

How digital experts are filling the customer service gap

 By [Ryan Falkenberg](#)

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Over the past few years, customer expectations of the companies they deal with have grown exponentially. Today, we don't just want companies to tell us what they have to offer but to interact with us in a way that's user-centred, hyper-relevant, one-touch, and multi-channel. We also want them to understand what our needs are and to be able to service those needs.



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While a combination of digital assistants and traditional human-based contact centres go a long way to achieving that, there are gaps that they can't fill. Until now, it's been difficult to bridge those gaps. A new wave of digital experts is however stepping into the breach and changing the face of customer experience (CX).

Different levels of customer need

To understand why digital experts are becoming so vital, it's important to understand the different levels of customer support and how they can be served digitally.

The simplest level of transaction that a customer has with a company is administrative. At this level, the customer knows what their problem is, and what their desired solution is. They just want help to process this clear need as quickly and seamlessly as possible. It's like going into a pharmacy knowing the specific cough syrup - your desired solution - that you need to sort out your current sore throat from a mild cold - your identified problem.

But what if you know your problem, but not the right solution? That's when you need the next level of support or assistance. An assistant listens to your problem and then helps you find the right solution - i.e., they are solution specialists.

Assistance is great as long as you are clear about your problem. It's when you are not that clear that you have identified the right problem that you need the next level of support or advice. An advisor is able to help you diagnose the root cause of your problem or situation before then recommending the right solution.

Advice is helpful when you are not an expert in the field, and you are not sure firstly what your problem or need really is, and what the best solution is. It's also helpful when a wrong decision may prove costly to you. That's why we look to advisors in fields such as medicine, banking, insurance, law and technology. It's because we don't know enough to self-solve ourselves, and mistakes can matter.

Digital assistance, chatbots, and digital advice

Understandably, most companies have focused on the low-hanging fruit of administration when it comes to embracing digital in customer service. Here, simplified interfaces and digital workers are being used to make transacting quick and easy.

Digital assistance, meanwhile, continues to be an evolving field. Many companies have tried building a digital assistant or chatbot, with mixed success. Part of the problem is getting their chatbot to understand free-flowing language. The bigger problem is getting the chatbot to handle requests or questions where there is not a clear answer - i.e., the chatbot still needs to ask more clarifying questions. In most cases, if the customer is not explicit enough in their request, the chatbot struggles to offer meaningful assistance.

Digital advice, on the other hand, remains somewhat of a holy grail with many regulated companies. This is because the logic of many human experts is built up through years of experience and resides inside their heads, not inside some data source. Getting a digital expert to learn this through trial and error sounds easy, but in reality, it is very difficult especially when these decisions have an impact and compliance matters.

The rise of compliant digital experts

These digital experts are capable of working much like human experts, ensuring the right questions are asked and answers are given, in line with business rules and context.

Digital experts are very good at information gathering, ensuring they gather all contextual information required to make required decisions. Additionally, they can navigate people through decision-making processes so they not only get to the right outcome, but they can prove they followed the right pathway getting there.

But it's not just what digital experts do that sets them apart, it's how they do it. A good digital expert, for example, always aims to accurately diagnose the root cause of a problem or situation before jumping to solutions. They are also able to dynamically adapt according to each customer's unique context and do so across multiple interfaces - such as a web app, chatbot, or social media.

Effective digital experts also keep up with changing business rules and processes and don't become trapped in 'decision-tree' thinking. They stay compliant and risk-aware, meaning that they don't 'self-learn' and randomly go off-script. They are also able to seamlessly work with existing interfaces, systems and digital workers. This means they operate within existing technical eco-systems, not outside them.

Consistent, compliant and context-relevant advice

For organisations that use digital experts effectively, the rewards can be significant. By automating business expertise, contact centre agents are liberated from worrying about what to say, and can rather focus on how to say it. Their digital expert navigates them through the right engagement journey, much like a GPS navigates you through the suburbs. The same applies to customers who can access their very own digital expert via any of the self-service channels.

Digital experts are lifting the CX bar by offering staff and customers meaningful and contextually relevant advice, at their fingertips. For customers, it means they can now get access to an expert, at their fingertips. And for staff, it means they can offer expert support, without having to be an expert themselves.

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