim for many organisations. It seems to make sense from both a customer and provider viewpoint, without anyone really knowing what it is.

From both an industry and consumer point of view, my thoughts are that first call resolution should mean one call, one agent - problem solved. This should be the benchmark.

However, this view raises its own questions and concerns. One of which is whether it's a suitable measure for all calls? The answer to this has to be a resounding "no".

First contact resolution is what customers should be able to expect on transactional calls. Let's be fair, a simple balance enquiry, payment call, or meter read shouldn't need more than this.

Where first contact resolution is not suitable, is where a customer needs clarification, needs to be reassured, or wants a dialogue. This is a key point to be aware of. Too often organisations are only interested in keeping call times down, and supposedly improving the efficiency of calls handled.

The customer is king

In some situations first contact resolution seems an appropriate target to meet customer and organisational needs. But who should really be judging if first contact resolution is the right option, the organisation or the customer?

In most cases, if you get service right, it is unlikely a customer will repeatedly make transactional calls repeatedly. However, if they are buying a product from you they may have new questions that need answering and want to talk to get the confirmation they need and this should be welcomed.



First contact resolution (continued)

Reassurance is another key reason for customers to call again, the ultimate example of this is NHS Direct. People will want to ring back if symptoms change; they require reassurance that they are taking the correct steps to wellness. First contact resolution would not be a suitable measure here. Admittedly this is an extreme example to prove a point!

Whatever the reasoning, if your customers want to talk to you, should you really be trying to stop them? The textbooks say we should be getting closer to our customers. Surely we should welcome their calls and the chance to get to know them better, after all a shop doesn't serve its customers by shutting the door on them.

In the mind of the consumer

In today's world of 1-to-1 marketing we should welcome customer contact. What a great opportunity to learn more about them. The contact centre allows you to gain information direct from the horse's mouth. No modelling or guesswork is required, it is the perfect place to find out what customers need and when.

Conversation can yield so much but is something of a lost art. It creates opportunities to cross-sell products and generate revenue. It also, importantly, allows you to gather customer information and comments so that your organisation remains in touch.

Thinking organisational wide - the bigger picture - your marketing department will love you for a better understanding of your clients. Even finance will be happy as customers are buying more at a lower cost to generate a lead.

What has driven FCR?

Obviously first contact resolution has its place, but with caveats. It is appropriate in some circumstances, but should be used with caution.

If your organisation is using this measure, are you achieving the target? Whether hitting the target or not have you ever checked it's the right measure.

Ask yourself what has driven the first contact resolution measure in your organisation. Probably a number of things; cost savings, KPI's, senior management have read about it or customers have demanded it.

The last point should be the main driver. Your customers must be the centre of your operation, and you must deliver the service that they want and need.

Ultimately, if you improve the service you offer, first contact resolution will come naturally... if your customers want it.

Unsure if or how first contact resolution could work for your customers, then contact the experts at Ventura

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