
Benchmarking Social Media Customer Service

Uncovering opportunities & best practices for
social care

A look at 7 consumer electronics leaders

Benchmarking Study | White Paper



Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Methodology.....	4
Why is Social Care Important?.....	5
Magnitude of Customer Care Conversations on the Social Web	5
Where are Social Care Conversations Occurring?	6
Mainstream Media.....	7
Forums	7
Blogs.....	7
Microblogs	8
Social Networks.....	8
Video/Photo Sharing and Wikis	8
How Leading Companies Respond.....	9
Who’s Doing What Best?	10
Highlight: Apple’s Community Forum.....	10
Highlight: Best Buy’s Twitter Activity via Twelpforce	11
Highlight: HP’s Facebook Support Forum	11
Highlight: Google’s YouTube Channel.....	12
What’s the Sentiment toward Customer Care on the Social Web?	13
Best Practices are Emerging for Social Care	15
Best Practice 1: Build a Cross-Functional Team to Launch and Support Social Care.....	15
Best Practice 2: Embrace the Appropriate Communications Style for the Channel.....	15
Best Practice 3: Create a Response Map	16
Best Practice 4: Follow through on Conversations	17
Best Practice 5: Provide Proactive Social Care.....	17
Key Takeaways	18
Recommendations	18
What’s next – Social Metrics and Contact Center KPIs.....	19
About the Authors	20
Kim Keating and Dave Evans.....	20
TELUS International.....	20

Executive Summary

A tremendous new customer service opportunity has emerged with the adoption of social media by consumers and the ability for companies to effectively listen to and track conversations about their brands. At TELUS International, we call this activity “social care” and it’s defined as the efforts employees make through social media to care for customers. Interestingly, these efforts aren’t necessarily confined to traditional contact center agents working in customer service departments. We’re finding some companies empowering not only their well-trained customer service representatives, but also a select group of engineers, product managers and even executives. Tapping into the larger talent pool is one of many strategies companies are using to provide positive customer experiences on the social web.

TELUS International commissioned a study to look at seven Fortune 500 companies to identify the social interaction best practices used by their customer service departments to resolve issues, gather feedback, collaborate on ideas, and build relationships. **The goal of this research is twofold:**

1. To provide readers with a view of what leading companies in the consumer electronics space are doing to support customers through social media.
2. To provide a list of best practices and recommendations for integrating social care into the traditional customer care environment.

As a global contact center provider, TELUS International recognizes the need for companies to develop a multi-channel, customer service offering. Social care is different from traditional voice, email and chat support because social care conversations are public, often permanent and can easily go viral. Many companies are still at the very early stages of building the people, processes and technology to support social care. However, as noted in this study, when social customer support is done right, it can actually generate **more positive sentiment than the overall brand sentiment**. Because social care has the potential to boost and lead overall brand perception, developing a strategy around social care should be a priority for companies in 2012.

Many companies are still at the very early stages of building the people, processes and technology to support social care.

TELUS International is focusing its research and development efforts in this area to better serve clients as they adopt social care. Providing a good customer experience is more important today than ever before, as positive and negative word-of-mouth spreads quickly on the social web. Companies need to actively shape the conversation by engaging customers *before and after purchases*.

Methodology

This research utilizes qualitative and quantitative analyses for benchmarking purposes. The qualitative efforts were used to help structure the research and broadly determine what consumers are seeking from corporate-branded social channels. Since the data is primarily unstructured social posts, this type of analysis is essential to draw conclusions about the nature of social care.

Quantitative research methods were used for analyzing large data sets generated from multiple social media channels. To conduct the quantitative analysis, social media analytics software was used to determine the magnitude and sentiment of social care conversations.¹

Our benchmarking analysis evaluates leaders in the consumer electronics industry only. This allows for better comparisons among companies that are all dealing with the same customer set (potentially frustrated consumers dealing with technical support issues). The companies included in this study are:

- Apple
- Best Buy
- Dell
- DIRECTV
- Google
- HP
- RIM

The research is designed to provide a snapshot of the customer support conversations and company responses provided by these leaders in their corporate-branded social media channels. Five social media channels were analyzed:

- Community Forums (branded support forums operated by the companies studied)
- Blogs (corporate blogs focused on supporting customers)
- Microblogs (Twitter)
- Social Networks (Facebook)
- Shared Video (YouTube)

The assessment period was the week of 5/16/11 – 5/22/11. For social media posts to be included in the quantitative research, the following criteria had to be met:

- A post written by a consumer must have contained the keywords [company name] AND “customer service” OR “customer support” OR “tech support.”
- Posts must not have contained typical spam words such as “weight loss” or “free.”
- Posts had to originate in the United States or Canada.
- The language of the post had to be English.

The resulting data set contained well over 10,000 posts. However, it’s important to recognize that this is a small sample of the total conversations related to customer service issues. In practice, typical social care conversations do not meet the stringent requirements set for this study even though the intent of the post is customer service. Thus, readers should use magnitude data as directional, not absolute.

Why is Social Care Important?

The rapidly evolving shift in how we communicate and connect with each other requires companies to rethink how they interact with customers. Companies need a new way to describe and measure the efforts employees make through social media to provide customer service. Social care gives companies a way to reference these efforts.

From a company's perspective, there's an important shift in who speaks for the corporate brand. According to the 2009 McKinsey Quarterly, 66% of brand touchpoints are generated by consumers. Since 2009, there's been an explosion of social conversation according to the following 2011 statistics:

- In excess of 150 million blogsⁱⁱ
- Approaching 200 million users of Twitter, generating 65 million tweets a dayⁱⁱⁱ
- Approaching 1 billion Facebook users^{iv}

When people talk about a brand, it's often about product-related issues or negative customer service experiences. Companies recognize they need to engage customers in social media, but the typical approach is to build a "social team" of marketers and PR managers. While professionals in these disciplines can effectively communicate corporate messages, they aren't typically equipped with the tools or experience to solve customer problems. Gartner predicts that at least 35% of customer service centers will integrate some form of community/social capabilities by 2013. Many companies are still at the very early stages of building the people, processes and technology to support social care.

Magnitude of Customer Care Conversations on the Social Web

The first step in the research was to understand the magnitude of customer service-oriented conversations occurring on the social web. To do this, a social listening platform was used to monitor and analyze conversations on all social venues. To be counted in the study, the social conversation had to contain the company name AND the words "customer service" OR "customer support" OR "tech support." It had to originate in North America and be written in English. If the post contained typical spam words, it was eliminated. Posts could be consumer or company generated, but from our analysis, posts were primarily consumer generated.

The resulting data is shown in [Figure 1: Magnitude of Social Conversations about Customer Service](#). Apple had the most posts related to its customer service during the week of 5/16/11 – 5/22/11 with a total of 1,888 posts. *Again, this total does not represent all posts associated with Apple that week, just the subset meeting the precise requirements for this study.* That's an average of 270 per day. Google's customer service had the second highest activity level with 1,387 social posts and a daily average of 198 conversations. When we expanded our timeframe, we found these two companies consistently had the highest volume of social conversations about their customer service. The remaining companies shared a tight pattern of lower volumes of conversations, except during spike periods that were driven by macro events or company announcements, just as one would expect.

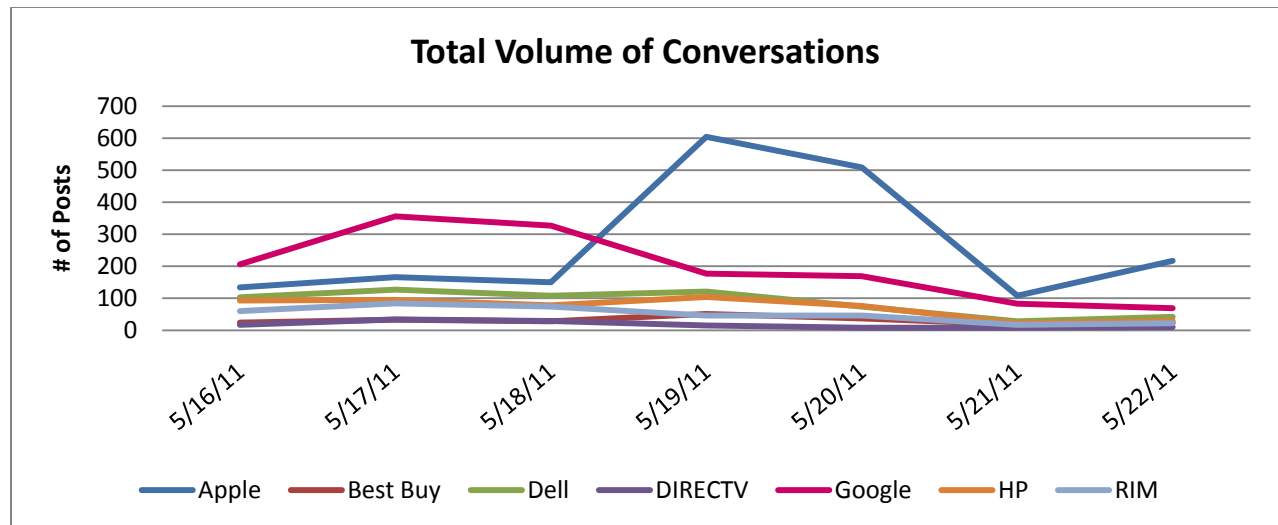


Figure 1: Magnitude of Social Conversations about Customer Service

Again, we want to reinforce that the results in Figure 1 are directional, not absolute. The true volume of customer service conversations is significantly higher. Through the qualitative research, we found that most social care conversations didn't include all the keywords. For example, often only the original post that initiated a social conversation would have the company name and other keywords. If there were 10 follow-up comments to the original post, they very likely didn't mention the company name and other keywords again. While the study results capture the essence of customer behavior, the scale is in fact much larger.

Where are Social Care Conversations Occurring?

The second step in the benchmarking process was to understand where consumers are talking about customer service on the social web. These source venues are strategic, not random or coincidental. They show us where consumers prefer to collaborate on issues. A key takeaway is that people are currently writing about customer service issues and seeking written solutions. They are interacting more on blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter) than rich media channels, like YouTube. Google is an exception to this finding. The company has published numerous short YouTube videos to demonstrate new features and answer common questions with customers actively commenting (e.g. their Google Advisor video has over 100 comments). The other companies rarely post support info to their YouTube channels. Rather, their corporate-branded YouTube channels are primarily used for marketing purposes. For the few posts that qualify as support videos, we observed minimal consumer commentary. Looking forward, however, with the proliferation of smartphones and ability to access rich media more easily, the practice of using video for customer support should broaden.

People are currently writing about customer service issues and seeking written solutions.

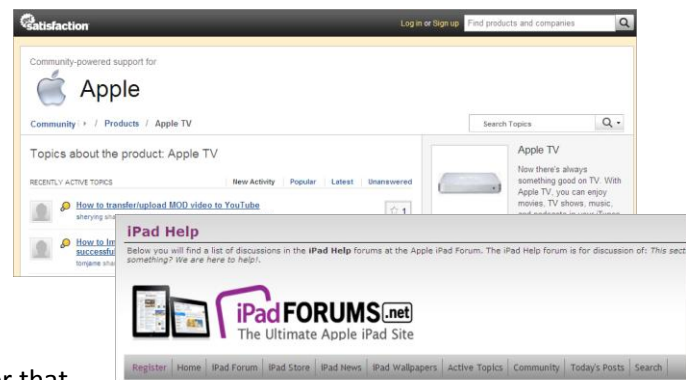
The following paragraphs define the various media types (channels) encountered by a typical social care team.

Mainstream Media

This category includes social posts from mainstream media, such as a blog from the Wall Street Journal. Both Apple and Google, for example, have social care conversations in this category as media giants focus coverage on specific companies. In fact, the Pew Research Center analyzed tech-news coverage from June 2009 to June 2010 and found that Apple garnered 15% coverage in all technology articles, while Google received 11% coverage. In the same study, tech giant Microsoft was only covered 3% of the time during that same period. Mainstream **social** media writers are following a similar pattern of focusing coverage on specific companies, including Apple and Google. Discovering posts in this category is straightforward, since the brand name is always prominently featured. Less clear is the role that this channel plays in driving actionable posts that are relevant to customer service. (Mainstream media posts were not included in this research.)

Forums

Forums include message boards and community forums. Activity in this channel—including third-party forums such as getsatisfaction.com—is highly relevant to customer care. Keyword-based searches need to focus on the specific topics rather than brand names. We found that customers typically did not write the brand name in their specific posts on corporate-branded forums, such as Dell Community. The customer instead assumed that it was obvious that the brand was known, since they were posting in a forum specifically for that brand. In terms of response, forums have become highly consumer-driven from a question and answer perspective. In its corporate-branded forum, Apple is a great example of a company that has shifted agents from answering questions to simply “checking” correct answers provided by forum participants.



Unofficial third-party forums including getsatisfaction.com are highly relevant to customer care

Blogs

Apple’s and Google’s customer service are written about extensively in the blogosphere. Like the mainstream media, bloggers are watching and writing about the innovators like Apple and Google at a disproportionate rate to other large, well-established high-tech companies, like HP and Dell.

Google “how to” and help articles are written about extensively in the blogosphere



Microblogs

The companies included in the study are starting to exploit microblogging, primarily Twitter, for customer service. Even without having an official Apple Twitter channel, the firm's customers are generating a significant number of posts on Twitter about Apple customer service.

Social Networks

Social networks reviewed include Facebook, LinkedIn, Ning and many others. The companies included in the study had moderate activity as it relates to customer care on these social networks. Our qualitative research shows that the majority of company activity in social networking is marketing and promotional copy about the brands, rather than customer service. HP was a stand-out example here; its Facebook support forum provides direct and unambiguous customer service.



Establishing social sites for official or unofficial customer support is easy

Video/Photo Sharing and Wikis

Video, photos and wikis are surprisingly under-represented. While Flickr's non-business policies explain some of this, there is clearly an opportunity to more fully exploit these channels. Wikis are a noteworthy publishing format for customer service—especially for solution and procedure updates. The use of video will likely change as smartphones evolve: posting videos of “what is going wrong” as well as video conferencing (such as Google+ “Huddles”) along with video-based solutions are likely to grow in use. We're finding some use of video in customer care settings with Google being the stand-out.

The use of video for customer support will change as smartphones evolve.

How Leading Companies Respond

At the time of the study, the benchmark companies have launched corporate-branded social care activities in the following channels indicated in Figure 2:

Company	Phone	Webform/Email	Chat	Community Forum	Blog	Twitter	Facebook	YouTube
Apple	√	-	-	√	-	-	-	-
Best Buy	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Dell	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	-
DIRECTV	√	√	-	√	-	√	-	-
Google	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	√
HP	√	√	√	√	-	-	√	√
RIM	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	-

Figure 2: Overall Presence of Company-Branded Customer Support Channels as of May 2011

Although the seven benchmark companies have a broad presence, they aren't actively posting social care content on all channels. Figure 3 shows the number of posts published by customer service representatives in each company's corporate-branded social channels.

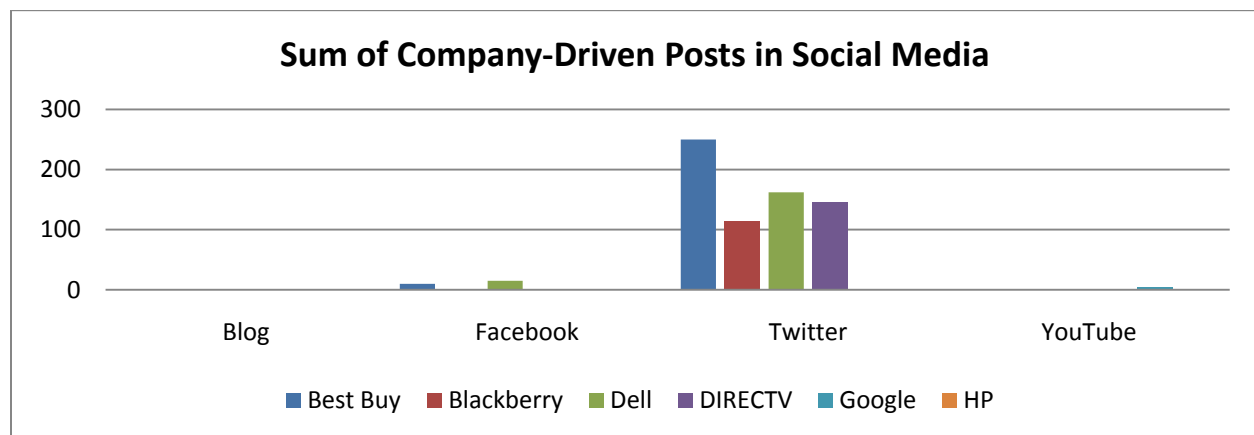


Figure 3: Company Activity in Social Care Channels for 5/16/11 - 5/23/11

Community forums are not included in Figure 3, because all seven benchmark companies have very active community forums. It is clear that outside of these branded forums the companies we looked at are focusing their support efforts through Twitter. Notably, none of the companies posted to their corporate blogs in the week of our study. Similarly, there were fewer than 10 posts to Dell and Best

Buy's corporate-branded Facebook pages by employees responding to customer issues. Google was the only company that posted videos, with two customer "how to" videos added to its YouTube channel.

As expected, the social care landscape is evolving rapidly. A good example is the launch of the HP Twitter handle @HPSupportForum in May 2011, not included in our benchmarking data. The channel appears to be community support driven—a potential strategy to offload support to customers.



HP's new Twitter support channel – corporately branded but based on community support

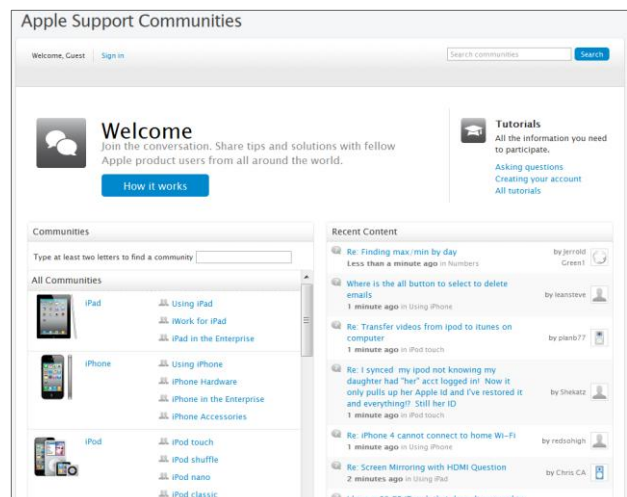
Who's Doing What Best?

Stand-out functionality for social care was apparent among the seven benchmark companies. Their strategies differed based on business needs and their approach to customer service. Below are the highlights.

Highlight: Apple's Community Forum

All the companies in the study have functional and highly useful support forums, but Apple has recently surpassed others by creating a community atmosphere that truly drives active participation.

Apple launched Support Communities, replacing its Support Forum, in mid-April of 2011. The support site is largely consumer driven, which means it's no longer moderated or driven overtly by Apple support agents. Apple employees will occasionally highlight the first correct answer provided by a member, earning that member points toward Apple privileges.



Apple Support Community

The new Support Communities incorporates social-networking features such as personal profile pages, "liking" an answer, and earning status credentials for the best responses. This adds a unique game-like element to social care (the use of game-play in non-game applications in order to encourage desired behavior) – a tactic gaining popularity. Additionally, member pages can be personalized by changing the layout, and members can automatically receive email notifications when their question has been answered. Apple has aligned its efforts around its goal of having consumers support each other in the social platform of their preference.

Highlight: Best Buy's Twitter Activity via Twelpforce

Best Buy launched Twelpforce in July 2009, and it quickly became a success. The key differentiator for Twelpforce over other companies is that it has empowered the entire talent pool of Best Buy. Employees can post to the Twelpforce handle, but they can only use it as a service tool – not a promotional outlet. In the week we benchmarked, Twelpforce tweeted 250 times, with the highest average of all companies — 35 tweets per day.

One of the notable results of Twelpforce is that it has engaged customers and energized the company's staff. There are many stories of Best Buy employees tweeting not only while on their breaks but also when they're not at work at all. As a result of employee engagement and passion for sharing information, the tweets are both reactive to customer concerns and proactive in alerting customers of potential problems.



Twelpforce Twitter Page

Highlight: HP's Facebook Support Forum

HP's support forum displays its mission statement prominently on the main page: *"Welcome to the HP Support Forum where customers are helping other customers on product questions. Also, you can search the community to view existing solutions."*

HP's support forum is the most active Facebook customer service platform we saw for all the companies benchmarked. There were 1,760 customer posts for the week 5/16 – 5/22. That's an average of 250 posts per day. One advantage to Facebook is that it allows detailed posts. There is no character limit, so more complex questions and answers can be discussed.



HP Support Forum Facebook Page

HP support agents do not comment on Facebook posts or attempt to resolve issues. It is purely customer driven. Given the level of activity, this strategy is working well. There's little to no negative commentary on HP: our supposition here is that would-be detractors are tempered by the *lack of presence* of official HP representatives. The best part and a key differentiator is that we're finding questions and answers that are crossing between consumers and businesses. For example, you'll find a

small business posting a very technical question, and then see a consumer answering it. HP has a very vibrant Facebook presence.

Highlight: Google's YouTube Channel

Google is getting the most out of using videos on YouTube to serve customers. This isn't surprising, since Google bought YouTube in 2006. The use of YouTube for support is a perfect way to leverage and link the brands.

Google has by far the most comments on its customer service videos of all the companies studied. Additionally, it's not unusual to find a short "how to" video created by a Google employee using the integrated webcam on a PC, a practice that continues with the firm's launch of Google+. These short but useful video snippets provide information in a rich format that is often easier for customers to understand and replicate than written content.



Google YouTube Channel

What's the Sentiment toward Customer Care on the Social Web?

Sentiment is the overall positive or negative opinion of brands across social media channels. Our quantitative research measured how consumers feel about the seven brands versus their customer service. The analysis looked at social conversations across all social media channels, not just corporate-branded channels. Figure 4 shows the output of a 12-month analysis of Apple sentiment. Apple overall has strong positive sentiment in social media, although it slightly trails Dell and Google. By comparison, Apple's customer support (by itself) has the most positive sentiment of the benchmark companies. Even so, it is subject to periods of negative sentiment driven by large-scale events like the iPhone 4G antenna issues in July of 2010.

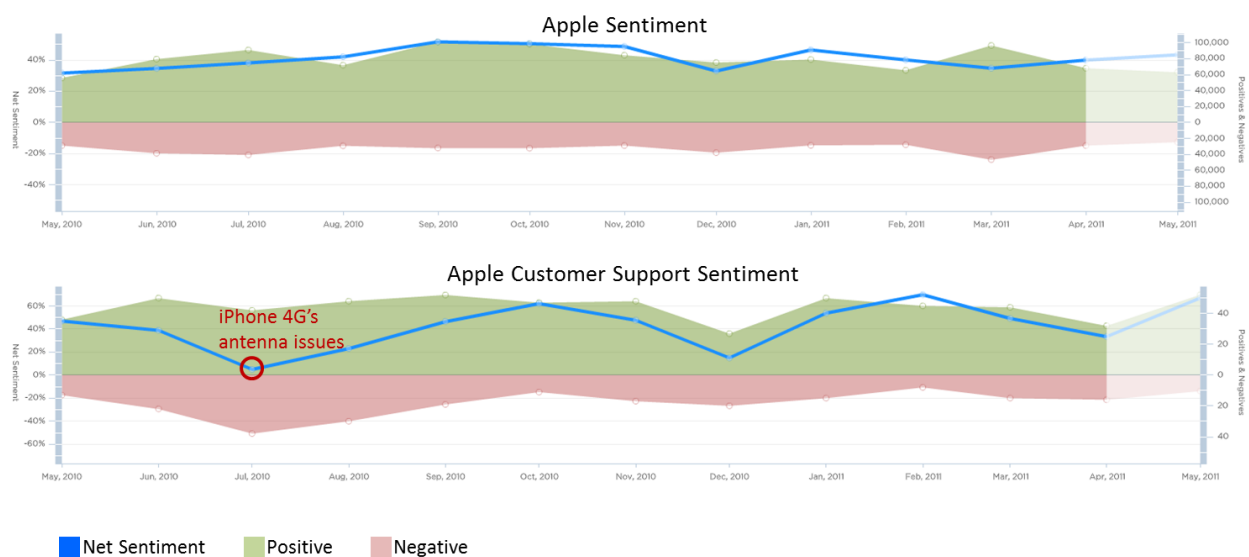


Figure 4: Apple Sentiment Analysis

The findings from the sentiment analysis are:

- The brands Apple, Dell, Google and RIM have highest positive net sentiment for their corporate brands as a whole.
- Apple has the highest positive net sentiment for customer support.
- Customer support typically has a **lower** net sentiment than the brand, indicating that customer support is a net negative for the brand. *This is a clear opportunity for all brands studied.*
- Best Buy customer service (not including Geek Squad and Twelpforce), DIRECTV customer service and RIM customer service did not have statistically significant volumes from which to draw conclusions.

A key takeaway from our analysis is that if customer support is done right, it can generate more positive sentiment than the overall brand sentiment. Well-executed social care can actually raise the social brand perception for the entire company. This isn't a surprise when you consider that customer service is a major consumer touchpoint and, therefore, a driver of overall brand sentiment and a contributor to brand equity.

If customer support is done right, it can generate more positive sentiment than overall brand sentiment.

Reviewing the net sentiment across the brands studied as a whole and at the customer service component in isolation, a universal finding emerged. For all companies included in the research, net sentiment for customer service was lower than the net sentiment for the brand. The easy explanation is that customers only call when something is wrong, so lower sentiment around customer care is simply to be expected. Yet, the idea that customer care could actually lift overall brand sentiment intrigued us, so we looked further.

As a comparison, although outside the scope of consumer electronics companies, we looked at Zappos, a leading online clothing retailer known for superior customer service. Not surprising, the analysis shows **customer service having a higher net sentiment in social conversations than the brand** – demonstrating that customer service excellence really does define and lead Zappos brand perception in the marketplace.

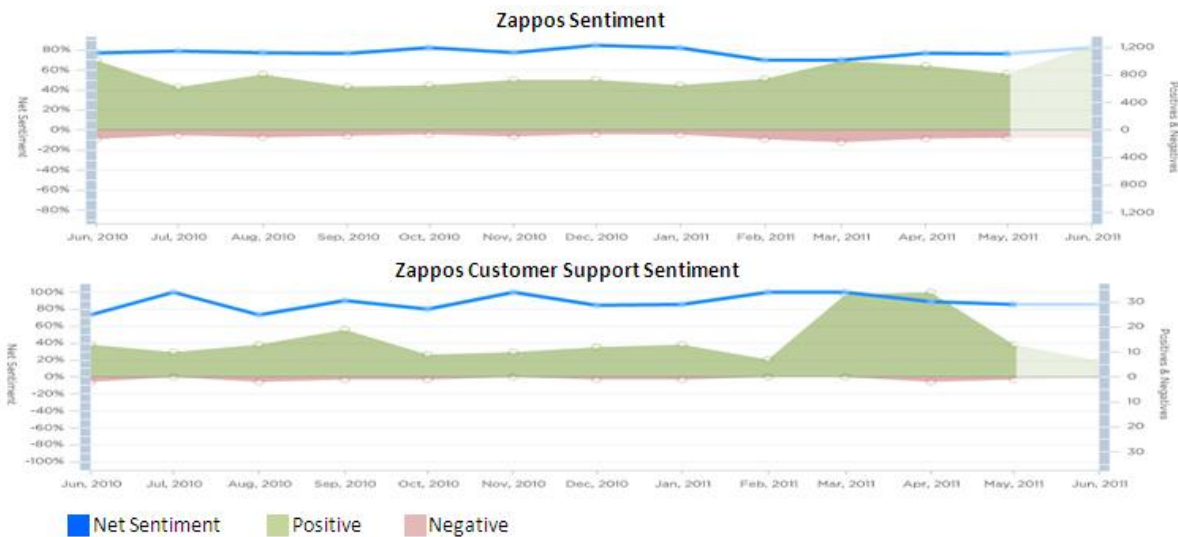


Figure 5: Zappos Sentiment Analysis – “Customer Support” Leads the Brand

Taken together, the universal findings among the tech companies studied in light of the Zappos data suggests a significant opportunity. Tech firms who invest in customer service excellence, in particular the social channels where conversations about service experiences spread more readily, are likely to achieve superior business results, just as Zappos has as compared to its competitors and relative to the retail segment overall.

Best Practices are Emerging for Social Care

Several best practices emerge from the research conducted as part of this study. Some of these practices are already being effectively employed at the benchmark companies while others are underutilized practices that represent opportunities for companies to expand and improve their social care efforts.

Best Practice 1: Build a Cross-Functional Team to Launch and Support Social Care

To launch a successful social care program, we recommend defining the vision and objectives, and building a cross-functional team that's working toward a common goal. It may include people at all levels and departments. At a minimum, the team should have representatives from the following departments outside of customer service:

Table 1: Cross-Functional Contributors Outside of Customer Care

Organization	Responsibility
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promote social support ■ Provide brand briefing on acceptable communication style
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Define social media policies that govern agent responses
HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Define hiring profiles and set training standards for social agents

Dell exemplifies this strategy—when its Social Media Command Center launched in December 2010, Dell's Chief Blogger announced that “over 5,000 Dell employees have been trained in social media, and many of those are listening and engaging with customers as part of their jobs.”

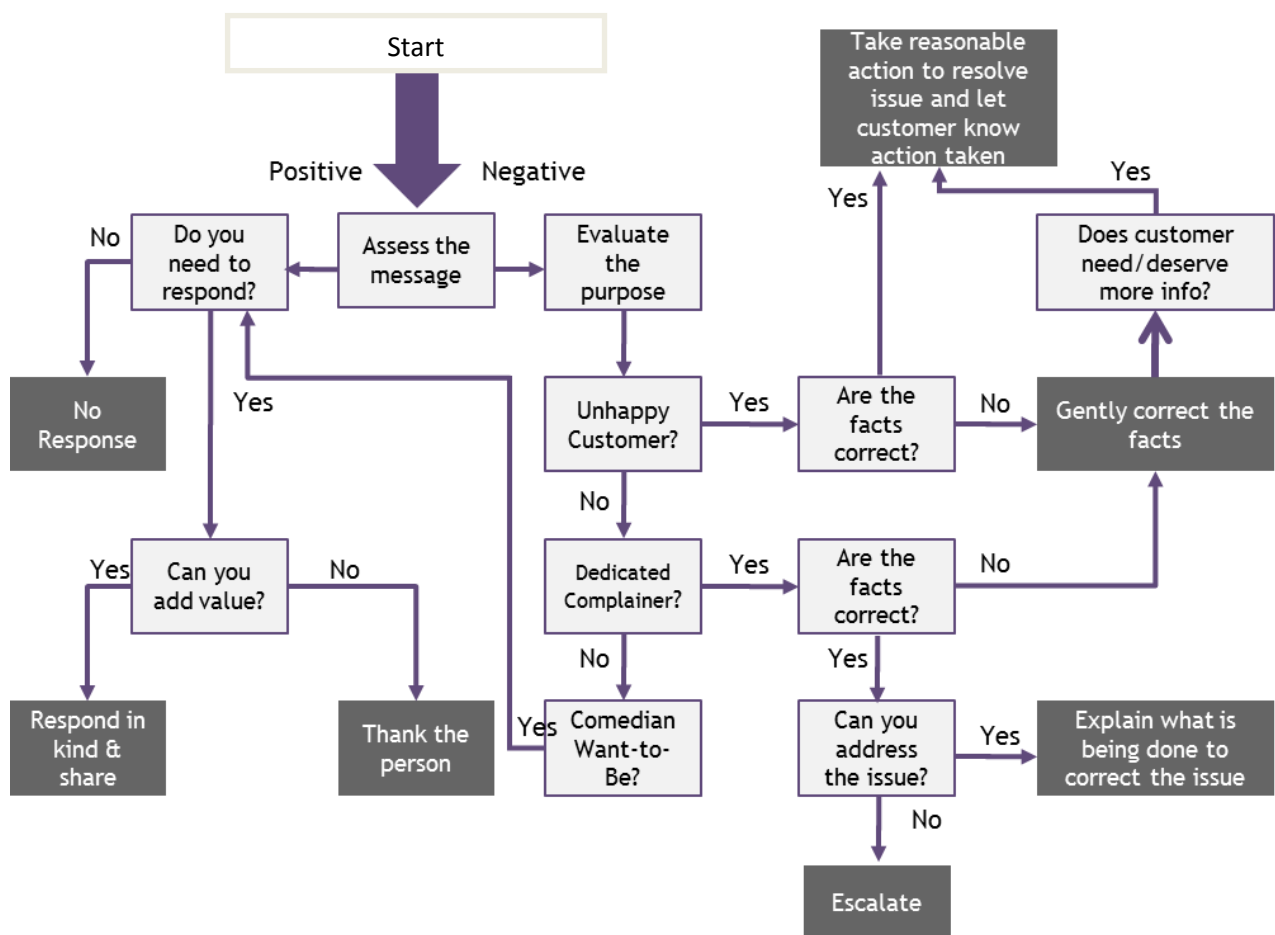
Best Practice 2: Embrace the Appropriate Communications Style for the Channel

Agents must be trained to respond in the character of the brand and the protocol and expectations of the channel. Most companies have communication guidelines that define the voice and tone of the brand. These guidelines are often intended for formal PR and brand communications, but can be adapted for social care training. The communication guidelines should be reviewed so that appropriate guidance can be created for specific channels. In addition, as stated earlier, people are currently *writing* about customer service issues and seeking *written* solutions. It is important that when agents respond they use appropriate grammar for the channel to ensure clarity of the response – a miscommunicated post can have broad repercussions if it goes viral.

Best Practice 3: Create a Response Map

Building a message map lends some process behind how to respond to public conversations. It reduces the risk to corporations of erratic responses and acts as an efficiency aid for agents who are tasked with managing hundreds of social posts a day. Figure 6 shows a modified message map from USAF and Altimeter that applies to social communication. Both USAF and Altimeter have received recognition for the simplicity and effectiveness of their social media response guidelines, so this serves as one solid example. A response map helps ensure quick and concise delivery of pertinent customer service information.

Figure 6: Social Care Message Map – Adapted from the U.S. Air Force Blog Triage & the Altimeter Group Social Media Triage




Best Practice 4: Follow through on Conversations

Reaching out and following through is critical for building real relationships. This can manifest itself in several forms. First, companies get excited to set up social media channels, like Twitter, but then fail to post updated information. *Stale = Bad*. Second, it's not just about posting information, but engaging customers and collaborating with them. *Collaboration = Good*. Third, if you request a customer to communicate with you in another non-social channel, such as voice or email, be sure to follow up the conversation to resolution while tracking that conversation across the channels used.

Follow-through enhances positive customer sentiment toward a company. Even if the information being communicated is not what the customer wants to hear, knowing the agent followed through in a timely and professional manner mitigates the negative impact. According to a recent article in the MIT Sloan Management Review, January 2011, *When Unhappy Customers Strike Back on the Internet*, failing to respond does not help customers rule out worst-case inferences. Rather, people tend to err on the sinister side when inventing explanations. At the same time, customers will tolerate problems not being fully resolved as long as the process is seen as fair. In short, follow-through in social care can make or break customer relationships.

Best Practice 5: Provide Proactive Social Care

Social care agents should embrace the idea of proactive customer care. They have the ability to reach out to customers before they become frustrated and dissatisfied about an issue. This screen capture shows a Best Buy Geek Squad agent posting information about a new virus penetrating Mac operating systems. There were dozens of appreciative comments from customers for the proactive communication. A similar best practice is the use of your early support cases from other channels to spot problems before they become widespread on the social web too. *Contact customers before they contact you.*



Geek Squad Online Support


New Virus Penetrating Mac Computers

A new rogue virus that has recently been released into the wild has been penetrating the OS X operating system by exploiting the "Automatically run trusted software" option in Safari preferences. It runs a malicious Javascript code that launches the installer.

Just like other rogue viruses, it will appear to run a fake anti-virus scan on the computer using a graphical interface that actually displays images from Microsoft Windows. The program will scan the computer and then claim that the system is infected, alerting the user that the only way to remove the viruses is to purchase the scam program.

Users can utilize security features of OS X by disabling Safari from automatically opening safe files. This can be done in preferences, and then removing the check next to "Open safe files after downloading"

Always be careful of where you surf, and avoid suspicious looking links! –Agent Jackie P.



Kevin Werners Great Post Agent Jackie P. I'm sure a lot of people appreciate the information!

May 10 at 7:16am

Best Buy's Geek Squad Proactive Facebook Post

Key Takeaways

- The rapidly evolving shift in how we communicate and connect with others requires companies to rethink how they interact with customers.
- Some companies are tapping into a larger talent pool of employees beyond the contact center to provide a positive customer experience.
- In social conversations, people are currently *writing* about customer service issues and seeking *written* solutions. In the future, rich media channels, like YouTube, will play a bigger role in customer support.
- While some of the largest consumer electronics companies have a broad social media presence for marketing and PR, their company-branded support channels are still fairly new or even non-existent. Dell is an exception here, with clear leadership across many of the social channels.
- Each company has unique highlights in how they conduct social care ranging from Apple's strategy not to provide dedicated customer care in any social channel beyond its own support forum, to Dell's and HP's use of social channels for customer-to-customer support with little direct intervention, to Best Buy's extensive use of employees empowered to provide proactive social care via Twitter.
- Many companies have not consistently applied best practices across all of their social channels, which is not surprising given the nascent state of social media as applied to customer care.
- Best practices include: build a cross-functional team to launch social care, embrace the appropriate communications style for the channel, create a response map, follow through on conversations, and provide proactive social care.
- If done right, customer support can actually generate more positive sentiment than the overall brand. It can drive positive conversations and improve brand perception.

Recommendations

There is a real opportunity to integrate social technology within a customer care environment. Across the board, the brands studied get high marks from customers. However, the sentiment scores for customer support (isolated) in social conversations are consistently lower. We conclude that customer service teams have the opportunity to extend their hub of customer interaction to social care, and in doing so, directly boost their overall brand sentiment scores. Based on the inconsistencies and lack of standardized best practices observed in social care responses, a focus on strategy development and implementation of social care should be a priority for 2012.

Actions:

1. Take time to plan and determine best practices for social care for your organization and customers. Realize that many leading companies are doing different things when it comes to social care.

2. View social care as a brand-building opportunity. As a primary touchpoint, social care can drive customer acquisition, retention and even future sales.
3. Consider how to use social tools to offload support requests. Look for ways to invite customers into your business. Consider rewarding participants in your support forum to help scale the effectiveness of your social care team.
4. Determine relevant social care metrics and benchmark against other support channels to affirm ROI, savings and reduced volumes over time.
5. Apply the same science and rigor of the contact center to social care. Realize that we are still in the early stages of social care. Keeping a pulse on the vendor landscape for tools and platforms that can scale and measure social care in the contact center can lead to a significant advantage.

What's next – Social Metrics and Contact Center KPIs

When it comes to the contact center, everything is measured. This is what makes social care so challenging when the analytics, routing, tracking and even workforce management tools have not kept pace with the growth in social media adoption—and when many organizations are still handling and tracking social care posts on a manual basis. However, we believe social care metrics are available for those who choose to adopt them. This includes a combination of traditional contact center key performance indicators (KPIs) and new, emerging social care metrics. In a follow-up white paper due early 2012, TELUS International will share its framework for measuring social care in the contact center.

About the Authors

Kim Keating and Dave Evans

TELUS International commissioned a benchmarking study from Kim Keating and Dave Evans, independent consultants with expertise in customer service operations and social media. Dave is a best-selling author and social strategist for Fortune 500 companies, including Pepsico, Phillips, Intel and Dell. Kim has over 17 years of experience in customer service operations and consults with Fortune 500 companies, including Microsoft, TELUS and DIRECTV. Kim also conducted TELUS' insightful studies: [Best Practices: Online Chat Sales](#) and [Reducing Customer Effort in the Chat Channel](#). Contact Kim Keating or Dave Evans at: kim@spotconsulting.biz or dave.evans@socialdynamx.com.

TELUS International

TELUS International is the global arm of TELUS, a leading national telecommunications company in Canada, with over 12 million customer connections. TELUS International delivers contact center and business process outsourcing solutions to some of the world's largest and most respected corporations in the financial services, telecommunications, consumer electronics, and energy and utilities industries. Its multi-channel programs include voice, email, chat and social media customer care. Connect with us to learn more about our contact center solutions.

Contact TELUS International:

Email: socialcare@telusinternational.com

Web: telusinternational.com

Twitter: [@TELUSint](https://twitter.com/TELUSint)

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

© 2011 TELUS International. Other company and brand, product and service names are for identification purposes only and may be trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective holders. Reproduction without permission is forbidden.

ⁱ Technology used for quantitative research includes Alterian SM2 and Netbase Insight Workbench.

ⁱⁱ ["BlogPulse"](#). The Nielsen Company. February 16, 2011. Retrieved 2011-02-17.

ⁱⁱⁱ ["bbc.co.uk"](#). BBC. Retrieved 28 March 2011.

^{iv} [Facebook](#). Facebook Statistics. 2011.

^v [Dell blog post](#). Dell's Next Step: The Social Media Listening Command Center, December 2010.