

Lucidworks

Build customer loyalty in the moment

Create deeply connected experiences for every customer by understanding intent in real time.



Giving your customers amazing service and support can be expensive and time-consuming. But it can also mean the difference between building loyalty and seeing that monthly churn metric start to, well,... churn.

Customers don't want to wait in a phone queue. They don't want to wait in a chat queue. They don't want to wait in a ticket queue. They simply don't want to wait.

And COVID-19 hasn't helped. The pandemic put call centers into overdrive as everyone was trapped at home trying to get the various devices and services that run their lives to work properly. Tech giant Neustar, which services several hundred banking clients, saw a 21.5% increase in calls across all banks in late February 2020, with average wait times of more than three hours. As the pandemic shutdown settled in, analyst firm Gartner reported that clients and vendors saw customer support volume go from 4% to more than 1,000%. And that's with an industry average cost of \$11 for each and every time a customer contacted a support agent.

Impatient customers and explosive growth can be a formula for terrible experiences. This was true even before customers were added to "The Phone Queue of the Damned." The systems that customers use don't know who they are, don't know what products they've bought, and don't know their history or their past interactions. Half the time, customers aren't even sure where to get support — or they have to go to multiple sites and places.

It's as personalized as a white paper plate.

But it could be different. Advances in AI and machine learning (ML) technologies are giving us the ability to understand user intent and create deeply connected experiences for every customer. Understanding intent in real time enables companies to deliver personalized interactions in the moment. This delivers a highly connected, relevant experience to each customer. Most leaders in supporting organizations surveyed said they understand this is the future, but only 34% said they are very good at capturing, measuring, evaluating, and taking action on customer intent. Less than half say they can do it in real time using search data.

Let's tackle the three top trends that can help you bring intention into your customer service organization:

Service leaders estimate that **20% to 40%** of their current live volume could easily be resolved through self-service.

70% of customers try self-service to resolve their issues, but only **9%** of those interactions stay contained in the self-service channel.

Put self-serve front and center.

Self-serve should be the primary entry point for all of your customer service engagements. Leading with self-serve shows that you value the customer's time by giving them a way to quickly and conveniently access the answers they need without waiting. It can also surface help and assistance before a customer even asks for it. Plus, personalizing the self-serve experience is much easier to do than going right to a human agent that has to interpret customer data. Most customers don't want to wait to "talk to a real person." They just want an article or video on how to fix what's not working and move on with their lives.

What's going on here?

Many companies just toss everyone into a support portal and declare, "Done and done!" And customers are left to sink or swim (probably sink) in a sea of knowledge-base articles and content that has absolutely nothing to do with the problem they are having. Without the budget and resources to bring in more advanced technologies, the self-service system gets stuck.

Brands spend a ton of time, resources, and money on the buyer's journey but then skimp on what happens after the purchase. The search-and-browse experience after the purchase is just as important as the one before. Today's forward-thinking organizations are taking the same sharp focus they've had on customer experience for the pre-sale, shopping cart, and purchase stages of the customer journey and applying it to the post-sale — think concierge, think personalized self-service portals, think... the future.

Self-service portals are getting more intuitive and easier to understand and use across any device. Call centers are being outfitted with dashboards to give each agent a complete view of the customer. These dashboards are also personalized to the agents themselves, so key performance indicators include individual feedback. This can then be used to optimize customer experience and self-service overall. The agile feedback loop brought into the contact center.

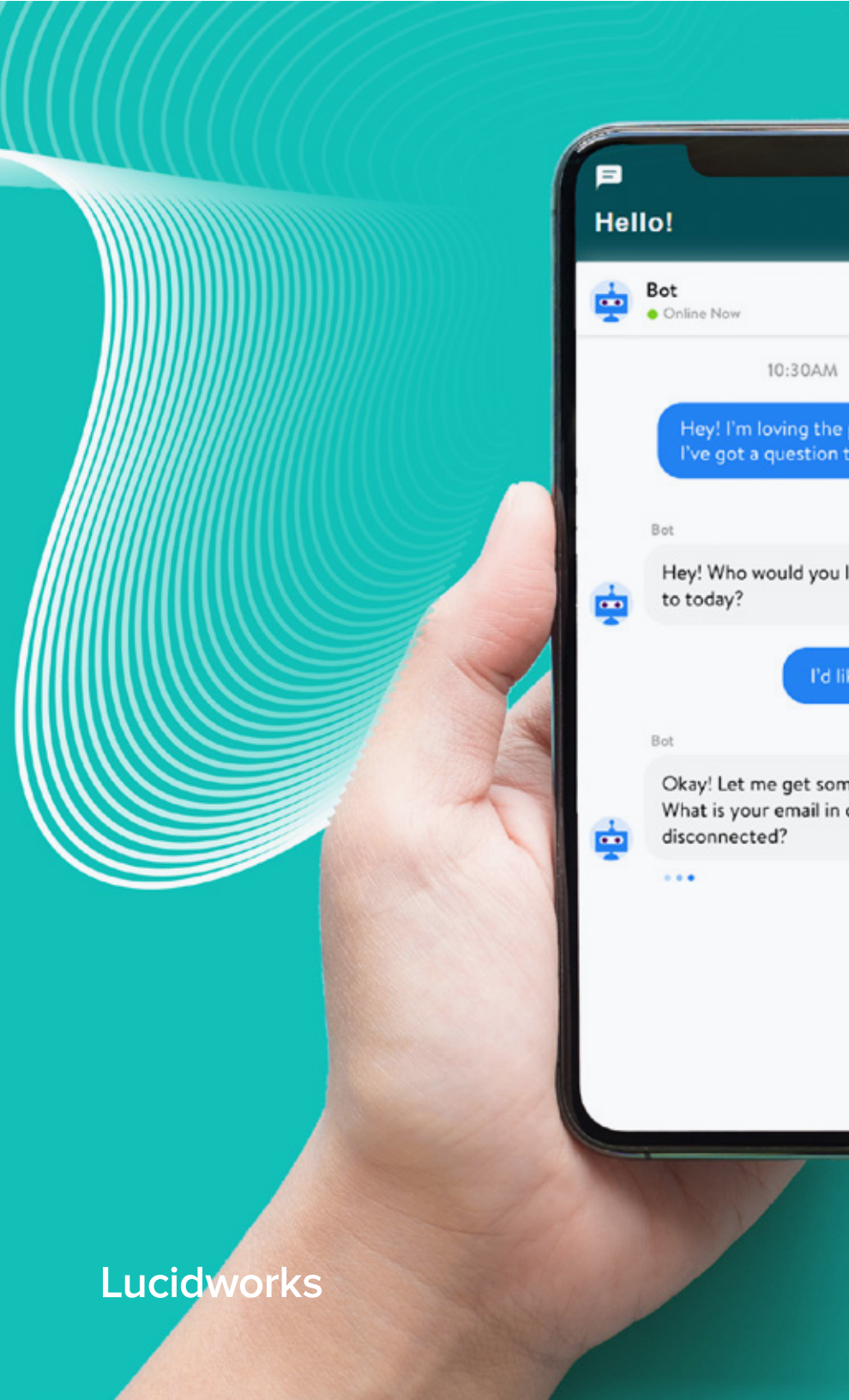
Here are three key ways to make self-service sing:

- 1 Don't try to self-serve everything.** Instead of soaking a customer in a long list of knowledge-base articles, pick the 100 top topics or current issues. Eliminate ones that require human intervention (like billing issues, for instance). Prioritize those issues that can be easily reduced to a knowledge-base article or quick video.
- 2 Personalize the portal.** Customers want a personalized experience no matter where they are in the buying journey — or the support journey. Personalize recommendations for them as they search for the resolution to their issue. The system should automatically filter results based on the products or services customers have purchased from you in the past.
- 3 Don't forget to baseline.** As with any big changes to your support portal, or any customer support experience, really, be sure you have several months' worth of baseline data and metrics.



88%

of customers expect
organizations to have a
self-service support portal



AI-powered call deflection.

Even with a better search-and-browse experience on the portal side, there's a lot more to do to keep a service incident contained in your self-serve channel.

Virtual assistants and chatbots enable self-service with a conversational interface for customers to use when seeking resolution. Customers don't have to know Boolean operators or special words to find what they want to know. These conversational apps can put advanced machine learning and AI to work to best understand the intention of the customer and get them quickly to the right resolution. Conversational applications use human dialogue as their interface. Customers type or say aloud what they want to know, and the system comes back with exactly what they're looking for — in the same natural, conversational format.

Behind the scenes, these conversational apps use machine learning to make semantic sense of large datasets like knowledge bases, FAQs, support docs, and past closed incidents to quickly receive a question, understand it, search for an answer in the dataset, and then come back with the most relevant answer — fast. These apps use many of the same methodologies and algorithms that help people search online while shopping or querying internal systems while at work.

And it's not all machines. Talented data scientists and subject matter experts (SMEs) fine-tune datasets and models so the whole support journey is rooted in a human experience. The machines just make it faster and easier to scale.

These advanced technologies for call deflection help keep your customer in the self-service channel. This frees your support and helpdesk agents to focus on the more complex and nuanced questions that represent a more valuable use of their time.

Here is what to keep in mind when bringing AI, ML, and deep learning to your support organization:

Go beyond workflows. Get your self-serve apps to go beyond if-this/then-that workflows and use deep learning to better understand user intent.

Integrate, don't replatform. Bringing AI and ML into your support channels doesn't mean you have to throw everything out and start again. More and more, these capabilities are being offered as managed services that can easily sit between and among your current support stack with API calls and endpoints.

Bring it all together. Find ways to connect, index, and offer access to all your disparate customer systems, knowledge portals, and incident documentation in a single view with enterprise-wide recommendations and insights for faster resolution to customer questions and routing to (SMEs).



Insights (and empathy) for agents.

And all of that was just on the customer side — just the CX. When customers have exhausted (and they are exhausted!) their self-serve options, they might then go to connect with a live support agent via chat, social media, or phone.

Since these cases have typically already gone through the self-service queue, they will either be cases that are the most difficult to solve or cases where customers are, frankly, so frustrated with the journey that it's become a slog — or both. When done right, an empathetic expert interaction with a support agent drives customer retention, loyalty, and delight, and it all happens within these interactions. Agent effectiveness is driven by creating the best experiences for our employees.

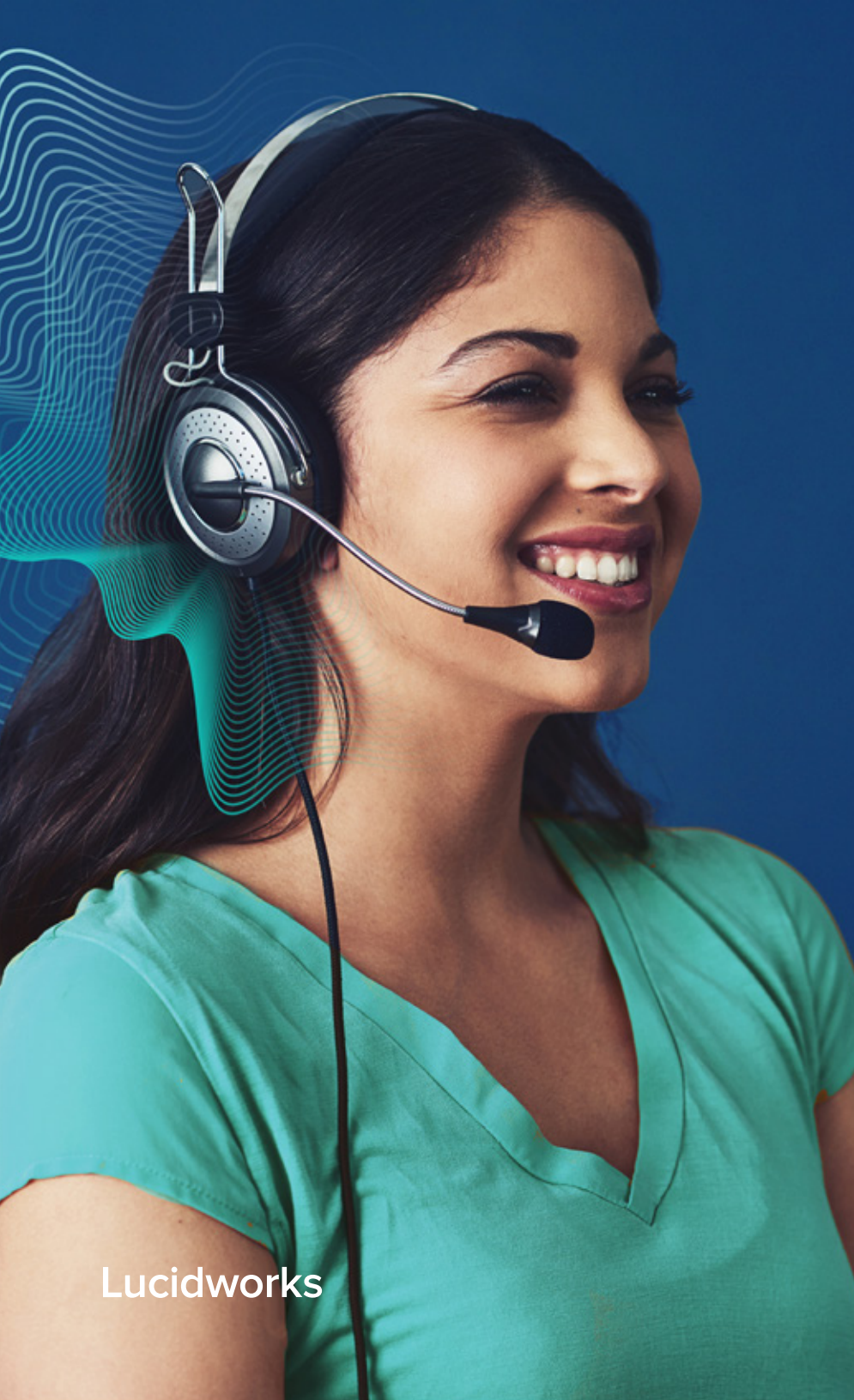
Customers want empowered problem-solvers. Upgrading and updating your agent experience to provide the intel and data they need to quickly get a sense of the customer's issue and get going quickly is money well spent. Every agent should have all the data they need (but not too much!) so the customer can speak to just one person during the complete interaction. Integrating machine learning models helps agents to find and suggest similarities between the current case and similar closed cases. This technology empowers them to resolve cases more quickly by having similar or related cases to reference.



John Smith created this case.

00001026

Subject: Broken Router



In addition to improving customer satisfaction, increasing agent effectiveness improves their job satisfaction, which increases retention and reduces training costs.

Put it where they already are. If agents have to query multiple systems to assemble a complete view of the customer (while the customer waits!), it takes them longer to fully understand the issue and start the solution process. Improvements in agent tools should integrate with the existing service consoles your agents already use every day (ServiceNow, Salesforce, Zendesk, etc.). Put the incident information, suggested articles, and subject matter expertise right alongside the customer profile.

Keep feeding the beast!

Now that you've started integrating all your systems and processes so that both customers and agents have a unified view, keep finding data to include and pour into the mix. With signal processing and deep learning in place, you'll be able to give your agents the best possible view of everything, so they can help every customer resolve their issues as effectively as possible.

Omnichannel service is on the way.

The future for customer service is looking bright as more organizations bring advanced machine learning and other capabilities to better understand user intent and deliver a great experience for every customer — and for every agent.

Omnichannel retail has started to unify customer data and experience across all customer touch points, from in-store, in-app, and phone to loyalty programs, online, cart, and meeting the customer wherever they are. The same trends are starting to expand to life after the purchase. Omnichannel service connects all the systems and parts of the customer service journey in one unified experience to again meet the customer where they are with a full view of their past behavior, purchases, and support incidents so the self-service system can quickly get a customer to resolution — or properly triaged and off to a live support agent for a one-on-one customer service interaction.

This data-led approach is transforming every facet of the customer experience and, when done thoughtfully and holistically, also the employee experience. Loyal customers, happier support agents, more revenue.



See how much you can save with a connected service experience that increases customer engagement and agent effectiveness.

CALCULATE YOUR SAVINGS

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