

# Knowledge Management for Customer Service Success:

How to gain the Customer Experience Advantage  
– any channel, any time, anywhere

*Organisations are under unprecedented pressure to deliver on customer expectations if they are to increase sales in highly competitive markets.*

*Centralising knowledge and sharing it across multiple channels is therefore imperative to create competitive advantage and deliver the best possible customer experience.*

*This white paper demonstrates the critical importance of knowledge management to your business moving forward and provides a start point for transforming your operations.*





# Knowledge Management: The jewel in the customer service crown

Organisations are under unprecedented pressure to deliver on customer expectations if they are to increase sales in highly competitive markets. Centralising knowledge and sharing it across multiple channels is therefore imperative to create competitive advantage and deliver the best possible customer experience.

But with tight budgets and a lengthening list of potential customer service projects, why should organisations invest in knowledge management ahead of other options?

## 1. Knowledge management is transformational

In an increasingly complex world, customers want to deal with knowledge-driven businesses. The success of the Apple Store around the world demonstrates how staff knowledge drives sales and increases margins. Harnessing the knowledge within your business and sharing it with customers and staff across all channels delivers differentiation and boosts revenues.

## 2. Increased customer engagement

Customers want consistent information and they want it now. 60% of consumers use web self-service to find answers to their questions<sup>1</sup>. If you fail to collect your knowledge and share it with customers and they will simply go elsewhere.

## 3. Greater efficiency and reduced costs

Organisations recognise the importance of knowledge but many store it in departmental silos. Centralising this information and making it available inside and outside the organisation dramatically reduces costs and increases efficiency through higher First Contact Resolution rates and a more consistent approach to customers.

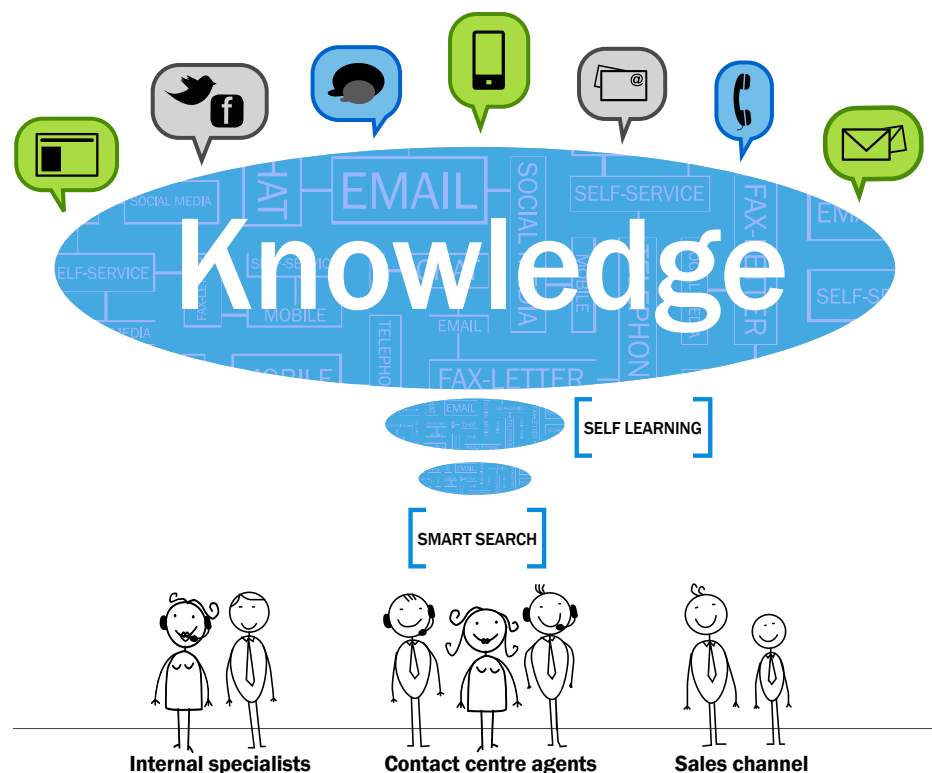
No wonder that Forrester describes knowledge management as ‘the jewel in the customer service crown<sup>2</sup>’. When customers are demanding an improved experience, failing to harness your knowledge increases costs, drives customer dissatisfaction and hits revenues. Built on real world examples, this white paper demonstrates the critical importance of knowledge management to your business moving forward and provides a start point for transforming your operations.

<sup>1,2</sup> Source: Forrester's Top 15 Trends for Customer Service in 2013 [http://blogs.forrester.com/kate\\_jeggett/13-01-14-forrester\\_top\\_15\\_trends\\_for\\_customer\\_service\\_in\\_2013](http://blogs.forrester.com/kate_jeggett/13-01-14-forrester_top_15_trends_for_customer_service_in_2013)

# Building multichannel knowledge management

Deploying knowledge management within customer service will transform the customer experience and empower your customer care team to be more productive. You need to start by creating a knowledgebase - a single, centralised source of information that underpins all channels and customer interactions.

Your knowledgebase can be implemented on one customer service channel and easily rolled out onto others, sharing a single information source to give consistent answers, improving First Contact Resolution and efficiency and significantly reducing cost per contact.





## Eight ways to drive knowledge management success

Effectively deploying knowledge management will transform your operations and deliver fast benefits to your bottom line. Based on Eptica's experience, here are eight ways to accelerate the benefits of knowledge management in your business.

### 1. Identify your knowledge sources

Look across your entire organisation and collate the different sources of information used to answer customer questions. Often these are very disparate and scattered – some customer service teams may rely on paper-based files, others on private notes on their PCs, while in many cases knowledge is stored in the brains of experienced agents.

Knowledge is power and often persuading people to share their information can be difficult. You need to ensure that they buy into the new system, so involve them in its development from the start. This way users will feel the system really belongs to them, making them more likely to contribute and use the answers when it goes live.

# 98%

NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA) launched a staff competition to name its knowledge management system. Sherlock the NHS BSA's knowledge management system is used by 98% of agents, providing over 2,000 answers per day.

### 2. Appoint a knowledge champion

Modern knowledge management systems allow users, such as agents, to automatically submit new content where there are gaps. However you still need to make someone responsible for overall management of knowledge, approving new content and proactively researching new areas that need to be added. These knowledge champions should take a strategic approach to knowledge sharing, ensuring information is available across multiple channels and to teams in different parts of the business quickly and easily. Additionally they can monitor performance, growth and usage of the system and act as an internal champion for knowledge.

Domestic & General's knowledge management system is used by 1,400 staff and contains over 700 articles – yet is run by just two knowledge managers.

# 700



## Eight ways to drive knowledge management success

### 3. Remember - knowledge doesn't stand still

Businesses change quickly. New products and services are launched, older ones evolve and customer needs change. So your knowledge must adapt. When customers ask new questions capture them and make sure you have the policies and workflow in place to quickly create and approve new answers, ready to add to the knowledgebase. Ensure your knowledgebase is self-learning, able to automatically update and organise itself in order to minimise administration and maximise effectiveness.

# 20%

Domestic & General has reduced training time by 20% as agents access updated information through its Fido knowledge management system, dramatically increasing productivity.

### 4. Make feedback simple and seamless

Fine tune your knowledge to make sure it continues to deliver the right answers. The best way to do this is through user feedback, so make it easy for agents and customers to give their opinions. This could be as simple as providing a rating scale for content and asking if it answered their question at the end of the process. For agents, allow them to comment on specific sections of your answers – are there areas that are unclear or in need of more work? And acknowledge and act on this feedback – nothing is more likely to drive users away than the feeling that their views have been ignored.

Staff surveys found that 91% of NHS BSA agents are confident the information on its Sherlock knowledge management system is up-to-date and correct and that it is simple to provide feedback.

# 91%



## Eight ways to drive knowledge management success

### 5. Use smart search to drive discovery

Simply piling all your answers into a knowledge management system creates a warehouse of information that is difficult to navigate. So make sure that your system incorporates smart search, making it easy for users to find the answers they are looking for. Ensure your search function understands the different terms your customers use for the same word so that it can deliver the most relevant answer time after time.

The KNOWHOW Knowledge Bank allows Dixons customers to type questions in plain English and receive a fast, non-technical answer.

### 6. Make it intuitive to use, whatever the channel

Customers want to be able to find answers across multiple channels and different types of device. So build a range of interfaces into your centralised knowledgebase, tailored to ensure they are simple to use by customers and agents. Make sure your knowledgebase can deal with different types of information – text, graphics and even video to deliver the right answer in the right format.

40%

AirAsia has introduced mobile, web, Facebook and telephone customer service, all based on the same knowledgebase. This has led to a 40% reduction in contact centre costs, despite dramatically increasing user numbers.

### 7. Create a structured design to meet different user requirements

Your knowledgebase needs to be accessible by both staff and customers. However in many cases the depth of information required is different, so adopt a structured design that provides more comprehensive answers to customer service staff than on your public website. A future-proofed design makes it simple to extend the right knowledge to other groups of users and channels inside and outside the business.

Dixon's KNOWHOW Knowledge Bank serves 300,000 monthly site visitors and 1,300 contact centre staff through the same user-friendly interface, with agents able to access more detailed information, including technical specifications.

### **8. Analyse results to improve business performance**

The questions your customers ask provide an invaluable source of feedback about your products and services. But to benefit from this insight you need to analyse this regularly – What are the top questions? Who is asking them? How is this changing over time? In a multichannel world you can gain additional insight by comparing different channels – are mobile users significantly different to the web or email for example. Use what you learn to change content on your website, update processes or amend products to better meet customer needs.

By analysing questions asked, Domestic & General is able to feed into new product development to keep at the forefront of the market.



### Dixons delivers its KNOWHOW knowledge online using website self-service for improved customer experience

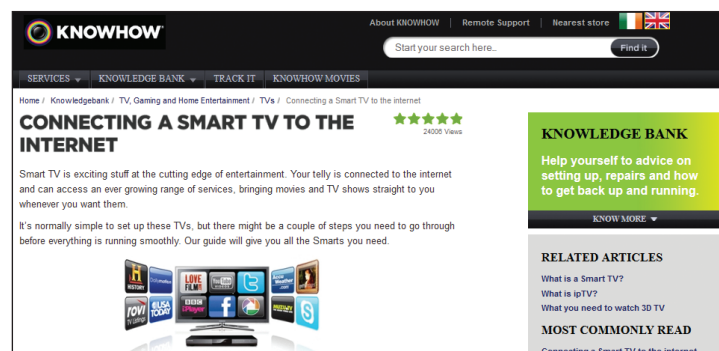
KNOWHOW is the service brand that spans Dixons Retail's UK activities, which includes Currys and PC World. In a fiercely competitive market, a key element of its strategy for growth is to move to a service-led business model that differentiates its brands from the competition.

Knowledge is at the heart of this and is being used to transform the business and the customer experience. With consumer electronics becoming more complex and interconnected, KNOWHOW aims to use Dixons' knowledge and expertise to reassure and assist customers. It aims to provide the UK's most comprehensive help, support and service infrastructure for electrical and computing products across all channels – instore, on the web, over the phone and through email, embedded within the customer journey.

### Delivering the KNOWHOW with Eptica

Eptica is at the heart of KNOWHOW's operations, powering a centralised online customer service knowledgebase that is available across the website and contact centre channels. Powerful meaning-based search technology enables customers and agents to simply type a question in plain English to receive a fast, non-technical, answer to their query. Alternatively they can browse the 1,200 articles, including How to videos, in the knowledgebase which provide easy to follow explanations across wide range of topics. Over 300,000 monthly site visitors and 1,300 contact centre agents now benefit from the centralised information within the KNOWHOW Knowledge Bank.

The welcoming, modern design incorporates customer friendly features including how difficult a task is and how long it will take. It also allows customers to provide feedback and rate content quickly and easily.



Since KNOWHOW launched, Dixons has seen the following benefits:

- Unique website visitors have grown by 17%, with average time spent on the site increasing by some 350%
- First Call Resolution has increased for inbound queries
- Customer satisfaction has grown, with metrics such as advocacy (likelihood to recommend) rising steadily by 28 percentage points over the last 12 months to 71%.





### **NHS Business Services Authority transforms telephone customer service for 3 million annual calls**

The NHS Business Services Authority provides critical central administration across the National Health Service, responsible for a wide range of healthcare-related services. These include managing the NHS Pension Scheme in England and Wales, which has over 2 million members, administering the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) scheme in the UK, and processing and making payments to dentists and pharmacists.

Delivering the highest levels of service efficiently is at the heart of NHS BSA's strategy. The combination of a large volume of calls and a complex variety of services means it is vital that agents are able to provide accurate, quick and consistent responses to customer questions.

NHS BSA understood that it needed to transform customer service, moving from paper-based information to a centralised knowledge management system, powered by Eptica, that was available to all its 230 agents, multiskilling them and ensuring they can work across all areas of the organisation.

### **Knowledge to answer 3 million calls every year**

Ensuring staff buy-in was critical to project success. Consequently NHS BSA worked closely with staff to involve them and created a name – Sherlock; with a brand and logo to make the system easily recognisable, understandable and approachable.

Designed around agent needs, Sherlock provides them with fast, up to date answers. They can flag where extra content is needed and provide feedback with a single click, ensuring answers are always optimised. Agents love the system, one commenting: "Genius! I feel it has had a massive impact on customer service and makes handling complex queries easier."

NHS BSA is now benefiting from greater efficiency, improved service levels and increased consistency of answers by using Eptica. And having begun on the telephone channel, NHS BSA is now rolling out knowledge to where it is needed, with information on specific services being shared on the email, social and web self-service channels.

#### **Key benefits:**

- 100% of staff say it makes a difference to the customer experience
- Agent training time has decreased by 30%
- The number of staff on the technical helpdesk has reduced by a third
- Sherlock is predicted to save £121,000 in its first year of operation, rising to £162,000 per annum in the future
- Sherlock receives nearly 40,000 hits per month with 9,000 articles in the knowledgebase



### AirAsia reduces contact centre costs by 40% through centralised knowledge across social media, telephone, email and web

AirAsia is one of the world's leading low cost airlines. Launched in 2001, it pioneered the low cost airline model in the region, introducing a whole new market to aviation – 60% of its travellers are first time flyers. The company has carried more than 100 million passengers, and has won numerous awards for its customer service, which is available across the web, telephone, email and social media channels.

From its beginnings AirAsia set out to be known for its outstanding customer service and invested heavily to make it simple and easy to find answers, especially for first time flyers. It has so far managed over 4 million enquiries through Eptica. To build confidence in customer service, AirAsia created a persona Lil' Miss Red, to represent customer service on the web and social media, providing a reassuring and easily recognisable signpost to fast answers.

### Consistent knowledge from a single source

As well as traditional channels such as the web, phone and email, AirAsia provides service through channels such as Facebook and mobile. What is critical for consistency of answers is that all these channels share the same knowledge, through AirAsia's Eptica system. So whether customers ask a question through the web, Facebook or mobile they receive the same answer, through the channel of their choice, 24 hours a day. This reduces the risk of separate silos of information being created and brings down cost. By using Eptica, AirAsia has been able to achieve a 40% reduction in contact centre costs, despite dramatically increasing user numbers as the business has expanded over the last decade.

The image displays three screenshots of AirAsia's customer service interface, illustrating a consistent user experience across different channels. The top left screenshot shows the Facebook interface with the 'ask AirAsia' button. The bottom left screenshot shows the mobile app interface with the 'ask AirAsia' button. The right screenshot shows the website interface with the 'ask AirAsia' button and the Lil' Miss Red persona.

The website interface features a search bar with the text "Hi, I'm Lil' Miss Red. How can I help you today?" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, there are four tabs: "ABOUT AIRASIA", "BEFORE YOU FLY", "WHILE YOU FLY", and "AFTER YOU FLY". The "ABOUT AIRASIA" tab is selected, showing a list of categories: "About AirAsia", "Before You Fly", "While You Fly", and "After You Fly". The "BEFORE YOU FLY" tab is also visible, showing a list of categories: "About AirAsia", "Book a Flight", "Before you fly", "While you fly", and "After you fly". The "WHILE YOU FLY" tab is also visible, showing a list of categories: "About AirAsia", "Book a Flight", "Before you fly", "While you fly", and "After you fly". The "AFTER YOU FLY" tab is also visible, showing a list of categories: "About AirAsia", "Book a Flight", "Before you fly", "While you fly", and "After you fly".

The website also features a "TOP 5 FAQs" section with the following questions:

- 1. If I do not wish to fly after purchasing a flight or if I could not show up for flight, what can I refund?
- 2. How do I contact AirAsia? (For Complex Questions, Complaints or Compliments?)
- 3. Can I increase my baggage weight?
- 4. What are the rules for hand carried baggage on board?
- 5. Do you provide free check in baggage allowance?

The website also features a "LATEST NEWS" section with the following news items:

- NEW Refund Process - Effective 9th August 2013
- NEW Direct Debit Processing Fee - Effective 7th August 2013
- Changes to prebooked checked baggage and sports equipment fee on Saturday 31 August 2013
- Termination of Red Carpet Services Effective 1 November 2013

The website also features a "BOOK A FLIGHT" button and a "MANAGE MY BOOKING" button.



### **Managing knowledge and transforming telephone customer service at Domestic & General**

Domestic & General is the UK's leading warranty specialist, with more than 7 million UK customers.

Ensuring Domestic & General's 1,400 front line agents are able to provide excellent, efficient service to customers requires access to consistent and comprehensive information. This customer service information, which includes contact details for manufacturers and details of warranty plans, needs to be at the agent's fingertips so they can respond quickly when on the phone.

Previously knowledge was stored in paper-based manuals, which meant that staff had to manually search physical folders to find the answers to customer questions, slowing the pace of service, reducing consistency and lowering First Contact Resolution rates. Updating manuals was slow and laborious while training time for new staff was increased.

### **Ensuring agent buy in**

Domestic & General selected Eptica's self-learning, centralised knowledgebase due to its advanced meaning-based search capabilities and ease of use. It knew that ensuring agents used the new system was vital if customers were to benefit. So it gave it a high internal profile by branding the project as Fido and assigned a full time project team to implement it.

Agents simply log on to the web-based system and type plain English questions into the search box to access answers. The system automatically provides them with the relevant customer service information, including a full script highlighting any specific details that need to be confirmed with the customer. This not only drives consistency, but also ensures that Domestic & General continues to meet all of its legal and regulatory obligations.

The knowledgebase is now receiving an average of 60,000 hits per month from agents, yet is managed by just 2 full time staff, demonstrating the low overhead of knowledge management.

#### **Key benefits:**

- Average call time has reduced by 22%, while hold times have reduced by 55%
- Customers have commented on service improvements: "Your customer service is second to none. They are polite, very helpful, answer your queries and sort out problems quickly"
- Training time and costs are lower – the time taken to train a new agent has dropped by 20% (2 days)
- A forecast full time equivalent staff saving of 10 agents per year



# Building a business case for knowledge management

At a time when multiple projects are competing for funding, investment in knowledge management stands out by delivering a combination of fast Return on Investment and long term benefits.

Building a business case for knowledge management revolves around these key objectives:

## **1. Reducing avoidable customer contact**

Making knowledge available to customers via the web and social media dramatically reduces incoming phone calls and emails, as well as increasing customer satisfaction as they can instantly find the information they want. 80% of AirAsia's contact is handled through self-service, lowering costs and providing round the clock service on the customer's channel of choice.

## **2. Increased efficiency**

Providing your agents with access to centralised knowledge reduces the time it takes to answer customer queries – without impacting quality. This translates into shorter hold times for customers and arms agents with the information they need to handle more interactions per hour. Domestic & General has reduced call time by 22% (nearly 30 seconds in some cases), and cut hold times by 55%.

## **3. Higher First Contact Resolution Rates**

With a centralised knowledgebase information is always accurate and up to date. Customers get the right answer first time, without needing to call back or follow up. This translates into higher First Contact Resolution (FCR) rates, which improves the customer experience as well as adding to efficiency gains. Insurer Ageas has increased FCR to 96% by arming its agents with centralised knowledge.

## **4. Reduced training times**

Staff attrition is an industry wide problem. Centralised knowledge management dramatically reduces the training time needed to bring new agents up to speed – rather than learning information they can be trained how to find it quickly and easily. Agents can easily be multiskilled, covering new areas with minimal training time. NHS BSA decreased training time by 30%, part of a £121,000 saving in the first year of Sherlock's operation.

## **5. Better customer insight**

By analysing the questions that customers ask and the feedback they provide you receive a deep insight into their needs and requirements. Using semantic analysis you can understand the mood of customers and take action accordingly, providing a more flexible and personalised service.



## Put knowledge at the heart of your customer service

According to Gartner, customer service technology for better managing customer interactions is now a top 10 priority for CIOs<sup>3</sup>. Choosing amongst competing customer service investment priorities is difficult. But only knowledge management provides the ability to transform your business, increase customer engagement, and reduce costs through a single system. Centralising information drives consistency, efficiency and most of all creates satisfied customers – helping increase sales, retain customers and build respected brands.

*Eptica can help you transform your customer service. To find out how, please contact us using the details below.*

<sup>3</sup>Source: Gartner Technology Priorities 2013, quoted in <http://www.destinationcrm.com/Articles/CRM-News/Daily-News/Gartner-CIO-Survey-Shows-Digital-Technologies-Are-Top-Priorities-in-2013-87212.aspx>

### About Eptica

Eptica is a global provider of multichannel customer interaction software, including Web Self-service, Social Customer Service, Email Management, Chat, Fax-Letter- SMS and Knowledge management for Customer Service. Available on premise or SaaS, Eptica software enables website and customer service channels to improve quality of service, resolve enquiries faster, reduce costs and maximise every sales opportunity. Today more than 400 customers, including some of the world's largest brands, in 15 countries, use Eptica software to deliver excellent customer service at much lower cost. Eptica's customers include: Ageas Insurance Solutions, Domestic & General, Mutuelles du Mans Assurances, MAAF, Société Générale, Gocompare.com, Haven Holidays, Ipeca, Humanis, Reunica, Dixons, Crédit Agricole, Carrefour Banque, AirAsia and Capita.

Eptica is based in the UK, France, Spain and Singapore and operates worldwide through its network of partners.

#### Eptica UK

200 Brook Drive  
Green Park  
Reading Berkshire  
RG2 6UB

Tel: +44 (0) 118 949 7072  
Fax: +44 (0) 118 949 7073

[www.eptica.com](http://www.eptica.com)

#### Eptica France

95 Bis rue de Bellevue  
92100  
Boulogne-Billancourt  
France

Tel: +33 (0) 147 12 68 88  
Fax: +33 (0) 147 12 68 89

[www.eptica.fr](http://www.eptica.fr)

#### Eptica Singapore

1 Fullerton Road  
#02-01 One Fullerton  
SINGAPORE  
049213

Tel: +65 6832 5134  
Fax: +65 6408 3801

[www.eptica.com](http://www.eptica.com)

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