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Live Human Conversations in the Digital Age: How do Call Centers Navigate This Mismatch

V Vanessa Gates 00:12

Hey everyone, welcome back to Masters of Support. I'm Vanessa Gates and I am your host today with me I have Mr. Rick DeLisi. He is the co-author of Digital Customer Service: Transforming Customer Experience for an Onscreen World. And he's also the co-author of The Effortless Experience. Rick is also the analysts over at Glia. Welcome, Rick, and thank you for being here with me today.

R Rick DeLisi 00:36

Hey Vanessa!

V Vanessa Gates 00:37

Hello, I'm so so so excited to speak with you today. Rick, I'm sure there are tons of people in the industry that may know who you are. But if you can, just take a second and just let us know who Rick is, what do you like to do? What do you do like Glia, just gonna spend a few minutes to introduce yourself.

R Rick DeLisi 00:56

So I've been studying the psychology of customer interactions and customer loyalty for over two decades now, working with Gartner for a number of years as the VP of Advisory for their Customer Service and Customer Experience practices. And now working as the lead Research Analyst at Glia. And Glia, of course, is the leading provider of digital customer service solutions for financial institutions: banks, credit unions, insurance companies. Ultimately, the goal is to help companies evolve in the way they serve their customers, as fast as customers themselves have already evolved. You know, each one of us has evolved in our behaviors and expectations

drastically over even just the last couple of years. And the sad reality is that the vast majority of companies have not evolved as quickly as their customers have. That is not a good position to be in. But there is no a way to overcome that mismatch.

V **Vanessa Gates** 01:53

I know Glia likes to pride themselves on, and, well, more so you as well to pride yourself on like the effortless experience. Can you tell us a little bit about that really quick? Because after all, that's what we have here for today to talk about effortless experience.

R **Rick DeLisi** 02:13

So a number of years ago, I was part of a team that started a project to ask, what is the one question you could ask a customer specifically right after a service interaction that would best predict not only their reaction to the interaction, but their future loyalty? And so our book, the effortless experience, is very much about customer experience and the customer service interactions that people are having. But more importantly, what happens afterward? Why are some customers much more likely to become more loyal or more disloyal, after a service interaction? And what we've discovered is that the questions that most companies are using to try to predict customer behavior, like the CSAT, question, customer satisfaction, how satisfied were you with this interaction? Or the NPS question the Net Promoter Score question, which is, how likely are you to recommend us to friends or colleagues, a person's answer to either of those questions, right after a service interaction, turns out not to be that predictive of their future behavior. Of course, any company would want their customers to be satisfied, would want customers to want to recommend them. And those are always positive things. But in that exact moment, right after a service interaction, what we learned is a customer's answer to the question, how much effort was required for you to get your issue resolved, is an almost perfect predictor of that person's future interactions and their loyalty to that organization. So when a person said I had a high effort experience, where the amount of effort required, was more than I thought it would, would be, they're four times more likely to become disloyal to that company. So thus, began the whole art and science of creating effortless experiences for customers

V **Vanessa Gates** 04:04

That, as I'm hearing you talk, I'm thinking here about how many times I don't ever want to call a contact center, because it's gonna take so much effort for me to have to go through the dial prompts and try to speak to someone explain my situation, chances are, that person may not be able to help me, and then I'm getting transferred again, it's this ongoing battle. So I'm the millennial. And I think for us, a lot of the times it's, we want things quickly, you know, there's, there's all these stereotypes and we can have a whole different podcast on that. But let's talk about let's talk about the generational differences and really quickly if you want to go ahead and start off with that.

R **Rick DeLisi** 04:52

Well, let's talk about generational differences in two different time periods, before the pandemic and Because before the pandemic, it would have been very easy to characterize and

pandemic and Because before the pandemic, it would have been very easy to characterize and to be generally accurate, that the younger you are, the more digital you are. Millennials or even Gen Z are digital natives. They communicate entirely through digital interfaces and communications. They're buried in their screens all day, every day. They text people in the same room as them. Y'know, you could see two people on a date sitting across the table from each other, and they're texting each other. I mean, those are comical ideas, but they're the the everyday reality for younger people. But that was pre pandemic, with the idea that older people much prefer in person communication are way more likely to reach for the telephone if they need something, or if they have an issue that needs to be resolved. But I think we can all agree that starting in March of 2020, and once the pandemic really took hold and the lockdowns began, one of the fundamental things that we saw is that older people started adopting those same digital first habits that younger people have always had, largely out of necessity. But the whole idea of going first to your screen, whether that's your smartphone, or your tablet, or your laptop, or even a desktop for people who still use a desktop, those habits, which were newer to older people very quickly became the norm that became the way we lived for all of those months and years of lock downs in the pandemic. And those habits have carried over. I'll just give you an example. My dad is going to turn 90 years old this year, and he's become digital first, when he needs to know something when he needs to do something, he will go either to his laptop, or in his case to Alexa, which of course is nothing more than a digital interface anyway. And so the biggest change in behavior and expectations since the onset of the pandemic, is how much more digital, even older people have become. So this schism, this divide this separation between the generations has been roughly equalized. You know, of course, for older people, digital technology still seems new. But again, once you get used to getting whatever you want delivered right to your front door, being able to access all the information in the world, being able to look at videos about any subject you could possibly imagine, being able to program your own music, being able to live in a world of your own creation, once even older people started to get used to that idea, then it becomes the habit. So at some level, now, we're all digital first.

V Vanessa Gates 07:44

But so this is now we know, kind of what the expectations were for these different generations. And kind of how COVID has pivoted what their needs are regarding customer experience. Tell us, does generation really matter when it comes to providing a excellent customer service experience?

R Rick DeLisi 08:12

Well, they would seem to matter. Because, again, if you try to focus in on preferences, what are the preferences of each generation? What are the preferences of our customers? One of the things that we learned in the Effortless book was, the idea of preferences is wildly overrated. And here's why. Because when it comes specifically to communication preferences, or channel preferences, or preferences for how I want to be served, if you ask people, "What is your preference?" which seems like the logical way to understand that, they'll tell you some answer. Some people will tell you, I prefer to always speak to a person. Other people will tell you, I always prefer to chat, or I always prefer self service where I can resolve everything on my own screen. That's what people will tell you. And if you give them the choice of a variety of different options, whatever they choose, you'll have to assume well, that's their preference. What we learned is, there's two kinds of preferences, "Big P" preferences and "small p" preferences.

"Small p" preferences are just whatever you would pick off a list if somebody asked you What do you prefer, but "Big P" preferences are what really matters to you in the moment when you're making a choice. And so when you ask people, "What are your communication preferences or how do you want to be served?" Turns out, their answer to that is a "small p" preference. Because for virtually every customer, their "Big P" preference, when it comes to customer service is just solve my problem. Whatever is the fastest and easiest way that you can solve my problem so I can be done thinking about it. I'll do that. So don't conflate preferences based on what people will choose, or what they'll tell you is important to them with what's really important. And again, in the world of service, the number one "Big P" preference is just make the problem go away.

V Vanessa Gates 10:14

So making the problem go away. I wish that was as simple as how you say. So what can different call centers contact centers do to essentially meet these needs of making the problem go away?

R Rick DeLisi 10:29

Well, what it comes down to is what you started this whole discussion with, and that is how much you hate having to call customer service on the phone. Guess what, so do almost all of us, "Today is going to be a great day, because I get to call customer service on the phone!" Said no one ever. None of us really likes that. In fact, here's a recent data point that if you haven't heard this, this will blow your mind. And this comes by the way, from a noted authority, the most prolific author in the entire customer experience space, Shep Hyken, who's written nine books about customer experience, he just came out with a survey that indicated that 42% of adults say, "I would rather be on my hands and knees cleaning a toilet, than to have to call customer service on the phone." That's how much we hate calling customer service on the phone. But here's the reality, Almost all of us when we have some kind of a problem or an issue go right for our screens. 84% of all customers begin a service interaction on their screen, smartphone, tablet, laptop, desktop. But in those moments of truth, there's still an innate human need to speak to another human being to have a live conversation. So what are you stuck with? You got to stop everything you're already doing online, abandon your entire digital interaction, and then go through that whole process that you described: finding the phone number, going through the whole voice robot IVR menu, waiting to speak to somebody, they have to ask you a million annoying questions about your account number and getting you authenticated. And asking you about your issue and doing a whole bunch of diagnosis. That's the part that we hate. But there's still this need to have live human contact in these moments of truth. And so what we write about in our latest book, Digital Customer Service, is about a technology pioneered by Glia. That enables a customer at any time in the middle of a digital interaction, if they want to have a live conversation, to simply press a button on their screen, and then have the conversation through their own computer, either voice to voice or face to face, like we're having now a video chat. Think about how different that is. If a customer wants to have this live human contact, they're having a moment of truth, they really want to have a human connection with someone and get that psychic confirmation that I'm being heard and that the company is being responsive and that I'm confident I'm making the right choice. If you can invite a live customer service rep into your digital interaction, and they greet you on your screen. And by the way, they likely already know who you are, because you've been

authenticated through the system. And they likely have a strong idea of what you need based on your browsing history or where you've paused on their website or app. Think about how different that is. That's the difference between "Hi, I'm Rick, how may I help you?" versus "Hey, Miss gates, great to talk to you. It looks like you're trying to apply for an auto loan, we can totally help you with that." Think about it that way. It's the same two people. One customer service rep one customer, they're resolving the same exact issue: I need help with an auto loan. But it's a completely different experience. Because it happened within the context of my digital interaction. It happened on my screen. I chose to bring a person into my experience and when that person joined me there, they knew who I was there and his sense of who I have what I need, that feels way more like a VIP experience, and one in which I the customer, am in total control. So that is the solution to this disconnect between the onscreen experience that we have, and then the off screen experience of having to call customer service on the phone. The point is, the need to speak to another human being during these moments of truth is likely never gonna go away. But the need to have that live conversation on the phone can now be completely eliminated. And that is the source of the highest effort experiences in today's world, having to stop what I was doing in the middle of a digital interaction and doing a whole phone call and that whole rigmarole that's the highest effort experience in today's digital world. And now, it doesn't need to happen at all.

V Vanessa Gates 16:03

Wow, Rick, you just made calling my next contact center sounds so easy. And I really hope that a lot of them have the Glia services of the to provide the digital customer experience because um, let me just say, that effort, that it just what I would have had to mentally prepare for just completely goes away. By the way you describe it, it sounds so easy.

R Rick DeLisi 16:31

Well think about it this way, the effort, isn't the conversation, the effort is everything that it takes to get to the point where you're having that conversation.

V Vanessa Gates 16:41

That's true. No, it's absolutely true. So big picture, kind of bullet everything kind of what we talked about today. So regardless of the generation, regardless if you are Zoomer, Gen Z, as they call it, or you're a Boomer or a Traditionalist, characteristics don't necessarily mean that we actually have to have different goals. Essentially, the one and only goal is that we want to provide an effortless, amazing customer experience, correct?

R Rick DeLisi 17:18

Effortless, and also one in which I feel heard. Again, during these moments of truth. Let's segregate that for just a second against just routine stuff, things that I either could take care of myself through self service, or things that could be done effectively through chat. And let's separate those more routine interactions from the ones that really matter the moments of truth. And in that moment of truth, there's no replacement for having a live conversation with

another human being. And that that cuts across all generations. Even people who would say I hate talking to people, what they really mean is, I hate the process of calling on the phone to where I can then talk to another person. But in a moment of truth, something that really matters to me something that there's some emotional component to I need to speak to another person. And certainly I want to it's more comforting. It's more reassuring. I want to make sure that I'm being heard. And so if you could accomplish all of those goals without having to go through the whole process and the whole hassle of calling on the phone. Well, then everybody comes out a winner.

V Vanessa Gates 18:29

Yes, yes, yes, I want to be heard when I am calling for whatever situation I need to call for. This has been really, really, really great. Rick, we could definitely keep talking about this much longer. But you know, we want to go ahead and and have our listeners, go ahead and get to your book and maybe read a little bit more and kind of log on to our Playvox resources to see you know how the two organizations, Glia and Playvox work together to essentially assist with a digital customer experience. everyone that's listening today, take a moment, we'll have the link to Rick's a book that he is the co-author of and you can go ahead and read that and we'll also provide additional resources for you to assist with a excellent customer experience. I am Vanessa gates, I am your host here with Masters of Support. Don't forget to subscribe to our channel so you can get notified when we will have our next podcast released. Thank you everyone for listening today. Rick, thank you so much for being here with me today. Everyone, be a great human and we'll see you soon. Thank you