

SPOTLIGHT ■ Benchmarking quality across the UK, sector by sector

customer experience spotlight **Retail: who comes out on top?**

The multi-channel world came into existence in the late 1990's with the explosion of Internet and mobile technology as customer channels. This changed the way in which companies do business and the retail sector became a world not just of bricks, but also clicks.

What this has meant for us as customers is a far wider choice of goods, available from a far wider range of suppliers, often based in completely different continents. This shift in buying behaviour has meant that retailers have had to provide a multi-channel

customer experience – in-store, on-line, and over the telephone. And, as consumers, we have developed expectations of what we need from each of the channels.

Many of the calls we assessed this month indicated to us that the agents had made certain assumptions about where we had been, or where we should go on our customer journey. Online was where we would do our research on product and price, in-store was where we could connect with the product and visualise ourselves with it, and the contact centre seemed to be where we

should place an order or make a complaint. What this meant was that we were only really offered a transaction over the phone.

Very little effort was made to assess where we were on our journey, and when the agent did so, they often tried to force us down this assumed model by giving a web address to check out the product specification, or the details of our nearest store so that we could see the product.

Whilst this approach admirably utilises the organisation's multi-channel capabilities, it ignores the fact that some customers can't,

Rank	Company	Overall Score	Welcome	Find Out	Show How	Close
1	Dixons	59.67	77.19%	44.44%	63.16%	71.43%
2	B&Q	53.33	63.16%	42.59%	58.77%	52.38%
3	Interflora	52.67	54.39%	37.04%	65.79%	57.14%
4	QVC	52.33	75.44%	37.96%	53.51%	57.14%
5	Boots	51.00	43.86%	47.22%	56.14%	61.90%
6	Debenhams	51.00	59.65%	37.96%	56.14%	66.67%
7	Toys "R" Us Direct	48.33	68.42%	30.56%	52.63%	61.90%
8	Argos	48.33	63.16%	38.89%	49.12%	52.38%
9	WHSmith	48.00	57.89%	37.96%	50.88%	57.14%
10	Tesco	47.00	59.65%	34.26%	50.00%	61.90%
11	Asda	46.67	77.19%	27.78%	48.25%	52.38%
12	Sainsbury's	46.00	68.42%	34.26%	46.49%	42.86%
13	Marks and Spencer	44.67	78.95%	24.07%	46.49%	47.62%
14	Woolworths	43.00	73.68%	26.85%	42.98%	42.86%
15	Waitrose	43.00	71.93%	17.59%	50.00%	57.14%
16	Mothercare	41.33	52.63%	27.78%	44.74%	61.90%
17	Halfords	40.67	57.89%	35.19%	36.84%	42.86%
18	Comet	39.33	68.42%	27.78%	35.96%	38.10%
19	Next	37.33	49.12%	22.22%	47.37%	28.57%
20	Littlewoods	31.67	47.37%	12.04%	41.23%	38.10%

Please note that the above figures represent the view of our customer experience assessors and are based on a sample of calls assessed using a consistent point system. All comments and scores represent the opinions of the maia spotlight team.

or don't want to, go through any other channel than the one they are using.

So, how can we service the needs of this difficult, one-stop-shop customer with heightened expectations of service? This type of customer is difficult to recognise and difficult to satisfy, but the contact centre is placed just behind the retail outlet, and far ahead of the Internet in being able to do so.

Each channel needs to be able to compensate for the absence of the others and perhaps add something over and above what the missing channels offer. The contact centre can do this by firstly having all the product information and competitor information to hand so that the agent can guide the caller in a way that the web can never do.

CSRs can also engage in a conversation with the caller to establish needs and build rapport, and can then take this information to create relevant benefits, which enable the caller to see and feel how the product will enhance their daily lives.

Retailers have adapted well to the changed world of multi-channel contact. The next step towards excellent customer service is to fit these channels into the wider concept of a customer journey and adapting it to suit the individual.

- Under 25%** Poor customer experience. Urgent investigation and action required.
- 25-50%** Functional level of customer service. Improvement recommended.
- 50-75%** Good level of customer experience. Certain elements may need enhancement.
- Over 75%** Excellent customer experience.

Any questions or comments regarding the customer experience spotlight may be addressed to the spotlight team at maia on +44 870 7744220 or by email to: spotlight@maigroup.co.uk



Welcome: sector score 63%

The industry achieved a good score for welcoming us onto the call. Automated menus we heard were generally easy to use and were usually limited to two or three options. The sector also achieved a good speed of answer, but the greeting often lacked structure with 20 per cent failing to name the company itself and 30 per cent failing to give their own name.

Find out: sector score 32%

A really disappointing score. Agents just weren't probing enough to get any meaningful information. On a range of scenarios where we were shopping for a gift, the industry scored only 10 per cent for using secondary questions to build rapport. A simple 'is it for a birthday?' opens up a conversation, but also opens a range of cross selling opportunities.

Show how: sector score 50%

As is so often the case, this section was brought down by the failure of the agents to find out enough to give us high quality advice. Agents scored well for product knowledge (59 per cent) and responded well to questioning (58 per cent). Overall, as the agents had not found out enough about us, they found it hard to tailor their presentations.

Close: sector score 53%

'Is there anything else I can help you with?' has become an overused call handling line for a good reason. It ensures the customer's needs have been fully met and gives the customer control over the call at the very end. A much higher than average number of agents than usual hung up on us before we had finished our enquiry.

Overall League Table			
Rank	Company	Score	Sector
1	Sage	76.3	IT and technology
2	Thomas Cook	75.7	Leisure and tourism
3	nPower	72.7	Telecoms and utilities
4	First Direct	70.7	Financial services
5	esure	70.7	Financial services
6	British Gas	70.7	Telecoms and utilities
7	Thompson	69.5	Leisure and tourism
8	Butlins	69.0	Leisure and tourism
9	Learn Direct	68.9	Public sector
10	HSBC	67.7	Financial services
11	Orange	67.3	Telecoms and utilities
12	National Blood Service	67.0	Public sector
13	The Royal Air Force	66.8	Public sector
14	Red Letter Days	66.4	Leisure and tourism
15	Carphone Warehouse (Talk Talk)	66.3	Telecoms and utilities
16	The Royal Navy	65.2	Public sector
17	TDA Teaching Helpline	65.1	Public sector
18	Avis	64.7	Leisure and tourism
19	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	64.4	Public sector
20	NHS Stop Smoking Hotline	63.3	Public sector