

A woman with voluminous, curly blonde hair is sitting at a wooden desk in a bright, modern office or home workspace. She is wearing a black turtleneck and is smiling broadly while looking at her smartphone. A white laptop is open to her left, and a white coffee cup on a saucer sits on the desk in front of her. To the right, there is a pink patterned napkin and a tablet. In the background, a white door is visible. The overall atmosphere is professional and positive.

Lithium

# 10 Ways to Upgrade Your Customer Service

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### Lithium delivers awesome digital customer experiences at scale for the world's biggest brands.

Comprising Social Media Management and Communities, the Lithium engagement platform enables brands to manage multiple digital touchpoints, facilitate millions of conversations, and drive smarter decisions through data—connecting customers, content and conversations at the right digital moment.

## Excerpts from Forrester Report: 2017 Customer Service Trends

Forrester Research recently published a report: 2017 Customer Service Trends: Operations Become Smarter and More Strategic. The report advises brands on 10 key trends for 2017 that will influence and enhance the customer service experience; ultimately, helping to impact top-line revenue. The report details driving factors for why customer service organizations are getting smarter and more strategic.



Read the full report [here](#).

**“In today’s world, customers decide how customer-centric a company is. Good customer service should capture the fundamentals of a great experience: ease, effectiveness, and emotion.”**

– Forrester, 2017 Customer Service Trends

The top three takeaways of the report are:

- 📁 Customer service demands customer obsession. Deliver differentiated customer service experiences that align with customer expectations.
- 📁 Customer service becomes smarter. Empower customers to self-serve first, and use digital and automated processes to drive customer satisfaction.
- 📁 Customer service becomes more strategic. Use the right methods at the right time to build emotional bonds and strong relationships with customers.

Forrester outlines the 2017 customer service trends to watch, but how can brands update their strategies and activate their teams to execute on these trends?

At Lithium, we took this report one level deeper. We wanted to offer tangible next steps and the technology needed for brands to help them upgrade their customer service.

We asked our resident social customer service thought leader, [Dave Evans](#), to provide actionable tips and best practices based on Forrester’s top customer service trends.

#### FORRESTER TREND NO. 1:

### Companies extend and enhance self-service

★ **Lithium Best Practice:** Make it easier for customers to find answers themselves

Customers want answers to questions quickly and at first contact with a brand. Forrester found that 65% of US online adults say that valuing their time is the most important thing a company can do to provide them with good online customer service. (source: Forrester: *Transform The Contact Center For Customer Service Excellence*, May 1, 2017). This is a good, cost-effective trend for companies, but only if they make it easy for customers to find sufficient answers. One way companies can advance this trend is with an online community of crowd-sourced content. As Forrester says, "Customer service will continue to invest in structured knowledge management and leverage communities to extend the reach of curated content."

#### Technology should help you:

- 📄 Surface the correct answers based on web searches (i.e. SEO)
- 📄 Highlight questions that are being searched for
- 📄 Maintain a knowledgebase of quality content and accurate answers
- 📄 Foster and maintain a community of superfans who will help customers find answers and information

#### FORRESTER TREND NO. 2:

### Companies sustain automated customer conversations

★ **Lithium Best Practice:** Know when to use AI & bots (and when not to)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is here and brands need a strategic plan on how (and when) to execute. AI should absolutely be part of your strategic roadmap: customers expect it to answer questions such as: "Is my flight on time?" and "How do I reset my phone?" These questions can be answered in seconds, using AI and bots. On the other hand, questions like: "Why is my flight late?" and "What is a better phone for me?" are a long way from AI. Customers don't want ten more questions, nor do they want platitudes like: "Sometimes, life is complicated and we're here to help you!" They want someone who cares. Brands must know the difference, and make sure the hand-off is smooth.

#### Technology should help you:

- 📄 Always provide customers the option to speak to an agent
- 📄 Make it clear to customers whether they are speaking to a bot or a human agent
- 📄 Make handoffs seamless between agents and bots
- 📄 Track customer satisfaction metrics with interactions with bots and agents

FORRESTER TREND NO. 3:

## Companies explore new customer service labor models

★ **Lithium Best Practice:** Operationalize your social customer care

It's no longer just about a social media team. It's about meeting customers wherever, whenever they are as well as responding quickly with accurate, relevant information (often in real-time). This means integrating all your touchpoints, developing processes, and tapping into expertise across (and even outside of) your organization. You need the right technology that meets business objectives, but also easy-to-use technology that can be immediately adopted to operationalize social care.

### Technology should help you:

- 📁 Engage with customers via digital touchpoints such as social, chat, and SMS
- 📁 Leverage expertise and tap into experts across the company to get customers the right answer the first time
- 📁 Monitor customer experience metrics against your set service level goals in real-time (e.g. response time, NPS, CSAT)
- 📁 Understand agent productivity across all agents and teams
- 📁 Calculate optimal staffing of existing resources and hours of operation
- 📁 Easily add new agents on-demand without weeks of training in an environment where both in-house and outsourced agents can work together

FORRESTER TREND NO. 4:

## Robotic process automation guidance will standardize service delivery

★ **Lithium Best Practice:** Automate continuous process improvement with machine learning

While certain processes should be automated for efficiency, they should always get smarter. Once continuous learning systems recognize a pattern in the types of service issues coming in, for example, processes can be automatically adjusted to handle these situations. And when it comes to digital channels such as social, it's just as important to learn when messages are unactionable and focus your team on solving the right issues.

### Technology should help you:

- 📁 Identify patterns around common issues that occur and solutions
- 📁 Provide a feedback loop from your field support teams to your technology teams to feed the data that identifies those problems
- 📁 Ensure your agents are only handling truly actionable messages
- 📁 Identify and filter (or route) noise associated with digital channels

FORRESTER TREND NO. 5:

## Journey analytics equip companies to better support customer goals

★ **Lithium Best Practice:** Align customer experience measures across all channels

You must understand the interaction touchpoints at every step—and across—your customers' journey, no matter which channel they use to interact with you. While you should have tools that optimize interaction for each channel (i.e. phone, chat, social, email), it's critical that these tools provide consistent measures and are integrated into a central reporting system.

### Technology should help you:

- 📁 Track the sentiment conversion journey throughout each customer conversation
- 📁 Track customer experience metrics such as response time, CSAT, and NPS consistently across all channels
- 📁 Track the number of channels the customer had to interact with to get their issue resolved
- 📁 Integrate metrics into central CRMs and analytics systems

FORRESTER TREND NO. 6:

## Prescriptive advice powers offers, decisions, and connections

★ **Lithium Best Practice:** Use data from past customer interactions to improve future processes

Your customers interact with you in various ways across many channels. The data from those interactions is a treasure trove of information for machine learning technologies to recommend how to handle future interactions.

### Technology should help you:

- 📁 Surface suggested responses to customer questions, based on existing Q&As
- 📁 Route queries to the right agent based on content and customer data
- 📁 Understand which messages are actionable by your agents based on past agent interactions

FORRESTER TREND NO. 7:

## Field service becomes the face of your company

★ **Lithium Best Practice:** Always deliver a great experience

Field service is already the face of your company. It's delivered when it's turned on and it's instantly commoditized. But when it doesn't work, or when customers want something more that's when you connect. Ensure that field service, remote delivery, automated recovery processes...are absolutely perfect. If you have a big lever, this is it.

### Technology should help you:

- 📁 Track your service level agreements (SLA) against your customer experience goals
- 📁 Understand when and why you're not meeting your service level goals
- 📁 Understand how customers feel about the service you're providing
- 📁 Set up approval and audit workflows that allow you to track agent interactions with customers

FORRESTER TREND NO. 8:

## IoT insights transform business models

★ **Lithium Best Practice:** Personalize your connection to customers

Expectations arise from any experience so brands must use the customer insights they have (i.e. data) to customize that experience to stay ahead. The internet of things (IoT) and technology has made it easier for brands to leverage data to provide a better customer service experience. For example, phone apps can sense location and context, so brands should personalize that experience. If you're browsing the Home Depot app, the brand should know if you are at home, or in the store. If you call support from the app, and are in the store –the brand should direct you to a local store representative. If you're at home using the app to shop, the brand should send you to an internet sales representative. With fully integrated systems, you will be able to provide truly efficient and personalized service.

### Technology should help you:

- 📁 Integrate customer preferences and data into your customer support tools
- 📁 Use the customer information such as location, purchased products, personal preferences, etc., to get the customer to the right representative the first time

FORRESTER TREND NO. 9:

## Visual engagement strengthens the customer bond

★ **Lithium Best Practice:** Incorporate visuals into your digital engagement strategy

Tell someone and they might remember. Show them and they are much more likely to remember. When customers can see options and how they fit together they ask fewer questions, and they connect more deeply to your product or service. You win on two fronts: cost and loyalty.

### Technology should help you:

- 📎 Share images, animated gifs, and video through support interactions
- 📎 Efficiently handle high volumes to create more time for high-touch, human interactions
- 📎 Understand how sharing of visuals as part of interactions impacts the customer experience
- 📎 Publish curated content for proactive customer engagement (e.g. UGC of customers resolving common issues or an infographic of how to handle an upcoming software update)

FORRESTER TREND NO. 10:

## Emerging analytics technologies empower agents

★ **Lithium Best Practice:** Know that data is the answer

More than anything else, knowing specifically why, what, when, and what's trending, taking action, modifying the response of your delivery systems in real-time... is all data driven. Gut marketing worked when the error was +/- 50% (i.e., I can tell you that half of your advertising works, I just can't tell you which half), but those days are over. Margin points, or tenths of points, separate winners from losers. By using agent-specific dashboards that are aligned with your business outcomes, you can show your team the impact of what they are doing in real-time, as they do it. That feedback will drive them to new levels of performance.

### Technology should help you:

- 📎 Highlight trends and emotion or sentiment associated with those trends
- 📎 Identify customer conversations where the sentiment and/or emotion of the customer is trending downward
- 📎 Track agent performance data that identifies training gaps and properly incentivizes agents to provide better customer experiences

## What Social Customer Service Success Looks Like



T-Mobile®

T-Mobile leverages Lithium Social Media Management to support its social team's customer service efforts. Initial results are impressive with T-Mobile's social team responding an average of 16,500 times per day to customers, and achieving a lightning fast average response time of 3 minutes 23 seconds (industry average for brands is 1 hour 24 minutes).



ROGERS™

Rogers, a Lithium customer, worked with Facebook to become the first telecommunications provider in the world to offer customer support through Facebook Messenger. Their goal was to deliver a better experience for customers and saw a 72 percent increase in customer satisfaction in social media following the launch.



sky

Sky customers who use the Sky forum had an average of 1 min. 48 sec. shorter duration over 19k calls—that equates to over 570 hours. Contributions from the Sky superusers and members play a vital role in delivering great service cross-channel. With Lithium's help, Sky is constantly looking to deliver on their customer promise to 'Believe in Better'.

## What Next?

The future of customer service is social, and Lithium is here to help you engage your customers when and where they need you while reducing service cost and increasing customer satisfaction.

Learn more about:

LITHIUM SOCIAL MEDIA  
MANAGEMENT

TAKE A  
QUICK TOUR

# Lithium

The Lithium platform is the leading solution for digital customer care and engagement. Lithium offers Community, Social Media Management and Messaging to help Fortune 1000 companies listen, respond and act on digital conversations – creating deep customer relationships and fostering brand advocacy. With over 15 years of expertise, Lithium has a massive digital footprint of approximately 500 million digital interactions analyzed daily and 50 million digital interactions powered monthly. Learn more at [lithium.com](http://lithium.com), join our community at [community.lithium.com](http://community.lithium.com), or follow us on Twitter [@LithiumTech](https://twitter.com/LithiumTech). Lithium is based in San Francisco.

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