LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO CUSTOMER NEEDS DRAMATICALLY INCREASES SATISFACTION

Small businesses thrive by listening to customers and providing the products, services and delivery that mean the most to them. But how does a world leader in data storage, cloud computing, Big Data and trusted infrastructure listen and respond to hundreds of thousands of customers all over the globe?

EMC does it by making the industry’s best total customer experience a major company priority. Its Total Customer Experience (TCE) program gathers, measures and analyzes customer feedback and equipment quality metrics at every touchpoint throughout the customer journey of buying, deploying, using and servicing EMC solutions. Of course, many corporations conduct customer surveys. At EMC, though, customer feedback directly influences strategic decisions.

LISTENING AND LEARNING REVEALS THE NEED FOR A STRATEGIC CHANGE IN DIRECTION

Excellent customer service has long been a hallmark of EMC. But rapid global expansion, an aggressive acquisition strategy, an ever widening portfolio of complex products and evolving customer requirements made EMC’s high-touch customer care system difficult to sustain. As business expanded, the volume of technical support requests grew in proportion. This industry leader responded by transitioning to a more efficient and scalable service delivery process. But EMC customers missed the type of personalized service they had enjoyed for years. Customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores declined. Today, thanks in part to its TCE program, EMC’s customer satisfaction levels are the highest in company history. How did this dramatic turnaround take place?

HOW THE TCE PROCESS WORKS

Combining the kind of agile responsiveness once only available from small businesses with the resources of an industry giant, EMC follows a continuous cycle:

LISTEN→ANALYZE→ENGAGE→ACT

Listening - Understanding what is truly important to customers and partners is the key to developing initiatives and products that really improve user experience. The TCE program gathers feedback through surveys, community forums, social media, customer-focused events and input from strategic accounts. Assembling data from many sources provides both a comprehensive view and a precise understanding of issues affecting customers and partners.

Analyzing – The methods employed to analyze feedback gathered in the Listening process sets EMC apart. Organizations like Service Strategies Partners and the Technology Services Industry Association recognize EMC’s TCE program as an market-leading example of effectively using business intelligence, including operational metrics and text analytics to drive business decisions. This program deploys several types of analytics:

- Statistical analysis identifies key customer satisfaction drivers for EMC service delivery as well as areas requiring attention
Advanced text analytics uncovers trends in customer comments and helps detect previously unknown issues.

Big Data analytics identify critical causes of service events and offer insight into service delivery characteristics that affect CSAT. This process helps TCE identify and update its highest priorities. It also assists in establishing key initiatives to improve these areas.

**Engaging** involves getting the right data to the right people. Identifying and driving improvements that matter most to customers requires accurate business intelligence, organization-wide collaboration and careful planning.

Data-rich online portals provide CSAT metrics in real time for key EMC stakeholders. Executive dashboards allow leadership to assess the state of their enterprise at a glance. Line Managers receive interactive reports, enabling them to analyze areas for improvement in their departments. TCE Leads and Data Scientists use Big Data tools to recommend essential improvements. Executives make decisions on initiatives and investments using TCE data and recommendations.

**Action:** Many companies provide customer research statistics to executives, but leaders often fail to act on their findings. EMC's program succeeds by generating action - initiatives that effectively improve service and business results.

EMC's TCE program achieves results by providing executives, not only information on needed improvements, but detailed recommendations based on proven methodologies like Lean Six Sigma. This is crucial. A meta-analysis of 132 studies showed that reports must include credible solutions if intelligence - even a warning that highlights substantial risk - is to assure effective action. The excellent results generated by early TCE initiatives have helped EMC executives to trust and implement the data-driven recommendations produced through this program.

**APPLYING THE TCE PROCESS TURNS A DOWNWARD TREND INTO AN ALL-TIME HIGH**

The TCE process played a major role in turning around a downward trend. Surveys revealed that EMC's move away from its high-touch service program, mentioned earlier, had reduced customer satisfaction. The Total Customer Experience team measured and assessed the problem and proposed this solution:

- Conduct a forensic analysis of customer, partner and field office feedback to identify specific triggers that decreased customer satisfaction with service events
- Root out chronic problems that cause difficulties
- Drive timely service delivery improvements to increase customer satisfaction
- Measure the impact of each service delivery enhancement
- Ensure that service upgrades are available worldwide
- Provide solid recommendations for strategic planning and investment
- Create an Elite Customer Care Program to provide enhanced service and support to strategic accounts worldwide

This initiative proved to be a remarkable success. It reversed the downward trend in CSAT and drove customer satisfaction ratings to an all-time high of 94.5%. CSAT for EMC Elite customers skyrocketed 17 points to 95.6%. EMC's revenue has grown 54.8%. Total cost savings generated by this program are estimated at $38.4 million.
CONCLUSION

EMC’s innovative Total Customer Experience program has earned best-of-class status, winning Temkin Group Customer Experience awards in 2012 and 2013, the 2013 STAR award for Innovation in Customer Commitment and the 2013 Omega Northface ScoreBoard award for Excellence in Customer Support. This is due to the TCE program’s:

- Broad data gathering through many listening posts
- Advanced analytics
- Unique engagement model
- Timely action resulting in increased customer satisfaction.

TCE’s next move will be even more proactive. The team will design a predictive/prescriptive model to identify service events that may result in poor CSAT scores. This approach will enable managers to spot and rectify problems before they occur. This could move customer satisfaction ratings to an all-time high.

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