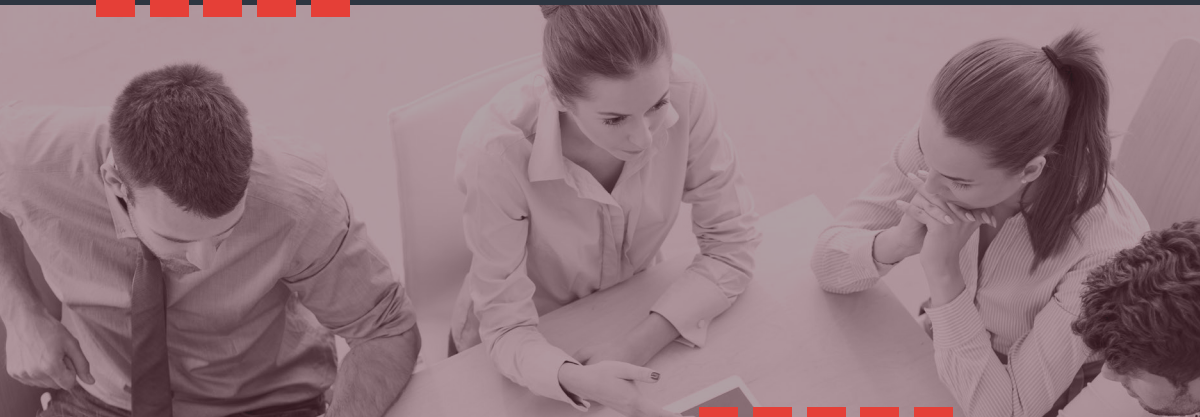




How should customer support interact with sales, product, and marketing teams?



A Conectys made Whitepaper



WHAT ARE THE CORE FUNCTIONAL AREAS OF A BUSINESS?

The short answer is: every section of a business is business-critical in its own respect. But as the modern economy has evolved towards [The Fourth Industrial Revolution](#), a lot of decision-makers spend a good portion of their time focused on these areas:

- **Customer support/experience:** “The front lines” of the business.
- **Product:** What the business is offering.
- **Marketing:** How those offerings are being presented to new audiences.
- **Sales:** How those audiences are becoming customers.

This begs a logical question: what is the ideal intersection of customer experience and the other three functions?

Conectys has, as of 2020, 16 years of experience with customer experience outsourcing. Within that experience, we’ve done significant program development aimed at both cost efficiencies and uncovering unrealized value for rapid-scale businesses. Our work with clients across multiple industries colors our perspective on how Product, Marketing and Sales can improve performance and gain new insights.

And here’s the essential argument: customer experience is the fulcrum point for all the rest of it. Many organizations still don’t lead with customer experience; some honestly still view it as a cost center and little more. But it can be tremendously powerful when you’re trying to scale a business properly. Let’s investigate.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND PRODUCT

Product drives revenue. Iterations of product or service are new revenue streams. So how do you improve your product over time?

You need to listen to your customers and prospects on everything: features, price points, release schedules, interaction with other products, availability, and more. That part you already knew.

Now, silos provide a lot of solace to the human brain because it’s a cluster of people with similar backgrounds and similar functional expertise areas, and everyone is beholden to the same set of bosses and processes. All that is comforting, so much so that Machiavelli actually predicted the [existence of business silos back in 1513](#).

But product development is a case against silos in many respects. Because how do companies tend to get this information about what needs to happen going forward with their core products and services? They house it in product marketing, who rolls out a series of surveys, emails, ad campaigns, targeted social media, etc. They get some intel, of course. And some of it is golden!

But customer experience? Those people are talking to customers every single minute of every single day. Their knowledge and context goes well beyond surveys and email blasts.

This is where product and customer experience agents have to work together. It’s

absolutely essential to grow the product/service line correctly. Silos should not exist between those two worlds.



We talk in our own marketing materials about “co-creating” or “co-strategizing” with our clients. It can seem like marketing-speak from afar, for sure. But it’s completely true! Often, a company brings us in for customer experience or content moderation work, but we regularly interact with product, sales, and marketing teams. Daily/weekly. We tell them what we’ve seen, observed, and captured. It makes their goals and efforts more achievable and adds value to the process they didn’t set out to create.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND MARKETING

Think of a service company for a second. Services are intangible and cannot be physically stored, unlike a conventional product.

How do you drive “brand equity” around intangible assets?

One of the only ways is through frontline customer experience agents. If those agents are well-trained and fully understand the brand they’re working with, they drive brand equity along two fronts:

-  Physical: Service evidence
-  Brand Positioning: Quality, cost, service guarantees, and more

If a marketing team is the steward of the brand, especially in a services company, the frontline customer experience agents constitute that brand to most people who interact with the company. Think of customer success metrics like first call resolution. If you have one bad call with a company, could that alter your perception of the company’s brand for a long time? Absolutely. It happens every day around the world. That’s why first call resolution and other customer satisfaction metrics are so important to decision-makers. One seemingly tiny interaction with a frontline agent can change brand perception in 10 minutes or less.

That’s why marketing needs to constantly involve front-line customer experience, educating them on the brand, new products/services, new positioning, and more. Then the relationship needs to go back the other way: agents tell marketing teams what people are asking about, responding to, wanting more of, viewing the brand as, etc. Marketing teams can take this information and lean into it for future campaigns. We’ve helped marketing teams develop robust email campaigns and even the copy language for targeted ads based on what terms customers use to describe the value of the service.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND SALES

Here is the most logical way to think about this: if you don’t know how current customers are responding to your products and services (information that the front-line support agents have), how would you know how to sell to prospects?

Sales is driven by information, relationships, and cost efficiencies. Customer experience teams provide the ability for all three. They have info on existing customers and their perceptions of what you already do. They have relationships with those customers, and they inherently provide cost efficiencies.

On the relationship front: one under-utilized aspect of front-line agents is cross-selling and upselling. It requires training on the brand and price points and offers, yes. But if an agent has an existing customer on the line, and the customer needs XYZ business-critical service, the front-line agent should be empowered to make that cross-sell. It doesn't need to go back through sales, necessarily.

And here's where the sales-to-customer-experience silos need to die. If sales educates and contextualizes the process for agents, and agents provide customer intel and concerns back to sales, everyone wins and the business grows.

We've done weekly check-ins with sales teams for years in some client engagements to make sure they know the features, benefits, pricing structure, and core concepts that resonate with existing customers – because the same constructs resonate with prospects, and that makes their close rates higher.

THIS LOOKS DIFFERENT IN EVERY COMPANY

It's a function of so many things, from size of company to geography to attitudes and perceptions of decision-makers to complexity of product and vendor relationships, and much more. There are always seemingly-logical impediments to bringing down silos between the front lines and functional areas such as product, marketing, and sales.

But do your best to bring them down. Your clients and prospects don't care or think in terms of what silos you have or who is "supposed" to address their need/issue/concern - they just want it solved, or better yet, never exist in the first place. We speak often of being "data-driven" these days. Some companies are; some are not. But to even begin being "data-driven," you need to capture the vast amounts of information that come into a company every day. Most of that information comes in via the front lines. As such, the customer experience agents need to be a part of your strategy for all departments.

Now, internally, the involvement of the front lines in broader product strategy, sales scripts, marketing campaigns, etc. is actually very hard to achieve -- because there is a preconceived way of getting work done, existing personalities, existing reporting structures, existing urgent deliverables, etc.

If you've been operating in functional silos for years and data has not crossed those silos, it can be hard to get there. Very hard, often.

But when you bring in an external partner, who lacks the context and internal politics and has done this data-crossing work between customer experience and other areas before, it goes a lot smoother. That partner needs to be looking beyond the initial impetus for the project and be thinking about ways to add value across multiple aspects of the business as a result of their work. You want to bring in someone who cares about the quality of the work and the protection of the brand. When you do that, you can start to move the front line from "cost center" to "profit center."

Now, obviously one way that companies deal with these complexities is through outsourcing, and that's where we reside. We meticulously track CSAT and NPS metrics, and we co-create programs with our clients to make sure front-line information is reaching core teams like product. That's how we work, because we know you don't need another order-taker to micromanage. You need information and context that will drive revenue.

If you'd like to discuss these ideas more, contact us!



Contact us at sales@conectys.com

Or learn more from our [Blog](#).