Making it easy for customers

Learn how BT’s radical new customer effort metric Net Easy has helped increase customer loyalty, deliver efficiency and emphatically engage front line advisors.

Summary
The new metric at BT Retail Customer Services is supporting a wider project to make life easy for customers and engaging front-line teams who are involved in redesigning processes end to end. Net Easy is similar to NPS in measuring across all channels and functions vertically, but provides insight which is more easily acted on by operations. Effective analysis has demonstrated how lower customer effort drives advocacy and reduces customer churn and business cost – and changing performance metrics for advisors was a major change in culture. The insight has driven several key customer experience investments and enabled Customer Services at BT to revise their channel strategy.

Key initiatives
Making it Easy is the key to customer retention
The ‘Easy’ initiative for customers at BT arose out of a corporate strategy for revenue growth, but has evoked passionate support from the front-line. It was championed by Warren Buckley, BT’s managing director of customer service. He drove a focus on the link between customer experience and customer churn and set the vision for Customer Service as an engine of growth, driving revenue through loyalty and advocacy. Internally, the new measures and cross-functional approach came as a breath of fresh air after many years of focus on process and productivity measures as the organisation adapted to market changes and a radical re-structuring of its business in 2006. What’s more, innovative work in the social media teams had already proven how much could be gained by simplifying the process for customers (see 2012 case study). “We now have clarity” “Increased focus on the knotty problems” “It is not a big battle because of the senior sponsorship” “Now we think about things from the customer’s perspective”.

Net Easy: the BT customer effort score
New questions were introduced to BT customer feedback surveys across all channels in 2011, asking about how easy or difficult customers found their experience of BT. Using this data, the Net Easy score is calculated by subtracting the percentage who say ‘difficult’ from those who say ‘easy’. It has become a natural way to measure the success of the Easy project and was initiated by Joanna Howard, the strategy general manager. This metric is similar in structure to NetPromoter, but provides insight which is more easily acted on by operations and business improvement teams. The data is segmented by location, by time, by process and even by individual agent. The business intelligence team analyse verbatim comments to uncover the drivers of Net Easy scores. This actionable insight directly relates to potential improvements in processes, contact journeys and advisor skills or behaviours. The data is also used to inform the triggers for proactive intervention; difficulty doubles after three contacts, so a team is primed to step in to deal with the often complex queries at this point. Already the data shows a huge positive impact on loyalty. Even customers ranking the service...
BT Retail’s contact centres are located throughout the UK and the Philippines, with over 7000 FTE providing service for PSTN, Broadband, TV, Directory Enquiries, 999, Openzone and Wi-fi – with around 12 million consumer customers. BT use Nuance to transcribe verbatims and a range of survey mechanisms (IVR, email, pop-up) to collect customer feedback across all service channels.

**Results**
- Research for BT demonstrates that Customer Effort is the No:1 driver of advocacy (NPS)
- 40% differential in customer churn propensity between ‘difficult’ and ‘easy’ experiences
- 1% improvement in Net Easy for voice yields £300k savings in repeat call costs
- Contact centre SLA performance is the single most important driver of Net Easy scores

‘neutral’ showed a 31% reduction in churn propensity, compared to those who found it difficult. BT found that just 1% improvement in Net Easy Scores in the voice channel will give £300,000 savings from repeat contacts. “This aligns perfectly with our growth strategies” “Net Easy moves the mindset” “Advisors get it” “We’re getting the right behaviours” “Our coaches are focussed on things that matter”.

**Advisors feel they now make a real difference**
A deep engagement by the front-line teams is at the heart of this success story. Their performance objectives and metrics were changed, a massive change of culture, and cross-functional groups of advisors now have the opportunity to redesign end-to-end processes, from mapping to training and workflows. Advisors feel listened to, because their feedback on how to ‘make it easy’ is sought through online forums, team meetings, email surveys and instant messaging – and because they see things changing as a result. Performance management, reward and recognition have been changed as well, so that advisors now feel freer to use their instinct and feel more trusted. Posters, videos and face-to-face presentations are used and new dashboards also help to drive engagement. “The mood has changed” “There’s a real emotional reaction” “We feel valued” “The managers are better” “Our opinions matter” “ Knowing you’re going to get a resolution gives you job satisfaction”.

**This is a strategic change across the business**
Managers have worked across the business to build relationships and integrate this measure. Evidence from Net Easy shows the BT board how operational decisions affect the customer. Six factors currently explain two-thirds of movement in the metric, which is highly influenced by process and extremely sensitive to service levels in the call centre. Significantly, the Net Easy metric is embedded across functions: technical support, all order enquiries and all billing enquiries. It measures across communication channels – voice, bt.com, email, social media and LiveChat – and as a result, the channel strategy for the Customer Service department is changing; comparisons show LiveChat and social media are rated by customers as ‘very easy’ so these are now better signposted and volumes have quadrupled and doubled respectively in only 12 months. “It’s all more positive” “We’re getting away from that hierarchical mentality” “We are all looking at the same thing” “We work together” “Everything flows”.

“The whole roll out of Easy was a change of mentality, not just a change of numbers. Net Easy moves the mindset to thinking about things from the customer’s perspective… The percentage is almost irrelevant, it is about the drivers.”
Kevin Horner, Strategy and Business Planning Specialist

“We have been given an opportunity to change. It’s really worked.”
Kate Ellis, Contact Centre Manager

“We went through learning to enable us to rewrite our own processes. We came up with various ways of making a better way of working. We have proved that the people at the front line know better than anyone.”
Stephanie Symons, Advisor

“We are using our instinct as to how people like being treated. It feels like much more of a partnership. It’s better for the customer.”
Caroline Robbins, Advisor

“Now everyone has the power to make a difference. Customers are obviously happier. Net Easy measures the customer’s journey from end to end.”
Helen Mildren, Tier 2 Manager

“Net Easy is about empowering people. It’s how we all want to work, now we’ve been given the ability”
Louis Higgins, Team Manager

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