CO-BROWSING: GUIDE CUSTOMERS TO GROW YOUR OWN SUCCESS

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Customer service is evolving. As buyers demand more timely and personalized service, businesses are looking for ways to provide top-notch customer experiences. This report highlights the business benefits of using co-browsing as a key technology enabler, and outlines three important steps that organizations should follow to maximize the performance with this capability.

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Companies are always looking for cost-effective ways to better serve customers and grow revenue. Working hand-in-hand with customers through co-browsing an application or website addresses this need.

This is the era of the empowered customer. Buyers can use a wealth of devices and channels to educate themselves on different products / services and make informed purchase and loyalty decisions. Businesses are aware of this change. Indeed, Aberdeen’s March 2014 State of the CEM Market 2014: It’s All About Better Use of Customer Data study shows that an average organization uses nine channels to address this multi-channel demand.

The changes that empowered customers bring to buyer / seller interactions are not restricted to the use of multiple channels, however. It also includes self-service. Specifically, customers don’t want to spend unnecessary time and effort navigating an interactive voice response (IVR) system, verifying their account and explaining their issue to a contact center agent. When the

When used effectively, co-browsing paves the way to greater revenue, reduced costs, and happy customers.
problem is simple, they prefer to use self-service to address their own issues. To this point, Aberdeen’s March 2014 Optimizing the Self-Service Experience: Help Customers Help Themselves study shows that approximately one out of two firms (48%) provide clients with self-service capabilities. However, what happens if the customer struggles when trying to solve an issue? For companies without co-browsing (see sidebar) this means that the client needs to expend additional effort to contact the business via another channel (e.g. phone or email), explain the issue, and interact with a contact center agent for resolution. Use of co-browsing reduces – and often eliminates – this challenge by connecting the client with a relevant agent to jointly navigate an application to answer questions and resolve any issues. The result: companies using co-browsing enjoy greater revenue, reduced costs and happy clients, compared to non-users (see Table 1).

Table I: Co-Browsing Yields Superior Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year-Over-Year Performance Improvements (n=252)</th>
<th>Co-Browsing Users</th>
<th>Non-Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual company revenue</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of positive mentions through social media channels</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from customer referrals</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer win-back rate</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent utilization rate</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>-0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average improvement in revenue per customer contact</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>-1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cost savings realized by the use of co-browsing are driven by the reduced need to expand time and resources to address repeat customer needs and provide rapid resolution. This helps firms improve agent utilization, hence they incur less spend on service delivery. Also, the ability to deliver seamless resolution via co-browsing helps firms improve customer satisfaction – validated by improvements in metrics such as positive social

Definition: Co-browsing

For the purposes of this research, “co-browsing” refers to the ability to have a service provider and customer jointly navigate an application (e.g., web page, digital document or mobile application) on a real-time basis through the web. Both the customer and the agent can access the content through numerous modalities, including desktops, tablets and smart phones.

In addition to a joint view of the same applications, the parties involved in the co-browsing session can also interact with one another through numerous communication mediums such as voice and video using functionalities such as “click-to-call” or “click-to-view.”

While screen share is often a part of the capabilities related to co-browsing, it only allows one party to command control of the application, whereas co-browsing enables both parties (customer service representative and client) to command control.
media mentions and revenue from customer referrals. The ultimate benefit, however, is that co-browsing provides companies with deeper insight into client problems and offers cross-sell and up-sell opportunities, which organizations can train contact center agents on how to spot and present them to the buyer. The fact that co-browsing users outperform non-users by 73% in year-over-year growth of annual company revenue confirms this opportunity for revenue growth.

It's important to note that the performance findings shown above are dependent not only on technology adoption, but also on usage. Companies must ensure that they are using certain best practices to maximize their co-browsing results. These activities are highlighted in detail within Aberdeen’s December 2013 Co-Browsing in Customer Service: The Path to Just-in-Time Customer Engagement study. We recommend that companies adopt the below activities to incorporate the best practices that are highlighted in the report. Doing so will help organizations maximize their potential returns from their co-browsing spend.

**Three Activities to Maximize Co-Browsing Program Results**

1. **Closely monitor trends influencing customer behavior and reflect them within your co-browsing activities.** Buyer preferences evolve rapidly and so must customer service. As customers start using new technology tools and channels, companies must ensure that contact center agents are well-trained in interacting with clients through these channels. However, just as importantly, these agents must know how to address the changing needs of buyers. For example, if a user of a software program was having issues with a newly added functionality, the contact center agent of the software provider must be well-trained about this capability and ready to address related issues when co-browsing with the customer.
It's important to remember that while the channels that customers might use to interact with your business might change, the issues that they're looking to address remain consistent. Therefore, your co-browsing activities must support client interactions through their channels of preference and evolve in tandem with the changes in their needs and wants. In other words, as buyers add new channels or devices to their preferred methods of interaction, you should closely monitor these changes and incorporate them within your co-browsing activities to remain a truly customer-centric organization.

2. **Empower agents with the right tools to elevate benefits of co-browsing to new heights.** Tracking and addressing changing customer needs is a step in the right direction to make co-browsing a success. However, it needs to be complemented by contact center agents who are enabled with the right tools to make each interaction a success. As noted earlier, when faced with a rather simple issue, most customers would prefer addressing it themselves via self-service. Therefore, a co-browsing interaction is likely to take place when a client is faced with a rather complex issue and / or needs guidance when self-serving (or purchasing a product). In such instances, it's imperative that agents have the right tools and knowledge to handle the customer issue. To address the latter need, we recommend that companies use a skills-based routing system to ensure that the right agent is connected to the right customer. As for the former, helping a user with a complex issue, the use of co-browsing provides agents with the right technology tool to observe customers' issues firsthand and provide swift resolution without the need to guide the client through numerous steps. This explains why co-browsing users enjoy greater performance in metrics such as agent utilization and positive word-of-mouth across social media, compared to non-users of the technology.
Companies looking to enjoy maximum gains through co-browsing complement its use with technology tools such as business intelligence and desktop analytics. These tools help in tracking and measuring agent performance when handling customer needs. Findings revealed through the use of these tools are crucial to design personalized training programs for each agent as well as point to any inefficiencies in the systems and processes that agents use to handle customer needs.

3. **Ensure that your co-browsing activities minimize customer effort but maximize satisfaction.** You’ve made sure that your co-browsing activities evolve with changing customer preferences and that your agents are enabled with the right technology tools to deliver timely and personalized service. What’s next? We recommend that you build and manage a closed-loop customer feedback and performance management system. This means regularly tracking and measuring how co-browsing impacts key metrics such as customer satisfaction and customer effort. This data should be captured for each co-browsing interaction and should then be analyzed by different criteria (e.g. nature of customer issue, contact center agent and interaction channel) to reveal trends and correlations on what generates a positive customer experience, entailing minimal effort by the client. Findings from this process are invaluable as it helps firms build a sustainable model for delighting buyers and enhancing the financial health of the business.

**Use customer effort and satisfaction as yardsticks to understand how far co-browsing takes your business in meeting the needs of the empowered customer.**
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