Improving Customer Experience and NPS Through Quality Assessment

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INTRODUCTION

This eBook sponsored by the call center quality management, agent performance, and engagement experts at Scorebuddy, presents a series of topics intended to help companies measure Quality Assurance in the call center and to use these metrics to improve NPS and overall customer experience.

Quality Assurance solutions are being implemented by organizations ranging in size, geography and industry, with the aim of delivering consistent service quality and improving the customer journey). NPS is typically an external measure of customer sentiment and applies to both the overall brand as well as to individual customer service transactions. Improved NPS, as discussed throughout this eBook, is directly correlated to increased revenue and understand the connection between service delivery and NPS is a key goal of a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF™). .

From agent self-scoring and engagement, understanding measurable call center insights and linking Internal QA scores to external NPS results, we discuss how to identify the ingredients of a consistently successful customer journey.

The customer experience and overall customer sentiment can be subjective in nature. Every contact center interaction is unique. Every consumer and agent interaction presents its own highly specific challenges. But there are methods and tools to effectively discover, measure, and connect service quality with customer sentiment.

Quantifying the customer journey into actionable insights may seem daunting, but it is absolutely necessary in order to improve a given company's NPS. Understanding how this journey may be improved through the lens of the customer experience is what this eBook sets out to do.
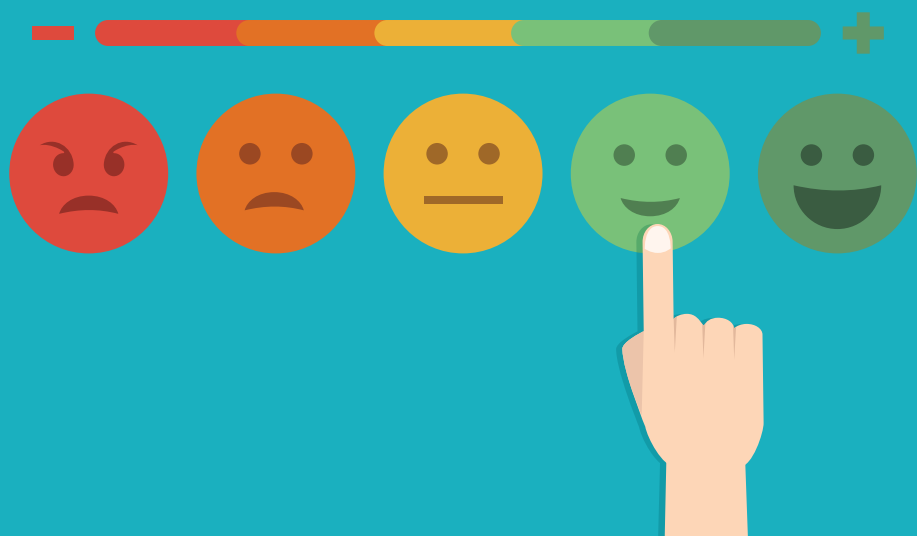
UNDERSTANDING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY THROUGH YOUR CONTACT CENTER

It is easy to say that in order to truly understand the customer journey; a company must put themselves in the position of a customer and then travel a given journey accordingly.

Actually doing it is a bit more of a challenge than it might appear at first sight.

Many journeys are as individual as the customer, so many variables come into play including the context and the purpose of the journey.

First, you must have a solid sense of the type of people who make up your company's audience. Don't guess. This is too important. It may be useful to partner with your marketing or advertising teams to get a good grasp on audience demographics (who they are) and psychographics (who they want to be). Create or have audience personas made, so that you are certain to focus on what a particular customer, with a particular background, and unique challenge is facing and needs from you at this precise time.

Next, you will need to map out a given journey -- the entire customer arc of engagement -- from initial contact through point-of-sale and beyond. You need to look closely at the entry points to the contact center and map where the journey took your customer before they contacted the center.

In "Using Customer Journey Maps to Improve Customer Experience," Adam Richardson in Harvard Business Review looks at the customer journey as follows:

Engage → Buy → Use → Share → Complete

While Richardson argues that the "complete" cycle may consist of an upgrade, a replacement, or choosing a competitor, this view is still fairly simple and optimistic. A true customer journey will need to account for a decision not to buy, or a decision not to share one's positive experience. It will identify what happens or could happen along the way that impacts a customer's positive or negative decision-making process.

Be sure to consider each transaction or touch point along the journey -- a phone call, an email onboarding series, a digital advertisement. Then consider all of the tiny, but essential details along the way. With a contact center call, for example...

- How long is the wait time?

- What information is the caller asked to provide?

- What questions are asked?

- What is the reason for the call?

- How informed is the agent?

- How, if at all, is the issue resolved?

- What are the next steps?

- Is the caller prompted to answer a survey?

- How did the customer feel after the interaction?

- How did the agent feel after the interaction?

Every touchpoint matters. Every interaction counts. Each of these moments rolls up into successful or failed brand loyalty.

The Authentic Customer Journey

To take an authentic customer journey, you must remove your business executive self from the equation and follow, as closely as possible, your customer's true journey. For now this is a map that is followed by audience personas, but it quickly becomes very real, and can be highly emotional.

What is a Customer Interaction?

A customer interaction, often called a customer touchpoint, is defined as any moment in which a customer directly or indirectly interacts with your brand. These can be...

- Phone conversations

- Emails

- Website visits

- Digital advertising

- Product or service purchasing

The key to remember is that while some similarities may exist, every customer interaction is entirely unique. Even when comparing two customers who receive the same email -- the circumstances, timing, and individuals are different, thus deeming the two interactions appropriately unique.

Transactional vs. Complex Customer Interactions

While every customer interaction is unique, we can place interaction types into two general buckets: transactional customer interactions and complex, or relationship, customer interactions.

The more frequent transactional interaction typically occurs in call centers when a customer speaks to an agent. Transactional interactions, by definition, represent a give and take, or an exchange of information. The customer may ask about store hours or pricing and then expect an answer in return. Sales also fall under transactional interactions. A customer may ask for a particular product or service and then receive it. In a transactional customer interaction, there is no emphasis placed upon building customer relationships. This is a simple, cut-and-dry exchange of information. Increasingly these types of transactions

are automated through the use of apps, websites and recently chatbots.

Complex or relationship customer interactions are focused more on relationship-building. These types of interactions are categorized as complex because they are more consultative in nature. A complex interaction may consist, for example, of a customer asking for a specific recommendation. They may, for example, wish to discuss product types or look for a specific solution to a problem. These complex interactions are less about the customer providing their name and contact information in exchange for a straightforward answer to a question, in many cases these involve resolving a problem and have a high emotional quotient. They are interactions that require more knowledge, nuance, and thoughtfulness in approach.

An Emotional Customer Journey

If proper homework has been done up front with regard to the development of audience personas, then more may be understood about how truly emotional a customer journey can be. Understanding a customer's needs is the only way to gauge how successful your call center can be at meeting those needs. And only then can you decide what type of interaction approach is best at meeting or exceeding customer expectations.

Assessing customer sentiment is something of an art form, Net Promoter Score (NPS) measurements can certainly assist in measuring and testing these challenges, NPS will indicate the confidence level the customer left with and test their intention to risk personal reputation by recommending your service. It may be necessary to ask a couple of follow-up questions to get a deeper understanding of the consumer's emotional state.

Call centers and their respective clients have a choice -- to be transactional or complex. You are at liberty to decide either way, but from a business standpoint questions must be answered:

- Which method is the most economical?

- Which method will increase NPS and ultimately drive revenue?

- Is the time and potential revenue increase worth the potential cost?

- Which method, based on audience persona and customer journey mapping you have completed, does your audience require?

- Which method will most emotionally resonate with your audience?

Key Takeaways

Often, the contact center is the first point of customer contact. It represents your company's opportunity to make a good first impression. When not busy working to make positive, lasting impressions, your call center is often charged with managing conflict resolution.

Each of these common scenarios is equally a moment of opportunity to build and foster customer relationships. It is certainly worth investigating further to develop a deeper understanding of the multiple customer journeys undertaken, to train agents to be adaptable and to ensure the right types of customer interactions are taking place to match your customer's needs, emotional state, and to improve their entire journey from beginning through sales and retention.

HOW CALL CENTER QA IMPROVES NPS AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Your agents don't operate in a vacuum; many variables influence the delivery of a customer experience. Organizations need an ability to identify root causes and effects on both good and bad outcomes, to repair broken processes or procedures and to develop priorities for coaching and training agents. The frequency of **underlying root causes** should drive your organization's priorities and focus.

Tagging quality assurance and assessment scores with root causes will give you a clear direction for managing major elements of contact center performance:

- Knowledge gaps that need to be closed

- Agent Skill Gaps that need coaching

- Authority and permissions: Do agents have the authority to delight the customer?

- Broken or inefficient processes

- Desktop tool failures supporting the agent (not fit for purpose or poorly deployed)

- Environmental negatives (low res screens, poorly lit rooms, poor ergonomics)

The goal is to understand the impact of these elements on the outcome of an interaction and, more importantly, to tie that to the customer sentiment using Net Promoter Score (NPS).

We begin our eBook with the topics of root causes analysis and agent self-awareness which can have a direct impact on improving NPS and customer experience.

How to boost your Net Promoter Score?

"How likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague? And could you please rate your recommendation on a scale of 0-10?"

These are two questions that can induce anxiety into the boldest companies. It seems as if there are always some floating inconsistencies or issues that could prevent overwhelming enthusiasm for customer responses. But the questions are real and have been so since 2003 when Frederick Reicheld of Bain & Company wrote about what he coined the Net Promoter Score (NPS) in a 2003 article for the [Harvard Business Review](#).

Reicheld's premise is simple. Answers to the "likely to recommend" question are rated on a scale of 0-10 and the responses are divided into three groups as follows:

- Promoters (rating of 9-10)
- Passives (7-8)
- Detractors (0-6)

The Net Promoter Score is determined by subtracting the percentage of detractor responses from the percentage of promoters. **The goal is to get as high a Net Promoter Score as possible as an indicator of customer perception of a company's service and support.**

Understanding the difference between Brand and Transactional NPS

Net Promoter Score is based on just one 'killer' question: Will your customer risk their reputation by recommending your brand to their friends? It is all-embracing, so businesses must ask themselves important questions related to their customer service delivery and overall engagement. Companies also need to understand and separate transactional NPS (recommendation based on a recent interaction) and Brand NPS (how they feel about your products or company generally).

Brand NPS is the accumulated experiences with the brand, much of which is beyond the control of the contact center. However, the contact center is typically where direct interpersonal interactions happen, which sometimes can become emotionally charged and, as such, can have a critical impact on the overall Brand NPS score for that customer.

Boosting the NPS depends on four factors and companies have found different ways to go about attaining their goals:

1. Manage the overall customer experience which will be reflected in a positive NPS score.

2. Live the customer journey by tracking every touch point in your company's customer engagement process so that high impact improvements may be made appropriately.

3. Incorporate contact center agent self-awareness to allow for performance course correction opportunities and improved customer perceptions.

4. Understand the causes of low NPS scores by targeted customer surveys.

Improve NPS through contact center agent self-awareness

The contact center is a logical touchpoint in the exploration of the customer journey because of its obvious customer engagement elements. Interactions, resolutions and relationship building all add up to overall customer perception. So, what's the best way to encourage agents to work effectively to improve NPS?

The key is to get the agent to look at interactions through the customers' eyes, to feel what the customer feels, to be self-critical.

Making agents aware of the affect they can have on customer sentiment is critical to promoting and delivering positive behaviors and building skills and driving NPS improvements. This is achieved through sharing QA results and collaborating on how to improve outcomes on an individual and team basis.

Does Agent Self-Scoring Work?

One tested approach is to promote the concept that agents should be empowered with ownership of their own performance measurement, where they make improvements based on their assessment of real-world scenarios. This tactical approach lines up with the evolution of a strategic contact center QA framework, in which the tactical goal is to gain a deeper understanding of both sides of the customer service experience, agent and customer. With this approach, agents are urged to self-score their own success metrics on their calls, thus prompting them to analyze and course correct if necessary.

When agents have the authority to own their own performance, morale is increased and staff turnover slows because they have input on the expected results. Allowing them to alter their performance at their own recognition of flaws lets them have some control over the improvement process without feeling like they are being reprimanded for inadequate performance time and again. This scenario also frees up the Quality Assurance Manager for other work that will help the center improve overall effectiveness.

Just a little bit of autonomy goes a long way in identifying areas for improvement. When employees are encouraged to make changes based on their observations, they become more self-aware, they have a deeper understanding of the effect they can have on a customer and will feel more in control. In addition to improving productivity within the contact center, acting on this feedback will also boost agent productivity as they will be more motivated and engaged with their work.

In one case, experienced agents were trained to self-score. Initially they were more stringent in scoring than the evaluators, but over time they developed a greater self-awareness and understanding of the customer's needs. This was measured closely with NPS scores being attributed at an agent level and it was clear that the NPS scores for self-scoring agents improved 3-4 points over traditionally scored agents.

Under these circumstances, employees will feel valued, more in control and more inclined to stay and will be willing to offer up suggestions and positive improvements in the future. Your training investment will pay off in the long run and staff churn will be reduced, minimizing the turnover rate and training of new employees.

Boost morale, reduce churn and identify areas of improvement

Empowering contact center employees to own their work will not only boost morale and cut down on staff churn, but it will most importantly outline the fundamental causes of poor service. Poor areas of performance, once identified, can then be directly addressed with appropriate changes made. In a scenario, for example, of an employee's self-scoring data being in stark contrast with customer feedback, there will be a disconnect in expectations on both sides.

When empowered, the agent will have the opportunity to make suggestions which will close that gap and resolve any customer dissatisfaction quickly. What may be temporarily uncomfortable in the self-awareness exercise will ultimately result in an acceptable solution and will serve as an essential stepping stone in working toward better customer experiences.

When it comes to improving your company's NPS score, don't feel like you're out there all alone. Engage your contact center agents and let them self-identify areas of improvement and you're well on your way toward getting only positive answers when your customers are asked: "Would you recommend our company to a friend or colleague?"

Key Takeaways

To move the Brand NPS needle, actions and improvements are needed right across the customer journey, however the contact center is shown to have a disproportionate impact on customer sentiment for those customers who need to contact you and through word of mouth on those that haven't contacted you. Using a combination of root cause analysis and methods to improve agent self-awareness of their role and impact on customer sentiment, the contact center can systematically improve the customer experience, and so can drive an overall improvement in both Transactional and Brand NPS.

CORRELATING NPS AND QA SCORING — DRIVING SHAREHOLDER VALUE

To drive shareholder value, contact center customer service across all customer-facing channels must be nothing short of excellent.

But how can something as seemingly subjective as a contact center customer service experience be measured in an effective way that directly correlates to Shareholder Value?
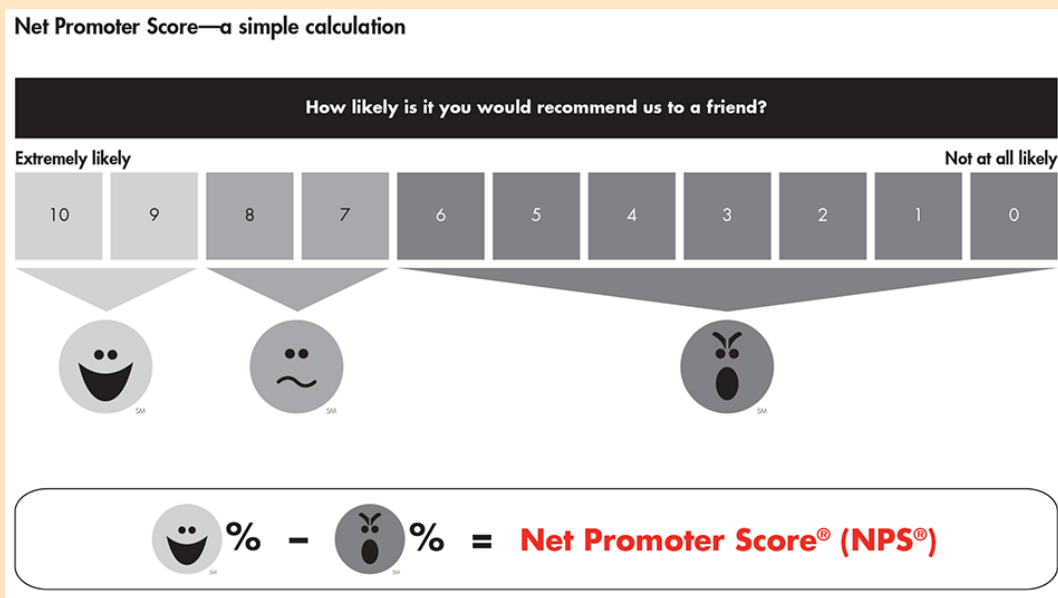
The truth is that this is not easy as these metrics tend to be measured using different platforms and can be difficult to cross reference. As previously stated, NPS is typically measured using surveys generated by the marketing department and QA is an operational metric gathered by evaluators and supervisors in the contact center. To understand how NPS and QA work together, let's review how we define these measurements and how they fit into a quality assurance framework.

Understanding Quality Assurance

Most simplistically, quality assurance is a process to maintain the quality of a given product or service. In a call center, quality assurance keeps checks and balances on the customer's experience taking into account things like agent performance, adherence to process and outcomes. The QA process of gathering data, organizing it and reporting on outcomes can be thought of as a framework.

The QA scoring process typically evolves from operational through tactical to strategic. In short, operational call centers focus on managing day-to-day process and workflows while tactical call centers are more concerned with growth and scalability, they focus on medium-term business objectives and impact. Strategic call center QA frameworks address longer term goals and are agents for positive fundamental organizational change.

As call centers evolve between operational, tactical and strategic QA frameworks, more time is dedicated to measuring and identifying potential areas of improvement. Every call is unique, but uncovering training gaps, negative behaviors or broken internal processes impacts the bigger picture, ultimately driving a greater customer experience and improved NPS.

Net Promoter Score—a simple calculation

How likely is it you would recommend us to a friend?

Extremely likely | Not at all likely

10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0

☺ % − 😠 % = **Net Promoter Score® (NPS®)**

Source: Bain & Company

How Can NPS Be Used to Analyze the Customer Journey?

NPS is used across organizations and sectors as a benchmarking metric to test customer loyalty and sentiment towards the brand. The goal is to drive scores that result in fewer detractors and more promoters through consistently positive customer experiences and outcomes.

How to Move the NPS Needle for Greater Impact

In the 2017 guide to improving your contact centre Net Promoter Score, Bright UK Limited breaks down the drivers of improved NPS. They are: customer effort, agent engagement, and agent knowledge. Bright highlights the following actions that can be taken to really push the NPS needle over towards those promoter scores of nine and ten.

- **Be fast:** There exists a direct relationship between speed of answer and NPS. Also, it is recommended to survey within 10 seconds of the interaction.

- **Engage employees:** There is a 1:1 relationship between employee NPS scores and customers. Happier employees tend to drive NPS.

- **Be knowledgeable:** It has been found that knowledge trumps empathy when it comes to NPS. "[Agents] need to demonstrate to the customer that they... have the ability to answer complex queries in a confident and eloquent way."

- **Automate:** Automated transactional surveys have nearly a 20% better return than SMS or email.

- **Quantify the results:** As NPS increases, look to your ROI to understand exactly how much NPS is driving revenue.

Actions taken by Voxpro, an international Outsource call center, that services high volume clients such as Google, Stripe and Airbnb, helped them move the NPS needle.

Making the QA NPS Connection

Kieren McCarthy, Head of Quality at Voxpro, summarizes how his team tackled the list above by paying particular **attention to engaging employees through a self-scoring mechanism. As employees began to look at each consumer transaction with more dedicated self-awareness, their own brand loyalty increased.**

While quality assurance initially dropped, it became more aligned with NPS and customer sentiment, so that managers could make more sense out of what was really going on in each transaction. They were suddenly given precise insight into the challenges agents and customers were facing. In time, because of this proven 1:1 relationship between employee satisfaction and consumer NPS, Voxpro's quality assurance and NPS both began to successfully climb as intended.

Key Takeaways

Driving true shareholder value takes time, monitoring, insight and effort. The key connection is the quality of the agent service and the customer NPS score, right down to the individual agent. There's a certain amount of testing that must be done in order to ask the right questions at the right time, internally and externally, but the results and knowledge are worth it.

The needle gets pushed as call centers evolve their quality assurance initiatives and overlay NPS to provide a clear understanding of the meaningful changes that can be made to deliver improved NPS. There are several research papers that demonstrate companies with best in class NPS have share values that outperform the market and their competition. This is no easy feat, but it delivers big results.

HOW TO ALIGN CUSTOMER SENTIMENT WITH SERVICE DELIVERY

Let us begin by defining customer sentiment, why and how it should be measured. There are indeed a variety of survey tools available that may be used to collect, analyze, and ultimately work to improve customer sentiment, but before looking closer at these options, it is wise to understand why customer sentiment is so important in the first place.

Customer sentiment is a general feeling or attitude customers have about a particular brand and their willingness to invest in that brand. It is defined as an "economic indicator of the overall health of the economy," or a particular brand or business, as determined by consumer opinion. Companies and call centers wanting to thrive will obviously want to drive positive customer sentiment to ensure the continued health of their organizations.

How and When is Customer Sentiment Measured?

Customer sentiment may be measured a number of times throughout the customer journey. The exact timing of which will vary based on the company, type of customer, and customer needs and challenges. Generally, as a customer interacts with a brand, there are a variety of touchpoints that naturally lend themselves to measurable statistics via net promoter scoring or customer satisfaction surveys.

An example for our purposes might be a survey issued at the end of a customer service call. Survey owners usually reside in the Marketing Department but increasingly include quality and call center managers who are trying to understand the impact service delivery has on sentiment and wanting to share their learnings with the larger team and executives. Surveys may measure levels of customer satisfaction based on specific products, services, and interactions. A survey may also gauge a customer's overall feeling (or sentiment) for the company as a whole.

Of course, how these surveys are delivered and what question or questions are asked may make all the difference, not only in survey completion rates, but in achieving strong scores that tell a story executives can take direct action upon to improve.

Surveys with the highest completion rates fulfill the following best practices. They are:

- **Short -** ideally one or two quick, concise questions

- **Simple -** do not unnecessarily overcomplicate; keep your questions simple and ex-pectbigger results

- **Proximate -** timing is everything; it is best to survey customers immediately after an interaction

The Integrated Survey Tool

Many survey tools are standalone and require the importing of a contact list to issue invites or a static web link posted on a website. Integrated survey tools are designed to collect CSAT or NPS customer sentiment data where the invite is delivered immediately after a given customer interaction. invites can be automated by integrating into the CRM platform so that they are triggered by events in the CRM such as closing a case or sale. These surveys record the aptly named "moment of truth" that follows directly after a customer interacts with an agent.

Integrated Survey Tool Benefits

Embedding surveys with your CRM and integrating results into the Quality Assessment platform will streamline continuous customer sentiment measurement.

A real and immediate benefit is that call center managers can own this entire process without relying on outside departments to collect valuable customer data. Results are available in near real time allowing managers to act on the insights. The results are granular so that customer sentiment can be associated with individual event types, teams or agents. Comparing and contrasting internal quality scores and external customer sentiment results at a team and agent level delivers a deeper understanding of the cause and effect of service delivery. The surveys may be delivered in a variety of ways -- email, SMS-messaging -- with automated reminders to encourage customers to complete the surveys. These integrated survey tools provide quick and consistent results that are highly efficient feedback mechanisms. They at once deliver actionable call center learnings uncovering the close connection between the interaction with an agent and the impression that leaves on the customer.

Key Takeaways

Integrating customer surveyswith internal QA scores, when used correctly and in accordance with best practices, help the call center manager correlate internal QA with the customers experience, this will drive home results and insights resulting in operational improvements that can be quantified, that give customer sentiment a boost, ultimately improving sales and retention.

However, it is important to remember that no single survey statistic will be the final game-changer but NPS is becoming a standardized 'Killer' question. Keep in mind that customer feelings are not and should not be easy to objectively identify given all the variables. There is, for better or worse, no one true quick fix when it comes to customers who have such a variety of uniquely personal needs and challenges, but the goal is to identify trends that indicate cause and effect and can be quantified in impactful ways.

Integrating your surveys into your QA and CRM platforms will streamline the gathering of surveys and provide a continuous stream of valuable data allowing the organization to adjust and evolve strategies to improve customer experience with all the benefits that brings.

IN CONCLUSION – KEY TAKEAWAYS

The call center, typically a customer's first point of contact, represents your company's ideal opportunity to make a lasting first impression. Each example of call center conflict resolution is an opportunity to build and foster customer relationships. The only way to know where your call center's strengths and areas of opportunities are is to measure quality assurance.

Measuring call center Quality Assurance is necessary to improve NPS and other customer-driven experience analytics that directly correlate with revenue growth. This data may be collected through detailed analysis of both brand and transactional NPS, which may be improved by way of root cause analysis and agent self-scoring.

Only with fully-integrated survey tools in place can customer sentiment along the customer journey be fully-realized through quantifiable metrics. And only once that data is at last collected can a company begin to examine those insights and take appropriate actions to systematically improve them.

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