

Changing Channels:

Tuning in to New Demands from Producers and Customers

Even in today's connected and highly mobile marketplace, many insurance companies are providing both producer and customer service the same way they've done it for decades. Meanwhile, producers and customers have developed significantly different business preferences and expectations. And emerging technologies are about to change those expectations again.

Good customer/producer service is tied directly to retention. Unhappy customers have always been able to take their business elsewhere, and it can cost hundreds of dollars to acquire a new customer to make up for one who leaves.

"So retention on its own is a critical factor," said Bob McDonald, principal management consultant, CSC. "But now, in an age where customers can voice their experiences on social media, one bad interaction can go viral across the Internet and the news media. On the flip side, a positive experience and recommendation can provide free marketing just as easily."

CSC works with the world's leading insurers on ways to streamline customer service processes, improve access to client information, centralize call center technologies and integrate self-service capabilities. Most recently, CSC released mobile and Web 2.0 apps that allow agents and policyholders to use smartphones to conduct more than 140 different life and annuity transactions.

A growing number of insurers are looking to the mobile channel to serve a whole new generation of smartphone-toting customers. Before jumping into any new customer service technology, McDonald advises companies to develop an overall customer service strategy.

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BOB MCDONALD,
Principal Management
Consultant, CSC

Develop an Overall Customer Service Strategy

1. Measure Customer Satisfaction

A basic strategy starts with an understanding of your customer and distributor experience as it stands now. You should measure across multiple channels and benchmark current service levels against industry peers.

2. Consolidate Customer Intelligence

You probably already have much of the data you need. Client files should be consolidated from across the enterprise to provide customer service reps with at-a-glance contact preferences and complete service history.

3. Form a Plan

The metrics and data will help you formulate a strategy that encompasses all customer points of contact, identifies your most valuable customers and distributors, and establishes service level standards and key performance indicators.

4. Be Cautious with CRM Technology

Perhaps the most important guideline is to be cautious. Most CRM technology is designed for general transactions and falls short of the needs of the insurance industry.

CSC's understanding of customer service is grounded in the company's business process outsourcing operations. CSC processes more than 3 million life and annuity contracts for more than 100 insurers worldwide. To manage that workload of diverse products, CSC introduced its Customer Service Accelerator® software, which gives CSRs a common front end for working with multiple products and back-end systems.

CSC's insurance software clients have used Customer Service Accelerator to avoid replacing aging legacy systems. By simplifying the process, these companies save money by centralizing the customer service function, consolidating operations and introducing self-service portal capabilities.

Improve Service and Lower Costs

Following these four steps will put you in a much better position for the next wave of customer and producer expectations. "In our experience," said McDonald, "companies of all sizes can fundamentally change their customer service programs—and save money in the process."

CSC

To learn more about CSC's Customer Service Accelerator, call 800.345.7672 or visit www.csc.com/csaccelerator.