

# Driving Effective Sales and Retention Programmes



**Growing revenue and retaining your customers is an increasingly difficult challenge given the sales and retention challenges created by today's rapidly-changing customer landscape. So what steps can you take to improve sales and optimise customer retention within the contact centre to maximise customer lifetime value?**

In this CCMA Good Practice Guide we look at the challenges contact centres face when it comes to providing innovative solutions that help organisations to retain their customers, drive new sales, and maximise cross-sell and up-sell opportunities. We highlight the challenges of customers engaging across multiple channels, consider how the introduction of AI-powered insights will impact these processes, and stress the importance of providing memorable experiences. The guide concludes with five key recommendations to help improve your sales and retention programmes.

## **Be ready to engage across all stages of the customer journey**

With many customers now only reaching out to an organisation's contact centre after first engaging via chat or across social and messaging channels, it's important for sales and retention specialists to be in place and ready to engage regardless of the channels being used.

Sales and retention teams need to be responsive and flexible, ready to join conversations across different channels and also able to pick up interactions where customers may have begun to self-serve but quickly decide that they need someone to help them. CCMA research found that seven out of ten people fail to complete a self-serve journey and are

forced to seek assistance. Here it's important for advisors to capture how far the customer has progressed so they don't have to repeat themselves at the start of their conversation. Effective customer retention requires teams to know exactly what is and isn't working, with a constant focus on the sales funnel and the ability to conduct waterfall analysis. Studying customer feedback and responding to it is also an important part of the process. The good news is that there's a wealth of data available in terms of different routes to market, sales retention, and different entry points that provide further opportunities for optimisation.

## **Use AI to support your advisors with timely insights and next best actions**

For effective sales and retention it's important to use this data smartly - it's a finite resource across organisations and teams need to understand that customers quickly realise when they're being poorly targeted. There's certainly no excuse to be over-reliant on high volume, poorly targeted cold calling these days. Inbound contacts are also a finite resource, and sales and retention teams have to be ready to convert these opportunities - irrespective of whether it's a call, a messaging interaction or a webchat conversation.

In addition to managing all the complexity of multiple

customer journeys and compliance regimes such as GDPR and Treating Customers Fairly, sales and retention advisors also need to be highly skilled in their understanding of customer life cycles and what represents a smart offer for each customer. This highly nuanced skillset means that advisors require all the support they can get - making it a role that's unlikely to be replaced by AI (artificial intelligence) over the coming years, but also one that will benefit from the deep insight that AI can bring in terms of providing relevant information and maximising conversion rates

The CCMA's research reflects this, with 44% of respondents suggesting that AI's lack of human interaction could negatively impact customer service. However, 32% also felt that AI's ability to support advisors with timely information and next best action suggestions. This illustrates how AI might positively impact sales and retention.

### Recognise the key role that customer sentiment plays in effective retention

Managing complexity and equipping advisors with timely AI insights is invaluable in terms of surfacing relevant information

and supporting advisors in making the sale. However, it's equally important to drive the right behaviours and motivate employees – and that's the same for both selling to consumers and selling to businesses. It's critical that organisations have specialist sales and retention teams with everyone recognising that customers value interactions where advisors know who they are and are ready to help.

Simplifying these customer journeys is one of the most effective ways to improve sales performance. Applying automation smartly to profile the customer helps to personalise and enhance the conversation, with internal sales journey processes primed to give all the support they need at the right times.

This matters because it frees advisors to focus on what customers are actually saying and what they feel. Building these connections makes for more memorable conversations and also provides an important differentiator – particularly in a world where sentiment analysis is becoming more valuable than traditional customer satisfaction measures.

## Five Key Takeaways

- 1. Continually analyse your customer journeys** – this shouldn't be a one-off exercise. Having access to live analytics gives you real-time access to insights from across all your different journeys – helping you to quickly identify what's working and what's not, and fine tune accordingly.
- 2. Focus on measuring momentum** – with customer behaviours and channels continually evolving, it's vital for sales and retention teams to keep track of momentum - rather than just concentrating on the raw numbers. There's no guarantee that last year's strategy will work the same this year – particularly in a time of global and economic uncertainties. Make sure you have the analytics in place to respond effectively.
- 3. Don't be afraid of doing things differently** – Ticking boxes and doing what everyone else does might seem like a low risk approach, but you don't want to be the company that gets left behind. This can become a real risk as increased automation crowds out process innovation opportunities. Skip-level meetings provide a great way of surfacing new

thinking. Remember it's your frontline that are talking to your customers all day long – they almost always have the answers. Doing something different helps you stand out.

- 4. Empower advisor intervention** – No matter how well you've refined your customer journeys, successful sales and retention still comes down to having motivated, inquisitive and success-oriented people speaking to customers. That's why it makes sense to empower your people, unlocking discretionary advisor behaviours and supporting them in winning business through tools such as AI.
- 5. Break down your channel silos** – Almost all sales and retention teams recognise the damage that can result from having siloed digital and voice channels. Legacy channel conflict with teams cannibalising each other's target customers was inevitably harmful to everyone involved. Fortunately most teams now work hand-in-hand, and that's critical given the increased complexity of today's customer journeys. Customer contact leadership needs to keep on top of this to prevent new silos emerging.

At a time when customer expectations continue to intensify, there's a requirement for an increased focus on effective sales and retention strategies. While technologies such as AI and smarter data analytics have a vital role to play, organisations also need to ensure that they're driving the right

advisor behaviours and simplifying journeys for customers. Above all, however, they need to ensure that they have a team of experienced professionals who are dedicated to driving results and success.