

# CUT THE WAIT

Five steps  
to speedy  
customer  
service



# Customer service is at the center of opportunity

Post the pandemic, customer retention has taken priority over growth. Research shows that customer loyalty has taken a severe blow over the past 12 months.

[More than 60% of consumers across the UK, European countries, US and APAC](#) are trying new brands due to economic pressures, store closings, and changing priorities. They are going online in their search for better and safer ways to transact with businesses. This has blurred the lines between sales and service, with every customer service interaction becoming an opportunity to sell. In fact, some of our clients are seeing 70% of sales-related queries come through customer service channels.

Companies cannot treat customer service reactively anymore. It has to be the center of your growth strategy.

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**Pradeep Rathinam**  
Chief Customer Officer  
Freshworks

“This is a pivotal time, and one of the most strategic inflection points in a customer service leader’s life. They’re being brought into leadership meetings and asked questions around churn, what customers are saying, how the organization can tackle the situation. Historically, customer service assessments have always been post-mortem, and that’s changing.”

# Customers choose speed over everything

We analyzed 107 million support interactions from Freshworks' extensive customer data, and it emerged that speed is the most important factor to improve CSAT scores. While everyone recognizes the importance of faster customer service, organizational roadblocks hold most companies back.

1. Organizations invest in sales and marketing for growth while saving costs on customer service
2. This leads to staffing crunches, extended wait times, and backlogs
3. Technology projects and digital customer service investments get put on the back burner
4. "Good enough" customer service becomes the outcome

If you put customers at the center of your growth strategy, you need to reply first and fastest or lose the business to your competition. Like it or not, companies like Amazon and Google are shaping customer expectations, and every company needs to evolve its service strategy or get left behind.



# 5 steps to speedy customer service

In this playbook, we prescribe five steps you can implement to #CutTheWait:



1 Make your service accessible →



2 Go “automation-first” →



3 Shift from reactive to proactive →



4 Give your agents superpowers →



5 Refresh your customer service metrics →



# 1

## Make your service accessible

Traditionally, contact centers measure queue wait times and average handle times (AHT). In reality, the customer journey begins the moment they start looking for your support line. Your service needs to be available on channels and devices that are convenient to customers.

The modern customer journey starts with a Google search for information on a mobile device. If the query is complex, customers prefer chatting, either via text or on their favorite messaging app, over calling a helpline. These communication channels feel faster than waiting on the phone, and you need to ensure that your support mix focuses on the right channels for your customers.

Axminster Tools adapted their customer service mix to meet changing customer expectations and saw great success with its chat channel.

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### 5 steps to achieving your omnichannel potential:

1. Deploy the right channels based on your customer behavior. Digital channels like live chat and social messaging can reduce customer wait times and cost per interaction.
2. Make it easy for customers to find your support resources. We suggest 2 clicks from any point on your website or mobile app.
3. Reduce queue times with omnichannel routing so that you don't have bottlenecks on a single channel.
4. Plan for channel shifts - conversations are continuous and can shift from phone to email to chat. Ensure that customer context is maintained across channels.
5. Help customers find the right agents at the right time using skill-based and load-based routing.



## 2

# Go “automation-first”

Most customer service organizations have a people-first approach with automation as an add-on to reduce query volumes. AI-chatbot pilots tend to fail because they try to map the same processes on chatbots to lukewarm results. These approaches lead to a 20-25% deflection which creates frustration for customers who have to go through additional steps before engaging with a live-agent.

AI-chatbots offer the opportunity to rethink the customer service experience with an automation-first approach. By connecting your data sources and making the bot “smarter”, organizations can reduce customer interactions by 80%. This also frees up time for agents to deal with complex issues and advanced queries that the bot cannot manage.

### 6 steps to a successful self-service strategy:

1. Keep your FAQs organized and comprehensive. Help customers help themselves.
2. Shift customers from the phone to chat and messaging channels by adding an option to your IVR, and use bots as a rich self-service option on these support channels.
3. Keep your bot structured. Think IVR on chat. Offer buttons for the most common questions, and leave the rest to live-agents.
4. Customers are going to test the limits of your bot. When you have to fail, fail gracefully and offer the option to speak to a live agent.
5. Transfer the bot history to the live agent so that customers don't need to repeat themselves.
6. Bots need constant improvement. Create a “deflection team” to iterate and improve your chatbot, and invest in bot-builder technologies that give you speed and freedom from developer teams.

PhonePe automates 60% of queries using AI-powered chatbots to reduce pressure on support staff.

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# 3

## Shift from reactive to proactive

When a customer enters a store or branch, their expectation is not for them to search for help, but for the help to come to them. Why should this expectation change online?

Our research shows that a majority of consumers (69%) have a clear preference for brands that offer proactive notifications and services to them. Examples of proactive support done well include enabling trigger messages via your live-chat window or bot to reach out and offer service to customers when they spend too much time on your payments page, abandon their shopping cart, etc.

### How can you make use of proactive support to #CutTheWait?

- Do not wait for a customer to ask - proactively send them updates around order status, shipment tracking, payments, and refund status.
- Track customer behavior online and detect frustrations such as difficulty in finding a product, struggle with payment, etc. Quickly offer support through a chat agent or bot.
- Work with product teams to identify scenarios where customers don't even have to think of reaching out for support. You know where your cab is when you open the Uber app, you don't need to ask Uber.

Fantastic Services set up proactive trigger messages that were informative and witty to capture the attention of website visitors.

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# 4

## Give your agents superpowers

When agents don't have the right information at hand, customers are made to wait.

Agent effectiveness is an outcome of multiple steps - access to customer information, understanding the customer problem, and navigating through a series of steps to find the solution. You can enhance agent performance by bringing all systems into a single agent desktop. Make it easy for your agents by giving them access to complete customer information, AI-assisted solutions, and next best actions, and automate routine work like ticket classification, assignment, and updates.

### How can you empower your agents to #CutTheWait?

- Create an internal knowledge base with workarounds and solutions, troubleshooting articles, and workarounds that may not be publicly available. Mock drills with experienced agents are also a clever approach to training.
- Provide your agents with a 360-degree customer view including past interactions across channels, order history, subscription status, or website activity.
- Deploy agent-facing bots that can help automate routine tasks, surface the right information, or suggest the next best actions that can guide your agents towards resolutions.
- Eliminate manual data entry with the help of automation rules and AI so that your agents are more available for customers.

Rightmove reduced First Response Times by 26% and brought up its First Contact Resolution to 75%.

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## Refresh your customer service metrics

The most customer-centric companies have changed the way they measure customer service. They've moved from team-centric metrics to customer-centric metrics that evaluate the holistic customer experience and put the onus on the entire organization to support customer experience goals.

### Consider adding the following KPIs to your organizational scorecard:

#### 1. Zero contact resolution

While first contact resolution is a mainstay in customer service teams, customers prefer helping themselves and this should be the first focus of every service team. Zero contact resolution is the number of customer complaints solved without any contact with the service team.

#### 2. Customer effort score

Customer effort score measures how easy or difficult it is for customers to find help and solve their problems. Alongside CSAT and NPS which are outcome metrics, CES gives an insight into customer friction that can help improve your service in the long term.

#### 3. Complaints per order

Another metric pioneered by Amazon, complaints per order is the number of customers who reach out to support teams after making a purchase. This casts the spotlight on the quality of products, information, and expectations set with customers during the purchase process.

#### 4. Cost per interaction

Contact center leaders should measure the cost per interaction across service channels, and move customers to lower-cost channels like chat and messaging.

# Ready to give your service a speedy makeover?

[Freshdesk](#) is a future-ready customer service platform that helps you delight your customers and win them for life. With Freshdesk, you can unify your customer service on a single platform, deploy modern service channels in a few clicks, and rely on our AI smarts to build chatbots and automate internal workflows.

We're a part of Freshworks, a customer engagement platform leader. Our customer-for-life platform is ready to go, easy to use, and scales to businesses of all sizes. Over 40,000 companies work with us to improve their customer service.

## Ready to modernize your customer service?

Email us at [info@freshideastoday.com](mailto:info@freshideastoday.com)

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