



What's Trending in Customer Communications?

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These are exciting times. We're living in a world where consumers are more connected than they have ever been. Before you can finish dialing a phone number, today's consumer can visit a company website, check out online reviews, and like or unlike a brand using social media¹. With this in mind, here are four trends we are seeing for the coming year in connecting with the customer:

Companies Will Strive to Better Manage the Customer Experience

Today's customers are in the driver's seat. They aren't afraid to switch to a competitor, and they aren't afraid to voice their thoughts on social media—positive or negative. This presents a big challenge for companies seeking to sustain customer loyalty. Now more than ever, we must provide an engaging, accommodating, and hassle-free customer experience. If you didn't believe that retaining your existing customers is more cost effective than bringing in new ones, consider this: Gartner reported in 2014 that digital marketers were spending nearly as much in marketing dollars to retain their customers as they were to bring on new ones.² Cross-channel customer engagement will be key going forward. Customers are coming to us through a variety of channels. We need to be sure we're ready to greet them at the door—wherever that door may be.

Customers Will Continue Their Quest for Self-Service Options

Today's on-the-go customer is exactly that—on the go. That's why it will be vital to continue to offer and develop self-service features for your DIY customers who want to bypass the customer service route. Whether it's viewing a bill, paying it online or in person, or getting answers to frequently asked questions, our customers will expect and appreciate the ability to be able to access their information any time, anywhere. Especially when, by the year 2020, it's estimated that 85 percent of consumers will manage their business relationships without actually speaking with a person³.

It's All About Mobile

Today, people have the world in the palm of their hands. According to a report by Pew Research Center, in January 2014, 90

percent of adults owned a mobile phone and 58 percent owned a smartphone.⁴ People are using their phones for a lot more than simply making a phone call. In fact, recent research tells us that 67 percent of online households have made a bill payment using their mobile device⁵. And that number is only going to rise as more people get even more comfortable making mobile payments. The ease of payment and the ability to make a payment anytime, anywhere are very appealing. So it'll be incumbent upon each of us to continue making the ability to pay a bill on a mobile device as easy as possible.

Paper Will Still be Relevant and More Colorful than Ever

There's no question that society is moving in a paperless direction. However many consumers still want to receive their bills in the mail—some for record-keeping purposes, some as a reminder to pay the bill and some for security reasons.⁶ That's not to say that they're paying those bills by mail. More and more consumers that prefer to receive bills by mail are paying their bills online⁷. Furthermore, recent studies indicate that we will see growth in transactional document printing in the next few years⁸. And, with the costs for full-color printing dropping, these transactional documents can and should be more colorful and attractive, making them more memorable.

The times may be changing, but as long as we make sure we're changing with them, we're headed in the right direction.

Sources:

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4. Steps to Break Down Siloed Communications, 2014.
5. Pew Research Center, 2014.
6. The Future of Multi-channel Transactional Communications in the U.S., InfoTrends, 2013.
7. The Household Diary Study: Mail Use & Attitudes in FY2013, U.S. Postal Service, May 2014.
8. Transactional Printing in North America: A Vibrant & Important Market, Interquest, 2015.

