

New Study: Customer Dissatisfaction, Rage Are at All-Time Highs

By: Paula Bernier, Executive Editor, TMC

There's a lot of talk these days about the customer experience, but a new study by customer rage expert Scott Broetzmann indicates that customers are more dissatisfied than ever, and some of them are downright enraged.

Cable and satellite TV is the most likely culprit causing this sad state of affairs, according to the new study from Broetzmann's firm Customer Care Measurement and Consulting, and the W. P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University. But products and services related to dissatisfaction run the gamut – to the tune of about \$76 billion in revenue at stake. In fact, 56 million American households experienced at least one problem during the past 12 months.

The study indicates that 50 percent of the 1,000 households surveyed reported customer problems, that's up from 45 percent in 2011 and up from 32 percent in 1976.

“People are frustrated that there are too many automated response menus, there aren't enough customer-care agents, they waste a lot of time dealing with the problem, and they have to contact the company an average of four times to get resolution,” said Broetzmann.

While 60 percent of those surveyed two years ago said they had experienced rage from a customer service interaction, 68 percent of survey participants this year said they had reached that level of frustration. In fact, 36 percent of those surveyed said they had actually yelled at a customer service representative as a result (up from 25 percent in previous rage studies), and 7 to 13 percent said they went as far as cursing at such individuals.

The fact that people are 11 times more likely to complain using the phone gives them this opportunity. But we're also seeing plenty of customers voice their dissatisfaction via social networking. Indeed, complain posting on sites like Facebook has nearly doubled, from 19 to 35 percent, since 2011.

And unhappy customers are far more likely to share their stories with others (and average of about 28 people) than are those who are satisfied or pacified (10 to 16 people). To turn unhappy customers into happy – are at least less unhappy – ones, the study's results indicates an apology and a monetary fix to the customer can double satisfaction from 37 to 74 percent. Sadly, 56 percent of those who said they'd complained got no offer for restitution at all. That's 9 percent higher than recorded in 2011.

As discussed in the September issue of CUSTOMER magazine, sometimes the solution to a customer support problem is as plain as the nose on your face. That solution is to speak two simple words: 'I'm sorry,' and Broetzmann says: "You can apologize without admitting blame."

Organizations "need to be more concerned about managing the emotional side of these transactions, which they're often ill equipped to do" because they are focused on transactional processes, he adds. Using scripts makes sense, he continues, but at some point you need to teach people how to go off script and use their personalities to solve customer problems.



Customer Care Measurement & Consulting helps Fortune 500 companies from every industry get a better ROI for their investments in the customer experience.

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