Q&A: Why Customers Won’t Take Your Call

Businesses are finding it harder than ever to contact customers through outbound calling, and it’s hurting both customers and businesses. To figure out why this is happening and what can be done about it, Neustar commissioned Forrester to evaluate the current state of outbound calling. Our study revealed important insights about the causes and solutions to why customers aren’t picking up the phone. Here are some of the questions answered by our report:

1. Is outbound calling still relevant with consumers moving to more self-service and digital interactions?

Despite the rise of self-service options and increased popularity of digital touchpoints with consumers, outbound calling remains an essential customer service capability. Our survey respondents rank the voice channel as the most important for meeting customer service goals, with 63% saying it is critical — almost double that of email.

While self-service grows in popularity as an initial point of contact, outbound calling remains as relevant as ever because it is used to initiate and continue high-priority customer interactions. These interactions are typically escalation points for complex issues (callbacks from self-service or web interactions, information verification, etc.) or delivery mechanisms for important and desired information (notifications, collections, appointment reminders, delivery information, etc.). In all cases, these outbound calls provide moments to connect with customers and nurture relationships.

2. If these are high-priority calls, why aren’t consumers answering them?

Americans saw a 47% increase in robocalls and spam calling in 2018 over 2017. This proliferation has had two major consequences for outbound calls:

1. The FCC and wireless carriers are taking aggressive anti-robocalling actions, which is causing legitimate outbound calls to be blocked as spam.

Summary of results from the Neustar-commissioned Thought Leadership Study, “Why Customers Won’t Take Your Call”

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To achieve these objectives, Forrester conducted an online survey with 319 business and technology decision makers responsible for outbound call experiences at financial services, travel and hospitality, retail/eCommerce, collections, telecommunications, and energy and utilities firms in the US.
2. Customer trust in outbound calls has eroded. Sixty-four percent of respondents surveyed say customers are not answering calls from unknown numbers because of the risk of threats and annoyances, like fraud (50%), call spoofing (48%), and robocalls (35%).

Close to half of respondents say that their firms do not have the right strategy for contacting customers — calling too often and creating call fatigue. The bottom line: Important calls are not getting picked up, hurting both companies and their customers.

3 How has anti-robocall legislation affected the call experience?

To deal with the rise in robocalls, many carriers are implementing free call-blocking services and developing applications to combat spam. As these tools are rolled out, legitimate calls are increasingly being blocked. Inaccurate call blocking and spam tagging happen as call number reputation and calling behavior are analyzed by call management systems. In many cases, businesses are not even aware that their outbound calls are being blocked or tagged as spam. To prevent this from happening, businesses can register their outbound calling numbers as verified numbers across the calling ecosystem of carriers and app providers, either independently with each individual carrier/provider or through an independent third-party with preexisting carrier relationships.

4 What is the cost of missed calls for consumers and for businesses?

When customers cannot get important information or contact a company over a channel of their preference, both businesses and consumers pay the price. Nearly half of surveyed respondents say that outbound call challenges have led to decreased customer satisfaction at their companies, and almost 40% say they have lost customers. These customer challenges impact the top and bottom lines for businesses: 48% of firms experienced increased operational costs, 43% lost productivity, and 37% lost revenue as a result of customers not receiving timely outbound messages.
5 What can businesses do to improve outbound call center contact rates?

There are several important steps businesses need to take to improve outbound call contact rates. First, firms need to ensure they have up-to-date contact information for their customers to avoid compliance risks, which survey respondents indicated was the most critical priority to address. Second, businesses need to supplement current contact information with phone behavior intelligence about their customers — including the best day and time to reach them and best number to call. Third, firms need to make sure their calls are not being mislabeled as spam and that accurate caller information is displayed for their outbound calls. Finally, firms should use this new intelligence to improve their agent scheduling, making sure that agents are contacting at the right times, and minimizing risk of call fatigue. The right technology provider is essential to achieving these goals: Two-thirds of survey respondents say technology vendors are important to solving outbound calling challenges.

6 What is a trusted call solution? How does it improve the outbound calling experience?

A trusted call solution improves right-party contact rate by displaying accurate information on customer data and preferences; providing protection from call threats like fraud, call spoofing, and robocalls; and identifying who is calling and the call purpose. The right trusted call solution will help assure customers of who is calling, so they can decide to pick up. It will also help protect customers from fraud and spam and will provide companies with up-to-date data and intelligence so that companies can develop better outreach strategies. Adoption of trusted call solutions is currently limited (30%). An additional 40% of respondents say adoption is in their road map for the next 12 months.

7 What are the benefits of a trusted call solution?

Respondents see trusted call solutions leading to a myriad of benefits for adopters. Top expected benefits include: improved customer experience (69%) and retention (61%), improved answer rates (64%), improved operational efficiencies (50%), and increased revenue (55%). Early adopters are reporting higher than expected revenue and operational benefits, but slightly lower customer experience benefits. This is expected. The value of these solutions is proven early on with operational gains. As customers receive more of the calls they want, and fewer of those they don’t, customer experience gains will come.
ENDNOTES


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