

DON'T LOSE TOUCH

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Many companies and consumers believe that a move towards Self-Service means an inevitable move away from human interaction in the sales and service experience.

However, that is not the case since most customer service models will use a blend of human interaction and automated processes to deliver an optimal combination of convenience, cost-efficiency and human touch.

This model, which can be described as Assisted Service, is on the rise across industries and throughout the world. Assisted Service is becoming popular for many reasons, one being that it allows companies to serve people that lack internet access with the same systems they use for customers online.

One example of this is in the travel industry where travel agents often use the same systems and interfaces to book cars or low-cost flights for walk-in customers as Self-Service customers use to make their own bookings online.

ASSISTED SERVICE

Another reason to offer Assisted Service is to transition customers who aren't familiar with Self-Service from depending on a teller or agent towards serving themselves.

Cinemas in South Africa use this form of Assisted Service - patrons can buy their tickets from a kiosk, but there is often someone on hand to show them how to use the machine and help them to complete the transaction.

Assisted Service is also coming to the fore in industries where products and pricing are becoming increasingly complex - for example, the telecommunications and financial services industries.

Companies can push routine and simple transactions onto Self-Service channels, while providing human assistance for more high-value and complex transactions. If it's a transaction where the customer might need support or sales advice, it makes sense to make human assistance available.

TOUCH POINT

With an Assisted Service model, companies can offer a consistent level of service to customers across electronic channels and the call centre or branch office. At each touch point, the interactions are based on the same customer data and the same business processes. And since the same systems are used at each point of contact, it becomes easier to keep a single database with clean data about each customer.

Though many businesses and consumers expected the rise of Self-Service channels to eventually lead to the disappearance of customer service representatives and intermediaries in many industries, the human touch has remained important in most industries. ■