



Proactive Customer Service in the Era of TikTok Effects

An expert discussion with Avtex and Microsoft
on the changing landscape of customer service

To understand how to serve customers in an era of constant connectedness and viral consumer reactions and interactions, **Gemma Milne**, a technology journalist and author interviewed industry thought leaders **Karl Phenix**, Director of Sales Engineering at Avtex and **Tom Yang**, Global Sales Director for the Dynamics Customer Suite at Microsoft.

Like social media, customer service is made up of many moments, some more impactful than others. What's clear is that no organization should wait for unplanned events to understand how to enhance their customers' experience. For example, a recent TikTok video featuring Ocean Spray Cran-Raspberry juice became a viral video phenomenon, racking up 26 million views¹ and launching 134,000 tribute videos scoring a half-billion views,² providing this 90-year-old company with unexpected brand awareness and relevance. Ocean Spray gifted the creator with a truck full of juice and used the viral social media event to share how the company is navigating the pandemic and meeting a growing demand for home cooking far beyond Thanksgiving Day.³ Market trends that shift customer behaviors, a new product or solution launch, or even an organizational crisis can set off spiraling effects, either good or bad. It's up to you to harness them proactively and productively just like Ocean Spray did.

In the on-demand, hyper-connected world we live in, a personalized customer experience (CX) reigns supreme for attracting and retaining buyers. Across B2C and B2B industries, customers expect their experiences to be instant, tailored, and delivered on their terms. Legacy one-size-fits-all approaches to customer service are

being surpassed at a record pace by omni-channel, self-service, contextual, and personalized experiences. These experiences deliver exactly the right touchpoint—be it an offer of help, a promotion, or an inspiring idea—at precisely the right time and via the right channel. Since every planned and unplanned interaction is a chance to win or lose across the customer journey, organizations must take a proactive and agile approach to service to increase their share in the digital marketplace.

Contributors

Karl Phenix, Avtex
Tom Yang, Microsoft
Gemma Milne, Technology Journalist

Setting your organization up for success to handle challenges and scale your business longer term is easier than you think. This expert perspective provides insights into providing service that customers want, with real-world examples and actionable steps that help you keep pace with fast-paced change.

Q: What are some examples of shifting customer expectations?

KARL: Traditionally, when we think about customer service exploding, it's because of trends you've anticipated and coordinated such as a seasonal rush for your business or a sales promotion. However, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and other social media platforms are providing your brand with unprecedented positive or negative exposure that happens in an instant. If you are a CMO and Chrissy Teigen tweets about your brand, millions of people are seeing something that you had no line of sight into. You need to be able to react and respond to social media and deliver the right service for your customers. So, the unknown is increasingly what organizations must plan for.

Q: What do customers want?

KARL: Customers are looking for their personal context to be used appropriately. More and more, they're looking for that context to be passively provided rather than requiring mandatory input. Technology can help you understand who your customers are, why they are contacting you, which products they already own, whether they have an order in process, whether they are making a second call about a problem, and the list goes on and on. The customer's expectation is that you already know this information and are ready to help them because you have an ongoing relationship. They want you to use the information to drive to an outcome as soon as possible.

Q: How is customer service changing in the TikTok era?

TOM: Organizations are becoming much more agile as they respond to change. They are adopting a hyper-personalized, hyper-consumer-focused way of delivering service to win and keep customers in this new digital era where constant connectedness and fast responses are the norm.

Q: How has moving to the cloud impacted customer service?

TOM: The cloud provides technologies you can use to give a better customer experience. It lets you use data to become predictive and proactive: crafting discounts or offers that are specific to your customers' interests, wants or needs. You can unlock and respond to new opportunities in a cloud environment that you simply can't do on-premises.

Q: How do companies leverage technology to respond to unforeseen events?

TOM: When COVID-19 struck, it caused significant business interruptions. The brands that were most successful didn't respond reactively. They were already prepared for an emergency, even though they could never have foreseen a pandemic. Consequently, they increased their market share and revenues. You can do the same if you create the mindset and foundation you need to respond to unexpected developments.

Your goal should be to provide the best experience, realize your customers' highest satisfaction, and achieve your desired outcomes across all your channels. As a simple example, you should be able to detect customer trends across voice and digital channels and determine which channels to use for which messages. Less than one percent of voice is currently used today, meaning that it is a channel with massive untapped potential. You also should help customers understand why it's better to engage on one channel versus another. For example, you can push a customer to a knowledge base before making a service call.

Q: Which organizations are getting customer service right?

TOM: One organization that comes to mind is the Australian Red Cross, which is responding to COVID-19 in addition to its other responsibilities. Within five or six days, the organization stood up a brand-new team of hundreds of staff to make thousands of outbound calls to reach the elderly. To create a team, process, and technology in this timeframe is pretty amazing.

KARL: Credit unions are using geolocation or zip codes to determine a customer's local branch and then provide that information to an agent. B2C product and manufacturing companies can use the same data to help customers find their local dealer or local parts. That is a simple way of using personalization to serve customers better.

In addition, organizations are now spotting trends based on keywords, product names, or model numbers. They use that information to develop proactive content such as press releases, create knowledge and self-service content to triage incoming inquiries, or identify quality issues that need to be addressed at a root-cause level.

Q: How does improving customer service impact the business?

TOM: The best organizations are the ones who blend teams from a goals perspective. So, whether you're in sales, service, marketing, or product management, you're all there to serve the customer. The more you can work as one team, the better.

When you use customer service information and insights across the rest of your business and vice versa, you'll do better in the marketplace. Microsoft provides you with the tools you need to orchestrate these connected customer journeys and use the information that you capture to inform new campaigns.

KARL: Some of the biggest wins occur when organizations invest in the agent experience. Sentiment analysis enables agents who are receiving emails or chats to understand whether customers are angry or delighted. Contextual pointers for customers, such as the agent's name they last spoke to, can help diffuse tense situations by showing that you understand their needs.

Q: How can organizations invest in customer service effectively?

TOM: Investing in self-service and upfront knowledge sharing frees up your customer service organization to have more meaningful conversations instead of being rushed to finish calls or live chats.

KARL: Take a small segment of your workforce and understand how new processes are working. You may realize that the new processes will make a huge impact across your organization, and that the volume is there, but that changes will only going to be valuable if you do X, Y, and Z. And so, you make those discoveries with small groups, and then you build on them.

Q: What should organizations do right now to improve customer service?

TOM: Every organization has unique potential. You should be able to define at an organization and even a team level what you want to be known for. So, before you identify which virtual agent technology or CRM platform or knowledge base to use, identify who you are, who you want to become, and which use cases have the most ROI.

Once you establish these core items, you can identify the priorities you want to tackle first. Avtex can help you navigate the people, process and technology involved with driving customer service improvements.

KARL: We can pinpoint areas that are potential huge advantages for organizations, or disadvantages when issues blow up negatively. If you have X hundred thousand number of followers on Twitter and no social media customer service plan, that's a problem waiting to happen, or it's an opportunity that you haven't embraced yet. Expand your growth mindset to include business outcomes for customer service. For example, are you missing a demographic from a sales perspective, and how does that link to the fact that you don't have good customer service for that group or reach them in the way they want to be communicated with?

Microsoft has invested heavily in developing technologies to solve these problems and making these tools easy to adopt and use. So, there are good resources for you to tap as you seek to improve customer service at your organization.

Evolve your customer service to be proactive and predictive

If you'd like to transform customer service to help drive business growth, meet with Avtex at an [Envisioning Workshop](#). Avtex can help you identify the right short- versus long-term needs, ending with a clear, actionable roadmap of how we can help you reach your business goals. Avtex draws on our deep industry expertise, broad-based Microsoft partnership, and joint proven methodology to help you identify the top priorities that will make the most impact on your customer service program. By working with Avtex, you can evolve your capabilities in an incremental, thoughtful way that drives continuous ROI.

For more information on how Avtex can empower your organization with the right tools and real-time insights to fuel exceptional Customer Experiences visit go.avtex.com/always-on

[Listen to the podcast recording.](#)

Sources:

¹ Imogen Watson, "Ocean Spray finally reacts to viral skateboarding TikTok," online article, *The Drum*, October 7, 2020, <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2020/10/07/ocean-spray-finally-reacts-viral-skateboarding-tiktok>

² Lori Ioannou, "TikTok star gives Ocean Spray a boost as brand looks to Thanksgiving, and the future," online article, CNBC, November 10, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/11/07/tiktok-star-gives-ocean-spray-boost-as-brand-looks-to-thanksgiving.html>

³ "TikTok star," CNBC, *ibid.*

About Microsoft

Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT" @microsoft) enables digital transformation for the era of an intelligent cloud and an intelligent edge. Its mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. www.microsoft.com

About Avtex

Avtex is a full-service Customer Experience (CX) consulting and solution provider focused on helping organizations create better experiences for their customers. With an unparalleled breadth of knowledge and experience, and partnerships with leading technology vendors like Microsoft and Genesys, we are uniquely suited to address any CX challenge.

Our portfolio of solutions and services supports our unique approach to Customer Experience, which includes two key phases, CX Transformation and CX Orchestration.

- Our **CX Transformation** solutions and services aid in the process of defining and improving CX. From Journey Mapping to CX Design Thinking, we provide the support you need to set the foundation for CX success.
- Our **CX Orchestration**, solutions and services enable the realization of your CX strategy through people, processes and technology. From technology implementation to training, we ensure you have the capabilities to execute your CX strategy.