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## Mitel Networks: Going Beyond Customer Initiated Interactions

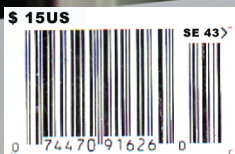
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# Social Media Customer Care Plan

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**R**egardless of your personal feelings on social media, it is no longer an option not to have a presence. Satisfied customers will buy from you again and refer you to others.

The difference today is that those referrals

are not just made in a one-on-one conversation. They are made through powerful platforms that can be seen and heard by endless numbers of people. Those same endless numbers of people can also see and hear negative things about your company.

A Nielsen Global Survey shows that online reviews are the second most trusted source of information for products, services and companies. Personal recommendations are the first.

You cannot provide customer-driven service unless you incorporate a social media strategy. Delivering customer service through social channels is just one more way that proves how social media has permeated

our society, and, it has largely been driven by customer demand. Even if companies did not promote themselves using their Facebook or Twitter accounts to contact customer service, customers went ahead and did it anyway, forcing businesses to respond.

Research shows that, not only do customers expect to receive service via social platforms, but they expect responses—fast and around the clock.

Many companies have not yet taken the plunge into social customer service because they simply do not know how to set up such a program. Where in the world do you start?

There are two primary things you need to create before launching social media customer service. One of these is a program plan that will guide your efforts and provide a framework from within which your team will operate. The other is a training program which ensures that all appropriate staff members know how to make use of social media for servicing customers.

Your Social Media Customer Care Plan should be your blueprint. There are several items that should be incorporated into this foundational plan. Following is an overview of some critical elements to be included.





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**Channel Identification:** The first place to start is by identifying which social media channels you are going to use for customer service. As tempting as it is to include as many as possible, a word of caution must be noted here. Do not bite off more than you can chew. It is far better to select only two channels and work them thoroughly with quick response times than to advertise social customer care on several channels with poor response times. For most businesses, starting with Facebook and Twitter will make the most sense.

As you identify which platforms are right for your business, you should also consider creating accounts for your customer service operations separate from your more “marketing” focused accounts.

**Response Times:** Next up should be the hours that you will staff your social customer channels and the time in which customers should receive responses. Research does show that most customers expect online customer service to be available 24/7, but if that is simply not possible for you, it is important that you post the hours that agents are available. You should also publish expected response windows.

**Conversation Monitoring:** Just as you (hopefully) monitor your current customer service phone calls, emails and live chats, so too should you monitor your social media conversations. This ensures that your employees are delivering the level of service that you want and expect of them and that your customers are being properly served.

In addition, mining any customer service conversations can give you insights into several things.

**Satisfaction Follow-Up:** Closing the loop is an important part of any customer service action. Your program should feature a standard method of surveying customers about their experience and how satisfied they were with the service they received. You should consider pushing this out via the same channel through which the service was delivered.

**Realistic Training Plan:** Once you have your plan created, you will need to educate your team. Training can be one of the most important components of any new program, especially one that is so visible

to the outside world. You will want your social customer care training to be deployed in a logical manner that addresses even those things you may consider to be “so basic.”

**Channel Tutorials:** Despite the fact that you “think” all of your employees should know how to use and navigate different social platforms, you should start your training with a review of the different channels you intend to use in your social customer care program.


**Tone of Voice:** You should clearly communicate to your customer service agents what tone of voice should be used and what “personality” you want projected by them.

**Online Language and Humor:** Part of what creates your tone of voice is whether or not you want to utilize online “language” such as LOL and other common acronyms or phrases. It is highly recommended that humor be used with extreme caution in an online setting.

**When to Go Offline:** There will naturally be many situations that warrant taking a conversation offline. This could be because of sensitive data such as credit card numbers or personal identity information. You will want to give your staff clear parameters for when—and how—to take social conversations offline.

All conversations initiated on a social channel should be completed on that social channel even those that were taken offline.

**Focus on Resolution:** One of the big advantages that social media has over phone calls as a vehicle for customer service is the ability to delay responses. Yes, I know we highlighted the importance of prompt and efficient responses, but that does not mean immediate as is required on a phone call. Your agents should be instructed to be responsive to customers but ensure they get the information necessary to solve the problem.

**Put on Your Marketing Hat:** Perhaps the most important thing for any company to think about when creating a social media customer care program is marketing. They showcase how you treat customers. And, they can embed your name in the minds of customers—for better or worse. 



Jim Iyob