Broadband Customer Service Trends in 2022

Omnichannel experiences, self-serve support and virtual device and app device emulators will dominate tech support this year.

By Madie Brookens / *Ozmo*

Across the globe, 2021 was a record year for the broadband market as the expansion of home internet, connected home and business voice segments significantly impacted consumers' home and work lives. Ever-changing shifts the COVID-19 pandemic brought on, broadband infrastructure legislation, the global supply chain shortage and other major external factors impacted the ways consumers interact with their technology, bringing to light how vital customer service and support is to the health of the broadband industry and the well-being of customers. The need for robust support is not going away anytime soon.

The broadband market can expect to see a few primary support trends in 2022, including universal customer expectations of omnichannel experiences, a shifting priority to emphasize self-serve support, and an increased need for virtual and app device emulators as a critical component of the hybrid work environment. Before diving into the trends themselves, it's critical to first address why comprehensive support matters in the new year.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT MATTERS

With vast advancements in technology and automation, it's no question that the new wave of tech support lies within platform-based solutions that make customer service more efficient and accessible for agents and end users alike. Over the past two years, customer service teams around the globe have faced great challenges, including increased technology issues, lack of personalized assistance, and the spread of inaccurate and nonsecure information within their support interactions.

With more people working from home, broadband providers are experiencing an even greater number of service requests. Whether the demands are for higher speeds for all-day video calls or more at-home streaming use, support agents struggle to keep up with the increase in technical issues and questions from customers.

In remote work environments, support agents haven't had access to the physical devices or apps required to support customer needs and resolve technical issues. In a remote environment, it's critical that customer service teams have the support tools needed to replicate the hands-on experience. When agents don't have the answers to customers' specific technology questions, they end up relying on unverified answers found from search engines and online forums to assist in their customer interactions, leaving them scrambling for answers that are often inaccurate. When customers receive misinformation from their provider's support center, companies are at risk for dramatic decreases in customer satisfaction and ultimately brand loyalty.

This also puts agents at risk from a security perspective, opening up potential vulnerabilities caused by accessing untrustworthy sources. In addition, agents have no way of preventing negative impacts from unverified answers

provided to end customers. Without a secure, remote-accessible, internal support platform and proper agent education, companies can face increased security risks. This ultimately harms support teams, leaving them with potentially compromised resources that inhibit their ability to support each unique customer interaction.

To address these challenges, businesses should look for the top trends that can ultimately transform the way they handle customer support. In 2022, broadband providers can leverage a significant strategic opportunity to capture agent lessons and rewire customer behaviors. When customers and agents are equipped with the necessary tools and resources to solve complex issues, broadband providers can expect greater benefits, including increased customer satisfaction rates (NPS), improved first call resolution, considerable cost savings and more.

NEW OMNICHANNEL TECH SUPPORT

Omnichannel is thrown around a lot in tech today, but it's more than just a buzzword. It refers to all physical and digital channels integrated within a single platform, interface or experience, and it's the future of customer service. Often, omnichannel support is used interchangeably with multichannel support, but multichannel customer service describes a support interaction in which information is accessed and shared through more than one channel.

Omnichannel support is more advanced. Omnichannel customer service involves more than one channel and more than one touch point, integrated all within a single, unified approach. "Omnichannel experiences matter because, fundamentally, people learn differently," said Ozmo director of marketing Christina Herrington in a 2021 BROADBAND COMMUNITIES webinar. "Some customers prefer to read an article, while others prefer to watch a video or be guided through to a resolution. What businesses today need is a single source of answers that can be served up in a variety of formats across a variety of channels to meet customers wherever they are, with consistent

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and up-to-date answers. That's what omnichannel is all about."

What does an omnichannel support platform look like in 2022? A multitude of factors can be a part of an omnichannel platform, spanning thorough agent-assisted support, increased digital adoption among end users, and comprehensive self-serve support. Let's look at all three.

ASSISTED SUPPORT

Supporting agents who work remotely is critical to providing end customers with the answers they need to solve their technology issues. An omnichannel platform that offers assisted support provides tools and resources to serve customer needs and empowers support agents in almost any customer interaction. A successful assisted support platform should feature scalable, digital versions of devices and apps that allow free-form troubleshooting, empowering agents to resolve the most complex issues.

Agents with access to the same source of consistent, up-to-date answers as end customers are more likely to have higher problem-resolution rates and more satisfied customers. When agents have access to push answers directly to customers through email or text for follow-up education, the business is able to rewire customer behaviors to turn to self-serve for future questions, thereby deflecting future calls for basic inquiries and saving costly assisted interactions. Confident, educated agents directly contribute to the number of positive customer experiences, improving a company's support standards.

DIGITAL ADOPTION

Service adoption within an omnichannel support platform offers

a guided onboarding experience through various channels, including email, messaging, web, in-app and more, and reduces the need for in-person assistance and call-center wait times. Thorough onboarding allows customers and agents to easily become accustomed to their devices, apps and services without having to navigate through a mix of channels or support teams to find answers.

By proactively reaching customers at the moment of initial setup with easy-to-follow support resources, companies can eliminate the influx of assisted support interactions and provide a frictionless onboarding experience for customers. This is critical for driving strong adoption of services.

SELF-SERVE

One of the most important aspects of an omnichannel platform is self-serve support. That is defined as a means of enabling individuals to solve issues and answer questions on their own. Providing effective self-serve support comes down to having the right answers – meaning they're always up-to-date and accurate – available in the right channels at the right moment when users need them.

Self-serve options have now become a necessity for customers who want to quickly and efficiently solve issues on their own. When agents must handle common repetitive issues, a company can accrue significant costs. Tech support calls cost an average of $6 to $20 per call, and truck rolls to a customer's home are even more costly. Broadband providers have an urgent need to maximize self-serve support to cut costs and reduce agent call volume.

How does your organization provide self-support?

We don't offer self support — 43%

Text articles, frequently asked questions or PDFs — 43%

Interactive step-by-step guides — 14%
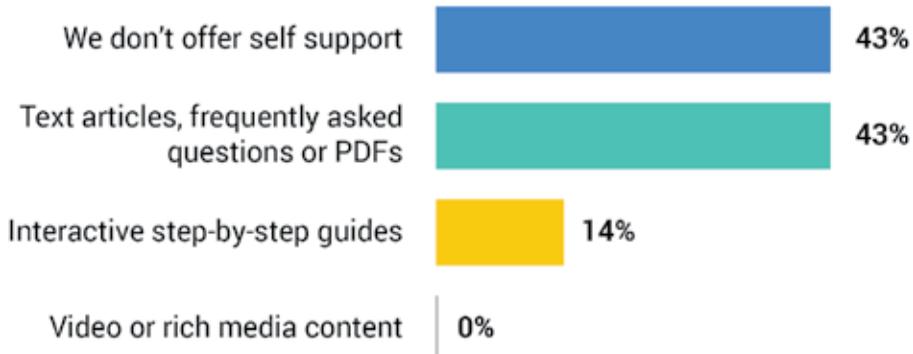
Video or rich media content — 0%

Figure 1

In one partnered interview with **Broadband Communities**, Ozmo found that 43 percent of respondents use text-based articles, static PDFs or basic frequently asked questions as ways of providing self-serve support to their customers. An equal percentage of respondents stated that they do not offer any self-serve support resources (See Figure 1).

One problem with text-based guides is that they are often lengthy and not optimized for proper technical support and education. They can also be difficult, if not impossible, to keep up-to-date as new software versions become available. Effective support lies within easily accessible self-serve resources, such as guided tutorials, videos and troubleshooting flows to

solve device or application issues. These interactive formats are more effective at resolving customer issues. Self-serve tools have the power to drastically increase call deflection rates for a company's contact center, which can help save significant time and money.

Without effective self-serve support solutions through their providers' digital channels, customers are more likely to

What is the biggest challenge your business faces when providing self-support?

Ensuring customers can find the answers they are looking for — 51%

Keeping answers up to date — 29%

Keeping answers consistent across channels — 10%
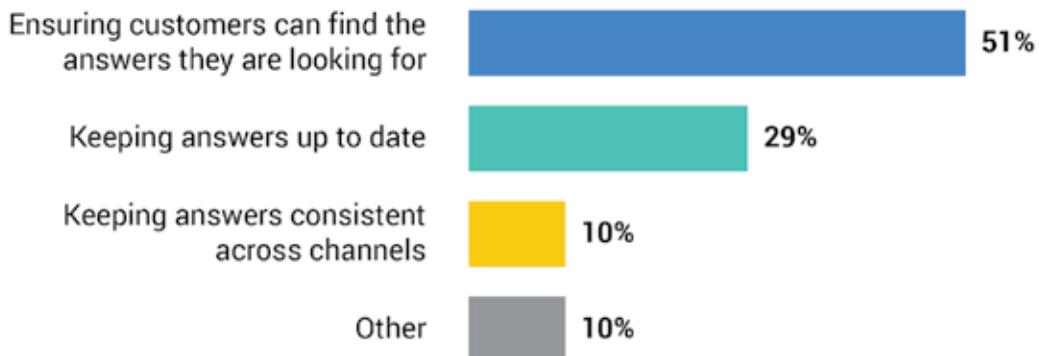
Other — 10%

Figure 2

swarm contact centers for support or, worse, have their complex tech issues go unanswered. When customers are left to rely on search engines for their tech support questions, often the answers are unclear, outdated and unreliable.

Responses to another poll question in the **Broadband Communities** webinar showed that more than half of broadband providers agreed that the most challenging aspect of providing self-serve support in their business is ensuring customers can find the answers they are looking for. Twenty-nine percent of respondents stated that keeping answers up-to-date was the most difficult part of supporting customers via digital channels (See Figure 2).

With the help of an omnichannel support platform, each challenge is addressed directly. Searchable, easily accessible self-support that adapts to all of a business's digital channels ensures customers can quickly find the answers they need, when they need them. A continuously updated platform that stays ahead of the pace of change with ever-evolving technology is necessary to efficiently, effectively guide customers through their support interactions. An optimal support solution is consistently updated to emulate the newest software and hardware updates on every device or app available in its library.

VIRTUALIZING SUPPORT

Virtualization has become a powerful tool within the world of technology, and in 2022, broadband providers can expect their competitors to empower their agents with this technology. But readers may be wondering: What is a virtual device?

Also known as a device emulator, a virtual device is a digital, free-form representation of a physical device that functions similarly to the way it would if a person held the physical device. A support agent can interact freely with the virtual device, navigating screen-by-screen through tens of thousands of pathways, to provide accurate, efficient assisted support.

Similarly, a virtual app or an app emulator is a digital, free-form representation of a mobile or web application that functions similarly to the way it would if a user were to interact with a live version of that application. Virtual apps can emulate the screens, features and functions of any application. A support agent can interact freely with the virtual app, navigating screen-by-screen and guiding the customer through hundreds or thousands of pathways.

True emulators eliminate the privacy concerns associated with remote login, removing the need for a support agent to connect to a customer's unique device. Devices store so much personal information and private data that many customers are hesitant or unwilling to permit remote access to their devices. Virtual devices and apps give agents the ability to see exactly what customers see on their devices or apps, whether they are on a call or in chat support, with no risk to customers.

In addition, emulators significantly reduce call-handling time when compared with remote login software, eliminating the complex and tedious setup and login process associated with remotely accessing a device. By having a robust library of devices and apps supported on every software and release version, agents can bypass the need for remote access and get right to supporting customers through any technical issue or question.

One of the most valuable benefits virtual devices and apps provide is comprehensive support for agents, regardless of their work environment. Over the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, work environments have adjusted to accommodate hybrid environments, or even transitioned to be fully remote. Virtual devices and apps allow agents to access the resources they need to effectively support customers in their interactions from anywhere at any time.

Scalable libraries of virtual devices and apps completely eliminate the need for physical device libraries to be purchased and maintained. This benefit alone saves valuable resources every year for large enterprises that historically maintained physical devices in contact centers. When agents are provided with libraries of hundreds of virtual devices and apps, they don't have to put a customer on hold to leave their seat to attempt to locate a specific device, hope it's charged, guess which software version it might be on or find that it might be in use by a coworker when they need it. Advanced functionality, such as interactive gestures, means the ability to emulate conditional events, including initial setup, and life cycle support allows an agent to switch software versions with one click. Virtual devices and apps entirely eliminate the need for physical hardware in the contact center.

ADVANCED CUSTOMER SUPPORT IS HERE

This year, the shift to digital, scalable support is vital for broadband providers looking to provide their agents and end customers with unmatched service experiences. It's imperative that broadband providers have the right resources to implement truly omnichannel support, whether through enhancing assisted support or driving digital adoption among customers, thereby rewiring customer behavior to link customers to self-serve options.

Similarly, customers who are engaged with and have access to self-serve support tools are more likely to solve their issues on their own before reaching out to customer service. Lastly, businesses of all sizes can benefit from virtual device and app technology in the contact center. From small, regional broadband providers with 10 agents to some of the world's largest enterprises with vast agent workforces across the globe, teams can scale to transform their contact centers. The future of advanced customer support is now – is your team ready? ❖

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