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# For Happier Customers, Call HR

an article  
from T10



I remember reading an article under the same title about Sue Nokes when she joined T-Mobile as senior vice president of customer service in 2002. The article began, “The company had serious problems with lousy customer service driving their users crazy. Calling with a question or complaint, they got put on hold for what seemed like eons, then spoke with customer-service reps who weren't much help. J.D. Power's customer-satisfaction surveys ranked T-Mobile dead last in the industry. Nokes launched a total overhaul. The first step: getting T-Mobile's human resources people and its marketing department to sit down and talk. The idea was to revamp the company's hiring practices, thus increasing the odds of picking customer-service staffers willing and able to follow through on the marketing promises.”

Sounds like common sense, doesn't it? But surprisingly, to this day, there are companies failing to do this.

There are many questions here for me, including, what has changed in the past twelve years? Why is there still whitespace i.e. the gap between HR and Marketing?

It's a question I always ask in the course of a TNA with a new customer and it's a question which often seems to be either misunderstood or seen to be irrelevant.

Typically, customer-contact people don't report directly to anyone in marketing or have any contact with them neither does anyone in HR, so HR isn't able to put customer-service people in place who can deliver on the marketers' message.

Examples of companies who have brought in their marketing function to oversee, support or even run their company's contact centre, seem to have the right idea. They understand that their company does something, sells something, off the back of marketing, to create revenue.

Industry studies indicate that where companies HR and marketing are not in sync, they try to improve customer service by focussing on hiring alone or training alone or incentives alone. All very disjointed – do you think? None of these three elements alone are a panacea for success in increasing staff retention or performance along the route to customer retention and advocacy.

I am evangelical these days about the “Effortless” concept or philosophy. I know of an insurance company who, after a multi-million pound fine by the regulator, a new T&C scheme and L&D intervention, are the epitome of this regime having had their US marketing folks transfer to the UK and take over the running of their contact centre, underpinning it with the “Effortless” concept. Everything they do is linked to a common theme or message and boy, is it working...

If only more companies could see it.

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