Microsoft Uses Gamification to Boost Performance, Skills and Communication across Thousands of Agents

A Frost & Sullivan Customer Case Study
AN EXCERPT FROM FROST & SULLIVAN’S ‘ENHANCING OMNICHANNEL AGENT PRODUCTIVITY’ REPORT – NOVEMBER 2016

There is no substitute for the human touch provided by omnichannel contact center agents when connecting virtually with customers for complex service and sales support issues. Agents are the linchpin to successful and profitable Customer Experiences.

But it’s costly to hire, train, manage, accommodate, and equip agents to perform these essential tasks. Wages and benefits comprise the lion’s share of operating expenses (65%-70%). Moreover, having contact center agents work on premise incurs significant real estate, facilities, and equipment outlays.

In today’s competitive environment, organizations (businesses, non-profits, and government agencies) must delight customers and control costs in order to exceed their goals and spur growth. Ensuring that contact center agents are productive and engage with learning is essential.

**Recommendation: Consider Gamification.** Gamification (also known as digital motivation) is a set of effective agent solutions that boost performance and learning. Gamification rewards contact center agents for meeting and exceeding goals, scores and targets, and for achievements, compliance, and training. Within this category, GamEffective was chosen in the report as the Top Pick for Agent Productivity applications.

MICROSOFT AGENT PRODUCTIVITY CASE STUDY

Microsoft is a leading global technology platform and productivity company headquartered in Redmond, Washington. The company’s B2C customers are served by Microsoft’s Consumer Support Services, which has a network of global support centers located in many regions and countries, including North America, Latin America, India, and The Philippines. These centers employ thousands of agents, providing customer assistance in many languages.

**The Need**

Microsoft staff discussed new ways to recognize and reward agents while increasing their productivity. The focus was to change behaviors, develop skills, encourage sales, and drive outcomes and innovation in a fun and interactive manner.

Additionally, Microsoft had multiple ways to communicate with its agents on emerging issues, updates, and news across its many teams. But there were no centralized communications or methods for measuring compliance with the company’s metrics and policies.

**The Response**

Microsoft identified gamification as a solution to these needs. The company believed it could be more successful at encouraging and recognizing agents for positive outcomes through each customer interaction than through monthly scorecards. Gamification also would allow the firm to provide consistent messaging across teams, along with the ability to track compliance and, if needed, have agent training to ensure it.

Microsoft began gamification planning in 2015. The company defined the features, business requirements, and operational metrics. These include leveling (level advancement), badges, and scoring systems, as well as other game elements, which would vary by agent team and region.

Microsoft also set out clear goals. The company wanted a gamification solution to enable and improve agent engagement, satisfaction, and retention. The product also had to increase speed to proficiency, heighten agent knowledge and skills, and sustain excellence. Microsoft also set additional overall goals of sales, customer satisfaction
and loyalty, and greater operational efficiency and cost savings. Finally, gamification would have to bolster real-time internal communication.

Microsoft met with six gamification vendors, winnowed its list to three finalists, and then selected GamEffective. The company cited it for having the best out-of-the-box solution that was tailored to driving the right behaviors. The firm said GamEffective also had an enjoyable interface that allowed agents to grow, try, and learn, without feeling they were being overtly measured for performance.

The Results

The GamEffective installation was straightforward, with simple setup and no agent training. Agents would log in, watch the introduction videos, and begin using the platform. The badges and points rewards system was tied to desired outcomes.

GamEffective’s solution in Microsoft has the platform running as a SaaS with no local installation. Results are promising with sustained improvements for specific issue types and processes.

- Any activity Microsoft put within the game for sales campaigns, or for issue resolution for top or difficult call drivers, showed immediate returns.

- Some gamification activities (i.e., simulations) emulate customer interactions. Agents could complete the tasks at their desks and then take the next calls, with the relevant micro-learning top of mind. This feature eliminated traditional off-desk training that resulted in time lapses between learning and executing, which lowered the effectiveness of lessons. It also grew agent availability and output.

The rewards from the GamEffective platform drove agents to improve their performance and learning, which, together with the other results, boosted the performance of Microsoft’s Consumer Support Services as a whole. As a result, Microsoft plans to expand the solution across more agent teams and languages.
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