

How Telecom Companies Can Ensure Customer Needs Are Met During Mergers

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Mobile users in India are on their way to being better connected as Vodafone and Idea finalize their [merger](#) and set their sights on bringing 4G network performance to consumers across the country. When it comes to being better connected to loved ones, streaming their favorite content or conducting business via a mobile device, the merger is good news for prospective and current customers. However, as with any merger, there is also a sense of uncertainty as the two companies begin to iron out the details of their new relationship.



One of the biggest concerns customers will have is regarding how their relationship with their current mobile service provider will change, including adjustments to their bill or service plan, as well as the best way to contact their provider should they need help. Now that Vodafone is serving more than 395 million subscribers, there is a justified fear that customers will be lost in the shuffle and their past loyalty may be overlooked or omitted due to restructuring. As customers look to build more intimate relationships with brands and expect a personalized experience, these types of risks can push customers away. Beyond losing their existing relationship, there is also the fear of trying to connect with a customer service team that may be feeling the strain of 395 millions subscribers.

To successfully serve customers during a merger, companies need to ensure they are accessible to their customers, provide consistent, unified information on the new parent company and monitor customer needs to ensure nothing gets overlooked. So what's the best way to create a controlled, comprehensive, accessible resource without having customer service teams work all hours of the day? The answer can be found in the use of AI-fueled virtual assistants that help to manage the front line of customer experience. As a key component of the customer service process, self-service virtual assistants are able to support both the customer experience team and its subscribers to more efficiently use resources and provide the 24/7 support that is demanded by today's consumers.

Make Sure Customers Still Feel Loved

One of a customer's biggest fears during a merger is that they won't know where or who to go to for help, feeling unsupported and unsteady. To alleviate this, both companies involved need to ensure that customers don't need to look for help, but rather ensure that help is readily available. This shows customers that, regardless of the changes in the business itself, the customer still comes first. Self-service virtual assistants can empower a business to be everywhere their customers are, offering technology that can be implemented across all channels, be it mobile, web, email and even social. Virtual assistants also allow providers such as Vodafone and Idea to ensure that each and every customer receives the most accurate and consistent information. Managing all resources through one centralized system, businesses can ensure that the information provided on Facebook is consistent with what is being shared on the website.

Beyond access and accuracy, businesses also need to ensure that they are creating the most effortless experience possible for their customers. One misstep when integrating customer service tools is the deployment of automated chat bots that require customers to identify the "right" way to ask a questions in order to get the answer they need. When things are already unsteady, this type of static, unproductive interaction can frustrate customers and may even cause them to consider going to a competitor. However, through natural language processing and AI-fueled capabilities for contextual conversations, virtual assistants can alleviate this frustration by creating an engagement

that feels natural and easy for customers. This means empowering customers to control the conversation, allowing them to ask questions any way they choose and propose follow-up inquiries without needing to re-explain themselves. It also requires that virtual assistants provide personalized answers based on a customer's history - be it with the new or previously existing company.

Better Empower the Customer Experience Team

Customers aren't the only ones businesses need to inform during a merger, it's equally important to ensure that your employees are up-to-date on the state of the new company. When it comes to customer experience, employees are on the front-line of the business, building the actual relationship consumers have with a brand and providing needed support. Internal use of virtual assistant technology can ensure that the workforce always has the most accurate answers to customers biggest questions.

In the same way consumers can ask questions on the website to find an answer, employees can leverage the same exact database to pull information during a conversation -- be it on chat or over the phone. More importantly, virtual assistant solutions can enable companies to update these resources in real-time across all customer service teams. In the case of a merger, this kind of capability is critical to helping both employees and customers understand the sometimes rapid changes that can occur.

Beyond ensuring that employees have the right information, businesses also need to ensure that they are empowering their teams to work efficiently and effectively. There's no question that with a customer base of 395 million, customer service teams can't directly reach out to each and every customer as soon as they need help. However, this also means that customers could be facing longer wait times to receive support, again leading to a number of unhappy people now interacting with an overworked customer service team. By offering the opportunity for customers to self-serve, they can feel empowered to find the answers they need without having to speak to someone. This makes their experience with a business fast, flexible and effective. Should a virtual assistant not be able to offer the best answer to a question, its AI-capabilities are then able to identify which channel or department it should connect the customer to. More importantly, the virtual assistant is also able to share insight from its initial conversation with the customer -- ensuring that the conversation doesn't restart every time a transfer occurs.

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Listen to Customers Reactions to the Merger

While it is important to implement all the necessary strategies to ensure customers have access to accurate information, it's also important to take the time to listen. A customer service resource will never meet every single consumer need and this can be especially true during a merger when there are a number of changes and uncertainties. To offer the best support possible, businesses

need to be collecting data on customer interactions and identifying in real-time how their strategy and resources need to shift. The best way to accomplish this is by analyzing data from self-service interactions on every channel the business reaches. Using virtual assistant technology and robust analytics, a business can thereby assess where roadblocks or gaps in information are and easily make the needed changes to ensure they continue to support their customers in the best manner possible. Ensuring that your customer service processes can improve fast to adapt and evolve as business changes shows that, regardless of the structure of the business, the customers still come first.

A merger can be an exciting time for the companies involved, creating new opportunities to grow in a market and better serve consumers. However, for their current customers, mergers can also be an unsettling experience that creates fears regarding their future relationship with the business. By implementing self-service virtual customer assistants to provide continuous access, up-to-date information and effortless support, businesses have an opportunity to reassure customers that they are still the most important asset.