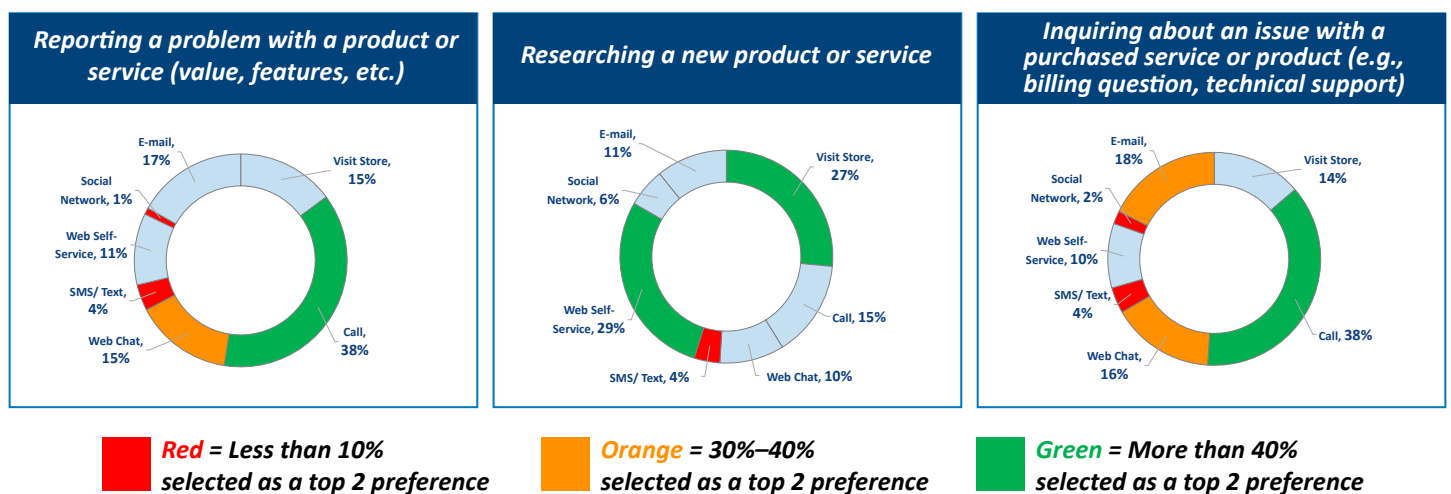


A Blueprint for Multi-Channel Success

Digital Channel Preference in Your Unified Customer Engagement Strategy

Today's customer lives in a world where the channels available to research and reach out to organizations is dramatically different than it was ten or fifteen years ago, and is still evolving. "Traditional" channels (phone/mail) are being substituted with digital ones (mobile-enabled, web, chat, video, social media, etc.). This presents a very different landscape for a company to connect with, attract, service/support, and gain their customers' loyalty.

Digital platforms offer customers a high degree of self-serve options, naturally leading to less dependency on human resources for information and more dependency on the human touch for compassion, reassurance, confirmation, and validation. For example, studies show that customers prefer self-service and other digital channels when researching and providing feedback, but turn to traditional channels for technical support and complaints.



Note: U.S. Services Consumer Survey 4Q14, n=1,953

Source: IDC 2015

Evolution of Self-Serve

How has technology evolved to support an optimized customer experience? New innovations and a paradigm shift in customer behavior has created the need for interaction channels that enable (or empower) customers to self-serve instead of being served. More and more customers prefer to go online to seek information because it is easier and more convenient; or what most customers would consider "effortless". With level of effort directly corresponding to level of satisfaction for most consumers, self-serve is quickly becoming a staple channel that today's organizations **need** to deliver, in a variety of ways (mobile-enabled, mobile app, etc.).

Luckily, self-service, with the right partner, can be one of the most cost-efficient and quickest channels to deploy in your customer experience arsenal!

So I Need Self-Serve?

YES! Where self-serve was once implemented almost solely for the cost benefit it provided (over live support), it is now a channel your customers expect, and even demand, and one you need to implement (effectively) to be successful in today's multi-channel world.

However, self-serve should only be a sub-section of your multi-channel experience. Most customers will want to interact with your company in a variety of ways that vary based on logical things such as the nature of their issue, but can also be dependent on more circumstantial things such as their environment, or emotional drivers such their mood, their past relationship with your organization, and so much more. Understanding—then anticipating—your customer's preferences will help your organization be recognized as one that is truly *easy to do business with*.

How Do I Keep It All Straight? How Do I Keep It Consistent?

Helping organizations anticipate customer preferences and deliver a strong and effortless customer experience is the **HGS Digital Channel Strategy**. Offering true customer experience transformation and supporting you in the delivery of your unified, multi-channel experience, our customer journey mapping provides a clear framework to servicing your customers based on proven industry and consumer trends.

Where Do I Start?

The HGS Blueprint for Digital Success

Providing enhanced channel offerings is a great idea, but optimal delivery models do not happen by chance. You need to intentionally plan your offerings and overall customer experience strategy around your customer. When helping you build your digital channel strategy, we keep in mind these three focus areas:



1. Customer Preference—What is the customer's preference for channel?

Preference can be influenced by factors such as demographics, personality, or past experiences. Preference can be very different from customer to customer and is directly related to an individual's perceived level of effort to contact, and do business with you. Supporting your customer over their channel of choice can go a long way to showing that you truly understand (and care) about their preferences, and in turn, their business.

Customer preference is most easily determined by analyzing historical data, where available, or simply asking/confirming as frequently as possible. Anticipating customer preference can be done through demographic analytics or profiling, building intelligence into your strategies as you go. At a simple level, website visitors from urban centers can be offered more digital-friendly options while rural visitors see more high-touch (voice) options. Further segregation can be done on individual communities as your data reveals trends.

According to the recent IDC report, "Identifying Missed Opportunities to Improve Customer Experience," the most important characteristic to ensure consumer satisfaction in communicating with a company is ease of use/simplicity of process. Over 95% of respondents stated being able to communicate over their channel of preference is important to them.¹

Being supported over the channel you prefer is easier, and easier experiences are almost always better experiences.

2. Customer Situation—What is the context for choosing this channel (e.g., location, environment, mood)?

While customer preferences typically dominate their communication, there are times when circumstances may dictate and change preferences.

For example, web chat during daytime hours is a convenient and inconspicuous form of communication for those who work in a busy office environment. A new mom may opt for SMS support that she can fit into her chaotic day. Voice, on the other hand, is popular for emotionally driven or sensitive communications such as product/service complaints or billing discussions.

According to IDC, communication channel preferences vary depending on the type of interaction they are seeking. For example, 76% of respondents selected a voice call as one of the top two ways to report a problem with a product or service.²

Detecting trends within channel usage and customer preferences and staffing queues accordingly will minimize customer hold times and improve the overall experience.

3. Customer Need—What is the inherent nature of the query?

As alluded to above, some situations will require human interaction, as it provides a reassurance element to the conversation that can be difficult to create through a digital experience. Customers often still turn to human interaction to resolve complex inquiries (i.e., technical support) that they are unable to rectify on their own.

However, as digital channels continue to emerge, organizations are in the unique position to evolve their technical support channels to keep relevant and current to a population that prefers digital communication.

Evolving self-help and low-touch channels to include how-to videos, walk throughs, and detailed, intelligent FAQs will empower digitally savvy customers to resolve their issue on their own: an easier avenue for them, and a much more cost effective one for you!

Ultimately, transforming your customer journey is a venture that is best taken with a trusted partner who has demonstrated results. Good business process management partners will help you understand your customer channel preferences and optimize them to create an effortless customer experience.

HGS is excited to partner with you to transform your customer experience into a truly EFFORTLESS one.

BPO buyer survey data indicates that as a share of overall interactions, social media will grow from 5% to 9% of overall interactions, and web self-service will grow from 12% to 15% of interactions over the next two to three years, while traditional channels like agent-based voice will decrease as a percentage of overall interactions.³

Self-Help Done Right: HGS improved customer satisfaction while cutting costs nearly \$1M per year through implementing an easy to use self-help portal for a Japanese electronics manufacturer.⁴

Transformation of Immigration Visa Support Process: HGS transformed the UK's Visa and Immigration process for 2.8 million foreign nationals, saving taxpayers millions while increasing customer satisfaction 20%.⁵

A word of caution: What you want to create is a channel that your customers choose to use through their preference—not because other channels have been removed or made more difficult to interact with. Remember, a customer's ease with digital channels is influenced by several factors, including demographic, education, personal experiences, tech savviness, circumstances, and the task that needs to be completed. Leveraging strategies listed above, in partnership with HGS as your digital transformation experts, your organization can avoid common mistakes and **fast-track your way to a truly effortless, and cost effective, multi-channel experience**

¹⁻³ IDC Report: <http://www.teamhgs.com/ca/identifying-missed-opportunities-improve-customer-experience>

⁴ <http://www.teamhgs.com/ca/thought-leadership/case-studies/dramatic-reduction-cost-contact-japanese-consumer-electronics>

⁵ <http://www.teamhgs.com/ca/thought-leadership/case-studies/integrated-multi-channel-portal-international-enquiry-service-0>

About HGS

HGS is a leader in optimizing the customer experience and helping our clients to become more competitive. HGS provides a full suite of business process management services from marketing and digital enablement services, consumer interaction services to platform enabling back office business services. By applying analytics and interaction transformation design to deliver innovation and thought leadership, HGS increases revenue, improves operating efficiency and helps to retain valuable customers. HGS expertise spans the telecommunications and media, healthcare, insurance, banking, consumer electronics and technology, retail, consumer packaged goods industries, as well as the public sector. HGS operates on a global landscape with around 40,000 employees in 65 worldwide locations delivering localized solutions. HGS, part of the multi-billion dollar Hinduja Group, has over four decades of experience working with some of the world's most recognized brands.

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