

A man with a beard and a young girl are sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop screen. The man is pointing at the screen and smiling, and the girl is also smiling. There is a calculator on the desk. The image is overlaid with a purple diagonal design element.

eGUIDE

The Importance of Agile Knowledge

eptica

An  Enhouse Company

At its heart, the concept of collecting and sharing knowledge is simple – it goes back to oral storytelling around the campfire and even to painting hunting scenes on a cave wall.

Essentially it is about two things- collecting information from those that have it and then making it available to those that need it, in ways that match their needs. Before reading and writing that was obviously through stories or drawings – but now it includes a huge variety of channels, from the web and email to chat and the telephone.

What is increasingly vital is shortening the time between the collection and delivery stages, without impacting accuracy or consistency. Making this happen requires flexible processes that can source, check and deliver the right information across the right channels to meet customer needs.

While the need for dynamic knowledge is not new, the current crisis makes it even more vital. Things are changing rapidly in a very fluid situation and consumers want the reassurance that accurate, up-to-date answers to their questions bring. Research for this whitepaper found that consumers are contacting brands 25% more during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and that 58% are seeking reassurance from brands. Delivering this reassurance requires knowledge to be:

- Consistent to build trust
- Available to access 24x7 on their channels of choice - 57% said they wanted to find information themselves via company websites



25%

Increase in consumers contacting brands during the pandemic

Agility is also required in how companies collect, share and update knowledge. According to Contact Babel 84% of UK contact centres currently have some agents working from home¹. This means that consistent, centralised knowledge has to be the backbone of operations, bringing remote workers together and giving them the resources they need to work successfully.

The current crisis accelerates existing consumer trends around knowledge- there is already a greater need to answer more complex consumer queries on more and more channels, particularly digital ones. 62% of consumers are contacting brands more or the same amount as five years ago – and 16% said they were getting in touch more than twice as much².

Knowledge must be comprehensive and delivered quickly- Eptica research found that 61% of consumers want an answer to an email in 2 hours and that 42% will leave a web chat after 5 minutes if they don't get their problem solved³. Breakdowns in providing answers come at a price – not only will forcing consumers to re-contact a company push up costs, 59% of those surveyed for this whitepaper said they'd remain loyal to companies that gave them accurate, trustworthy information.

Given the growing business importance of knowledge, this whitepaper explains how to successfully deliver agile knowledge in the current crisis and beyond.

84%
UK contact centres currently have some agents working from home

¹ Source: Contact Babel- The Inner Circle Guide to Contact Centre Remote Working Solutions

² Source: Eptica CX Automation Study ↴

³ Source: 2020 Eptica Digital CX Study ↴

THE BENEFITS OF KNOWLEDGE IN CURRENT TIMES

Dynamic, accurate knowledge is a vital part of how companies deal with any crisis, helping overcome both consumer and internal pain points.

GROWING CONSUMER NEEDS

We are in a fast-changing scenario that none of us have experienced before. Unsurprisingly consumers want reassurance from the companies and organisations that they deal with, and they want to trust that this information is up-to-date and consistent across different channels. They have more questions than before, across a wider range of subjects. Importantly they also want control and to be able to find answers themselves – 26% said they were visiting company websites more than before the crisis, against 13% that were calling or emailing organisations for answers. Companies must overcome these issues to build trust and future loyalty through consistent, up-to-date knowledge that is easily available across every channel.

CHANGING COMPANY REQUIREMENTS

Today companies are having to answer more questions than ever before. In previous Eptica research consumers said they were contacting companies on average nine times per month – leading to 463.5 million monthly contacts from UK adults. Our new research shows this has increased by 25%, meaning the total is now over 579 million. This has a major impact on costs on channels such as email, social media and phone – Contact Babel research¹ found that answering a single call costs £4.53 and an email £3.89.

1. Source: Contact Babel The UK Contact Centre Decision-Maker's Guide 2019-20

At the same time knowledge is changing more rapidly than ever before. Companies need to be able to shorten the process between creating new knowledge and sharing it consistently across the business and with consumers. Currently companies can feel they are continually playing catch-up – for example, 41% of consumers said that information on company websites isn't as up to date as advice published in the media.

Companies also face enormous organisational challenges. Staff are working remotely and many may be self-isolating, reducing capacity. Agents cannot simply ask a neighbouring colleague for an answer or advice in the same way as when they were all in the same room. Consequently companies need to be even more efficient and to do more with less. Agents have to be empowered with the right knowledge – especially as many might be in unfamiliar roles, requiring lots of additional information to do their jobs. Concerns and worries aren't limited to consumers – staff themselves want to know what is going on in order to be reassured, focused and motivated.

All of these factors demonstrate the need for centralised knowledge that can be:

- Shared externally with customers, consumers and other stakeholders
- Shared with agents answering queries
- Shared internally with teams/across the company

This knowledge needs to be simple and fast to update and delivered consistently across channels – in the next section we'll outline best practice for achieving this.

BEST PRACTICE FOR COMPANIES

Embracing a more dynamic approach to creating, sharing and updating knowledge is key for every business, not just during current conditions but if they want to meet rising customer expectations in the future. Focusing on these five key best practice areas will underpin a strategy for success.

1. SHORTEN THE TIME BETWEEN CREATION AND PUBLICATION

Brands are seeing a 25% increase in consumer queries during COVID-19, alongside a 26% growth in traffic to their websites from people looking for information. Up-to-date and accurate knowledge is central to meeting consumer needs, delivering the reassurance that they require. However at the same time the production and sharing of knowledge has become more difficult – policies, procedures and processes are changing rapidly in line with new regulations and ways of operating, while staff are now working from home rather than in the same office.

In these circumstances companies need to make it easy to collect and update knowledge, putting in place more flexible processes that match the needs of consumers and staff. Start by empowering those with the knowledge (frontline staff and customers) to make it easy for them to contribute, such as by giving ratings on articles and feedback on when information is out of date. Go deeper by analyzing queries submitted on digital channels and using this Voice of the Customer feedback to spot any gaps in your knowledge that need to be filled.

2. DELIVER IT WHERE IT IS NEEDED

Consumers require the reassurance of accessing knowledge themselves, on their channels of choice. 57% said they wanted to find information themselves without having to contact a company for example, while 48% said they were using digital channels more than before the crisis to get answers to their queries.

Answers need to be available across all channels, and must be consistent – yet 43% of consumers complained that information didn't match between different channels. The only way to manage fast-changing knowledge and ensure it is both consistent and available is through a centralised, intelligent knowledge base. This is easier and more efficient to administer (especially useful in current times with less resources available), and can be hosted in the cloud to ensure flexibility and seamless access.



43%

*Complained that information
didn't match between
different channels*

3. EXPLORE NEW WAYS OF DELIVERING KNOWLEDGE

Across every industry, the crisis is changing ways of working, and company customer service teams have seen this with many now based remotely at home. It impacts other parts of the business too- for example, social distancing makes it difficult for engineers to safely carry out repairs to consumer goods in people's houses.

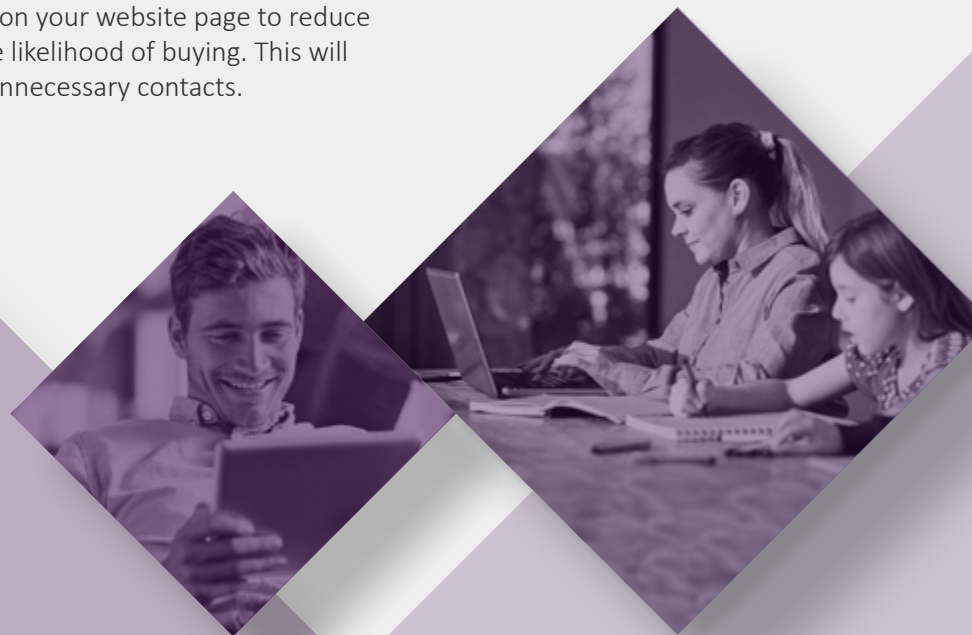
Delivering knowledge in new ways can help customers to help themselves. Companies should look at creating and sharing 'how to' videos that show consumers how to fix common issues or instal products for example.

Consumers also want a seamless experience, so embed relevant content and knowledge into the customer journey at the right point, avoiding the need for consumers to ask questions at all. For example, if there are normally queries at a particular stage of buying a product or service, include the relevant answers on your website page to reduce customer effort/calls and increase the likelihood of buying. This will improve the experience and reduce unnecessary contacts.

4. SHARE KNOWLEDGE INTERNALLY

Multiple studies have shown that good communication is at the heart of motivating employees and keeping them up to date during the current crisis, and many CEOs are dedicating their time to communicating regularly with staff and customers. Knowledge is a key part of underpinning this communication- and often customer service teams have the most detailed repository of information within a company.

Look at how you can give everyone within your organisation (and your partners) access to your knowledge, whether they work in customer service or not. As well as via the web, put it at people's fingertips- inject your knowledge into the apps and business processes that staff use everyday. This ensures consistent messaging and reassurance to the entire company.



5. ADAPT YOUR SERVICE TO CHANGING NEEDS

Over the past few years customer needs have been evolving rapidly – and the crisis accelerates this trend. That means your service and the information you provide needs to change equally quickly.

How can you be sure you are meeting consumer needs? In the past researching customer preferences involved getting them to fill in long, often standardised surveys to give feedback – this is counterproductive in the current situation where consumers are unlikely to have the time or inclination to complete ‘business as usual’ questionnaires.

Instead, focus your efforts on understanding which knowledge is requested most, such as by using AI and text analytics to analyze digital communications. Have you got answers in these areas? If not, update your knowledge and use this to improve the customer journey and the overall service you deliver.



MONTBLANC – EMPOWERING CUSTOMERS WITH INTERACTIVE KNOWLEDGE

Montblanc International is a world-renowned manufacturer of meticulously crafted luxury items ranging from writing implements to watches and jewellery. The service provided by Montblanc is an integral part of the experience for customers and is delivered by a skilled team of ambassadors.

Every day they assist customers by telephone and email, helping with queries such as choosing a personalised graduation gift or providing advice on servicing and repairing a treasured heirloom writing instrument or watch.



64%

*Drop in questions
submitted via webforms*

FACING A GROWING VOLUME OF ROUTINE QUERIES

Montblanc saw that it was receiving an increasing number of repetitive customer questions, such as around obtaining refills for a particular pen. This put pressure on time and resources, potentially diverting efforts from higher-value interactions and meaning customers spent additional, unnecessary time calling or emailing.

To address this, Montblanc looked to introduce a new, interactive self-service capability on its multiple language websites for Europe and the United States to give consumers the ability to quickly find answers to routine queries.

Working with Eptica, part of Enghouse Interactive, it was able to deliver multi-language support through an intelligent knowledge base. Eptica's solution, which was delivered within six weeks, uses linguistic technology to match customer questions with fast, accurate answers.

DELIVERING RESULTS THAT REINFORCE THE BRAND EXPERIENCE

The results have been impressive, including a 64% drop in questions submitted via webforms, achieving the aims of empowering customers and freeing up ambassador time to spend more time on complex enquiries, enabling them to deliver the personalised, handcrafted experience that is at the heart of the Montblanc brand.

Click here to access the full [case study](#) on Montblanc.



CONCLUSION

The current situation is accelerating existing trends about the importance of knowledge. Consumers are rightly demanding the reassurance of being able to access up-to-date information, combined with greater control over the channels they use to find it themselves. Companies are being forced into new ways of working that rely on knowledge to bring teams and processes together, while still improving efficiency and productivity.

When it comes to knowledge, there are three key imperatives for businesses:

- Reducing the time between knowledge creation and distribution
- Delivering reassurance and answers to consumers on their channel of choice
- Learning from customers and continually updating and changing information based on the feedback they provide

Overcoming these challenges has never been more vital to customer satisfaction and bottom line revenues. Given that over half (59%) of consumers say they'll be loyal to companies that deliver accurate, trustworthy information – every business needs to embrace agile knowledge if they are to thrive now and the future. Following the best practice advice in this whitepaper will deliver ongoing benefits, both internally and externally, to every business.

METHODOLOGY

To better understand current consumer requirements around knowledge within customer service, 1,000 UK consumers were surveyed in May 2020.



ABOUT EPTICA & ENGHOUSE INTERACTIVE

Eptica specialises in intelligent platforms that enable companies to place digital customer engagement at the heart of their strategy, driving excellent customer experience and deeper insight to create value across all operations.

Specialising in Natural Language Processing (NLP), Eptica makes the best use of AI and cognitive technologies for CX to help build trust between people and organisations:



AUTOMATED CONVERSATIONS

Help your customers help themselves: automate simple queries and free up agents to handle more complex interactions.



AUGMENTED AGENTS

Bring together technology and human emotional intelligence to deliver the most relevant and personalised responses.



CUSTOMER INTELLIGENCE

Convert digital conversations into actionable insights that advance CX and add value to your business.

eptica

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Eptica is part of Enghouse Interactive, a leading global provider of contact centre software and service solutions that deliver enhanced customer service and transform the contact centre from a cost centre into a powerful growth engine, including:



OMNI-CHANNEL COMMUNICATIONS

Shift seamlessly between multiple customer interactions via audio, video, email, SMS, mobile, web chat and social media channels, all captured and archived in one place, without losing any data or conversation flow.



SELF-SERVICE, AI & BOTS

IVR, chatbots, enhanced consoles, knowledge bases, portals, voice biometrics and authentication ensure compliance while enhancing the customer experience.



CALL RECORDING & QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Call Recording (always-on & on-demand, multi-site) and screen recording modules, full indexing for quick omni-channel data searching, agent evaluation and training tools.



INTEGRATIONS

Integrates Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Customer Telephony Interaction (CTI) and third-party applications, so they can communicate and interact.



ATTENDANT CONSOLE

Industry-leading attendant call routing and processing functionality that simplifies complex call flow management.



REAL-TIME VIDEO INTERACTION PLATFORM

Beyond video conferencing, our platform delivers industry-leading performance at the extreme ends of the quality spectrum for telehealth, video banking, workforce collaboration, customer engagement, and more.