



TeamSupport

The Ultimate Guide to B2B Customer Support

Hint: It's not the same as B2C!

Table of Contents

1. How is B2B Customer Support Different from B2C?
2. The B2B Customer Service Evolution: From Money Pit to Profit Center
3. 5 reasons to use a B2B customer support software
4. 3 ways B2B customer support software will save you money
5. Choosing the Right B2B Customer Support Software
6. Learn More

A man is shown from the chest up, splashing in the ocean. He has his arms raised and a joyful expression. The background is a bright blue sky with some clouds. The overall scene is vibrant and energetic.

How is B2B Customer Support Different from B2C?

What Does B2B Mean?

You'll see the term "B2B" used a lot in articles, on blogs, and in marketing campaigns - but not everyone knows what it means or why it's important.

B2B is simply shorthand for "Business to Business", and it generally refers to who you sell your product to. If your company sells a product or service to other businesses, you're a B2B company.

The inverse of B2B is "B2C" – This means Business to Consumer. Your company is a B2C company if you sell to individual people (consumers) as opposed to businesses.

How is B2B Customer Support Different from B2C?

The basic tenet of customer support is the same for B2B and B2C – Answer the customer's issues and resolve their problems as quickly and completely as possible. However, there are several major differences between supporting a business customer and a consumer customer.

More Complex Issues

As a general rule of thumb, issues in the B2B space tend to be more complex and have more back and forth communication than issues in the B2C space. Our research shows that the first contact resolution (FCR) rate for B2B customers tends to be lower than for B2C which is due to the more complex

issues generated in a B2B environment. As a result of this, the FCR metric is not as critical in the B2B space since customers are often quite technically savvy and know they are contacting their vendor about complex issues that may not be easy to solve.

Fewer, but Larger, Customers

In many B2B scenarios, the dollar value of the sale is much higher than a corresponding B2C case. Many B2B companies are selling large and complex products to their customers, so each interaction with a customer has more revenue implications.

In a B2C scenario if one customer gets upset and returns your product, the company may be out a few hundred dollars. In a B2B environment, the deal sizes are often in the 10s of thousands of dollars and even into the multi millions. Clearly, if a customer support incident goes wrong in a B2B environment, it could have a very serious impact on revenue.

Know your Customers

In a B2C environment, it is very rare to know your customers – Generally, each interaction is with a new customer and while you may have some data about them, it's rare that there is a personal relationship with them. Often, in a B2C case, products are sold through retail channels so the very first contact the company ever has with the customer may be through a call center.

The B2B environment is commonly the other way around – There has been a sales process that the company was involved in and there is already a great deal known about the customer. When that customer calls about a support issue, as much information as possible should be available to the support agent so they don't have to ask the customer for basic information that the company already has.

Often in B2B environments companies will end up with good relationships, and sometimes even personal friendships, with their customers. This doesn't happen often in the B2C space and is one of the great things about selling to businesses.

Multiple Potential Contact Points

A B2C contact is, almost by definition, with a single person. One person purchased your product, and they are calling about an issue with it.

While this can also happen in a B2B sale, more often in a B2B environment there are multiple people are using the product within the customer company. This means that many different people could all be calling about different issues, yet still be part of the same customer. In fact, with a B2B customer many different people could be calling about the *same* issue.

The implication to B2B support is that this can lead to duplicate efforts by support agents as well as a lack of understanding of the customer as a whole. Support agents should have access to all the tickets created by anyone at a customer company so they can both be informed and understand recurring and/or concurrent issues.

The B2B Customer Service Evolution: From Money Pit to Profit Center

In B2B businesses customer service is finally starting to get the recognition it deserves - as a profit center rather than a money pit.



The customer support function has evolved drastically in the past 10-15 years. A lot of this change has come as a result of technology, with customers now having easy access to online resources like chat and customer service portals.

The evolution of self-service has also been a contributor - in it's early days, having customers search for their own answers was seen as a poor-man's strategy, or worse, seen as a lack of interest in serving customers. Today, with the explosion of the internet and our data-driven society, customer self-service is a natural response to users' inclination to search for information independently, whether through Google, or a company's [knowledge base](#). Peer support (in the form of community forums and review sites) has also risen to the top of the customer support toolbox.

But technological advances aren't the only factor driving the evolution in customer support. A new appreciation for collaboration has also had an impact, particularly in B2B customer service where the priority is on managing the entire relationship, instead of just focusing on individual tickets.

Horizontal integration is the key - companies who provide the best customer experiences do so by integrating the support function with the rest of the organization. Platforms that deliver cross-departmental collaboration and eliminate data and knowledge silos enable these top-performers to share knowledge across the entire organization and [solve customer issues as a team](#).

This means that problems are solved accurately the first time, and the organization shares information about pain points and product issues more effectively - resulting in better product development and road-mapping. In today's SaaS (Software as a Service) environment this is crucial, as product enhancements and updates are rolled out on an almost constant basis. With no onsite deployment the customer support team becomes the main point of contact for any customer issues, requiring a collaborative approach - and closer integration with sales and product teams - to be successful.

The positive effect of these changes is that C-level executives are shifting their perception of the customer support function - rather than seeing it as a cost center that can't be avoided (a necessary evil if you will) more CEOs are seeing it as the profit center it is. When done right, customer service can be a key differentiation point among competitors and can inform every aspect of operations from product development to sales.

As TeamSupport CEO Robert C. Johnson says, "the closer coders are to users, the better the product." A more integrated organization brings users and coders closer together, and that may be the most significant B2B customer service evolution of all. Imagine a software programmer sitting right next to a customer - their every wish would be his command and he'd be the happiest customer in the world. Although that's not really a practical solution, eliminating silos and enabling collaboration among teams can certainly bring your company a lot closer to that concept.

To read the full article in Business2Community, click [HERE](#)

5 reasons to use a B2B customer support software

Word of mouth can have a big impact on any company, especially in the B2B sector. Providing customers with the best possible support is critical for your business's success. But providing great customer service isn't always easy. It takes a lot of effort from a dedicated team, and the representatives handling your customer support need to have access to the tools to get the job done. [Customer support software](#) specifically designed for B2B interactions helps ensure your representatives have everything they need.

Faster customer support

Having a software solution specifically designed for B2B customer support will help make sure that the needs of customers are attended to in a timely manner. With a quality software solution, tickets are sorted and organized automatically, eliminating some of the administrative tasks a representative would usually need to perform. This means reps can spend more time helping customers and less time dealing with organization and process.

Self-help option

According to Nuance Communications, [2 out of 3 customers would rather help themselves](#) than talk to a customer service representative. Without customer support software, it is hard to provide people with a way to access the information they need on their own. A software solution can build a database of knowledge based on previous tickets and community forums. This feature gives customers a place to visit for any and every issue they may have. If they need more information, they can simply call in.

Collaboration

With a high-quality software solution, representatives have the ability to work together on any given ticket. This can be essential for finding the best answer for a customer. While all representatives should be qualified to answer customer questions, working as a team on a ticket will ensure the answer is exactly what the customer needed.

Unification of customer information

Relationship building is an important part of B2B customer service. The B2B environment isn't the same as B2C. Businesses spend money differently than typical consumers do, there are more people making the decisions, they don't all have the same goals in mind and [pain points aren't the same across the board](#), according to Business 2 Community. For these reasons it's important for customer service reps to truly know their customers. Having all customer information in one easy-to-access spot makes this easier.

Reporting and analytics

While you're probably already tracking your customer service information, customer support software can help improve your reporting capabilities. When you take your business intelligence to the next level, you empower your business to improve the services they provide by having the ability to better understand where you're succeeding and how you can improve.

3 ways B2B customer support software will save you money

A customer service solution that is specifically designed for B2B communication can save your team a lot of time and you a lot of money.

Delivering quality B2B customer service is a difficult endeavor. It takes many skilled customer service reps utilizing the tools they have to provide the best service possible to the customer. Improving the tools your customer service team has can help them do their job better, which will help satisfy customers and save you money. A [customer service software](#) solution that's designed specifically for the types of customer you serve can greatly reduce costs and improve efficiency.

1. Improved efficiency

Your customer service team is busy. They're handling tickets, writing emails, taking phone calls, conducting live chats, and they're probably doing all of that on a number of different software applications. When you switch to a unified customer service software solution, everything is pulled together and readily accessible, making it easier to find information and manipulate data on a case-by-case basis. In addition to having one unified solution, certain aspects of the customer service process can be automated. Sorting and deflecting tickets is something that a customer service team member shouldn't have to spend their time doing. A customer support software solution helps them use every moment doing work that truly helps the customer with what they need. This means you're getting the most from them every hour that they're working.

With the right software, team members can also collaborate on tickets, making it possible for them to provide even faster and better service to customers. When team members work together to get the customer the best possible answer, they're pooling their knowledge. The old saying - two heads are better than one - is still true, and with [collaborative customer support software](#), you can have the collective knowledge of your team working to best serve your customers on any given ticket.

2. Customer Retention

Providing better service starts with improved efficiency and goes from there. When team members have more time to devote to actually helping customers, they can provide them with their full and undivided attention. This will improve customer satisfaction, which will help you save money by improving customer retention. Acquiring new customers is expensive, so doing everything you can to keep the customers you have will help keep revenue high. According to The Chartered Institute of Marketing, it's [between 4 and 10 times more expensive](#) to acquire a new customer than it is to keep an old one. Providing excellent customer service is one of the best ways to keep your customers happy and reduce turnover.

Also, customer service software provides customers with the option to easily search past tickets for answers to their questions. This makes it possible for customers to help themselves. Of course, if they do need help, a member of the customer service team is never far away.

3. Customer relationship building

Good customer service does more than provide answers to questions and fix problems - it builds trust and strengthens relationships. The stronger your relationship is with the client, the more likely they are to stick around. Building relationships isn't easy when the customer's information is spread out over multiple applications. By unifying everything, you're providing your customer service team with all of the information and tools they need to help strengthen ties with customers. They can see all of the customer's history and information to better understand the customer as a whole. This allows them to streamline the questions they ask, quickly get to the issue at hand and help the customer in a more personalized way. Building strong relationships based on trust will help you save money because happy customers spend more.

When your customers respect and trust your product, they become brand advocates. If they know someone in need of your products or services, they'll recommend you. According to a Nielsen report, [92 percent of people](#) trust a recommendation from someone they know. This makes your customer's referral an effective marketing tool. By providing great customer service to current customers through a [B2B customer service software](#) solution, you'll reduce marketing costs and see a greater return on investment through customer referrals.

Choosing the Right B2B Customer Support Software

Fadi Azba, BlueHat Marketing

Choosing the right customer support software isn't simple. Customer service enables companies to gain a competitive advantage, allowing them to efficiently handle customer relationships during and after the actual sale, making the industry large and competitive.

The B2B world is different from the B2C world, and this should impact your technology purchase process. When looking at help desk software for your operations, make sure the tool you are looking at is well suited for B2B use and has the feature sets you need. A perfect example is a company database – most support software built for B2C does not offer this feature, because there is no need for it. This makes it impossible to see all data, issues, and interactions at a company level, you can only see issues one ticket or one individual at a time. This greatly reduces visibility of the customer relationship and means missing important trends and indicators about your customers.

To help avoid purchasing mistakes, here are some steps for choosing the right customer support software for B2B:

Know Your Needs In Advance

Figure out your primary requirements and make certain you completely understand your internal business workflow. Do not focus on the cost or the cosmetics of the software, but rather on its capability to support your business's distinctive requirements.

Avoid Overcomplicating

Compile a list of practical requirements and be sure to keep it realistic. Do you need a contact management program or a ticketing program? Would you like to manage client information, monitor support requests and track the information by running reports of those activities? Be clear on what you actually need from a system, and then find a suitable match - there is no need to pay for added features that have no value for you.

Consider Scalability

Not all customer support software providers are the same. Even though many software solutions are made for small businesses, they often won't scale or perform well at higher usage. To avoid the hassle and inconvenience of having to switch vendors after a year or two, select a solution which has the capabilities and resources to develop as your company grows. Keep in mind SaaS (Software as a Service) is a great way to ensure scalability and keep costs low.

Look For Customization

Customer support tools are made with a large number of processes in mind. Each company's processes are unique, and this isn't a bad thing. In fact, this is exactly what distinguishes you from your competition. Make sure your customer support software is versatile enough to accommodate your unique processes. Similarly, you need a solution which will [grow with your company](#) and adapt to your changing processes without needing to be replaced.

Take It For A Test Drive

Make sure you request a product demo and that you use the software before making a commitment. Give it a good workout - add multiple users, upload documents, set up email integration, etc. to make sure it fits your needs. This is your opportunity to truly test the system and find its strengths and weaknesses - don't just assume it is going to work. Allowing yourself a little extra time here can save you time and frustration in the long run.

To learn more about how B2B companies are using TeamSupport, visit our [Case Studies](#) online.

Learn More

Interested in seeing what TeamSupport B2B customer support software can do for you? Sign up for a live demo and see for yourself why it's the industry's top help desk software for B2B

[WATCH A DEMO](#)

