Social Customer Service

Dedicated solutions vs. All-in-one social media management suites

A market credibility study
conducted by Forrester Consulting

conversocial

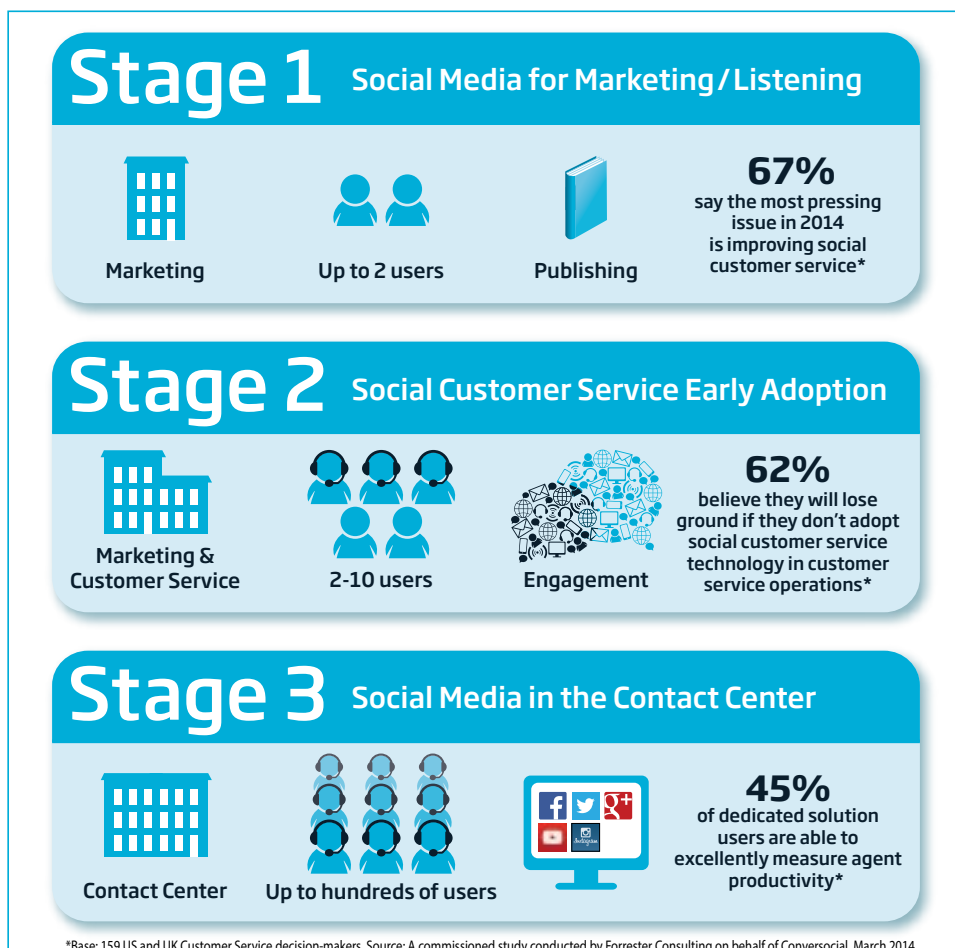# A tide in the affairs of social customer service

Improving social customer service is the most pressing short-term priority for Contact Centers in the US and UK according to a study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Conversocial.

More than half of the companies interviewed in the study believe that it will continue to grow in importance. Brands are, in principle, recognizing that not only must they offer social as a Customer Service option but that it must be a premium-level service – a service that can deliver satisfaction, inspire loyalty and encourage advocacy.

However, only 33% of the social customer service solutions being used by those interviewed were actually selected by the Customer Service team. The majority of solutions were obtained, instead, by Marketing.

More brands are moving into stage three of their social customer service development - where the business as a whole recognizes that social media is a primary customer service channel, alongside email, phone and chat. When this happens, responsibility for managing social media channels is transferred to the Contact Center to resource and manage properly, and to ensure the appropriate technologies are in place to deliver excellent customer service.

The three stages of social customer service maturity

Stage 1 Social Media for Marketing / Listening

Marketing | Up to 2 users | Publishing

67% say the most pressing issue in 2014 is improving social customer service*

Stage 2 Social Customer Service Early Adoption

Marketing & Customer Service | 2-10 users | Engagement

62% believe they will lose ground if they don't adopt social customer service technology in customer service operations*

Stage 3 Social Media in the Contact Center

Contact Center | Up to hundreds of users

45% of dedicated solution users are able to excellently measure agent productivity*

*Base: 159 US and UK Customer Service decision-makers. Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Conversocial, March 2014.

In practice, however, there is still a power struggle between the two departments, with Marketing primarily owning the budget for social media. This often results in a disconnect between Customer Service and Marketing, with Customer Service professionals stuck using Social Media Management Suites (SMMS) for Customer Service.

These suites are often great for Marketing but insufficient for the complex needs of a Customer Service department. This leads to organizations having to make unplanned investments to fix the social customer service problem.

The issue becomes easier to understand when approached in terms of departmental priorities:

Customer Service Priorities

Scalability and efficiency

Managing risk

Building an awe-inspiring experience

Associate development

Growth from existing customers

Marketing Priorities

Gathering customer data

Increase conversion rates

Building brand awareness

Digital measurement

Growth from new subscribers

The purpose of this report

On behalf of Conversocial, Forrester Consulting administered a survey in March 2014 to 159 senior Contact Center executives in the US and the UK with headcounts ranging from 100–5,000+ agents to better understand how dedicated social customer service solutions compare to SMMS. The survey was distributed across Retail, Travel, Consumer Finance, Telecom and Utility companies.

Key results

When compared to SMMS and free solutions, Contact Center executives find that when they use a dedicated social customer service solution they are much more able to:

• Measure and optimize agent productivity

• Use the same Service-Level-Agreement metrics as in traditional channels (e.g. First Response Time, Average Handling Time and Average Response Time)

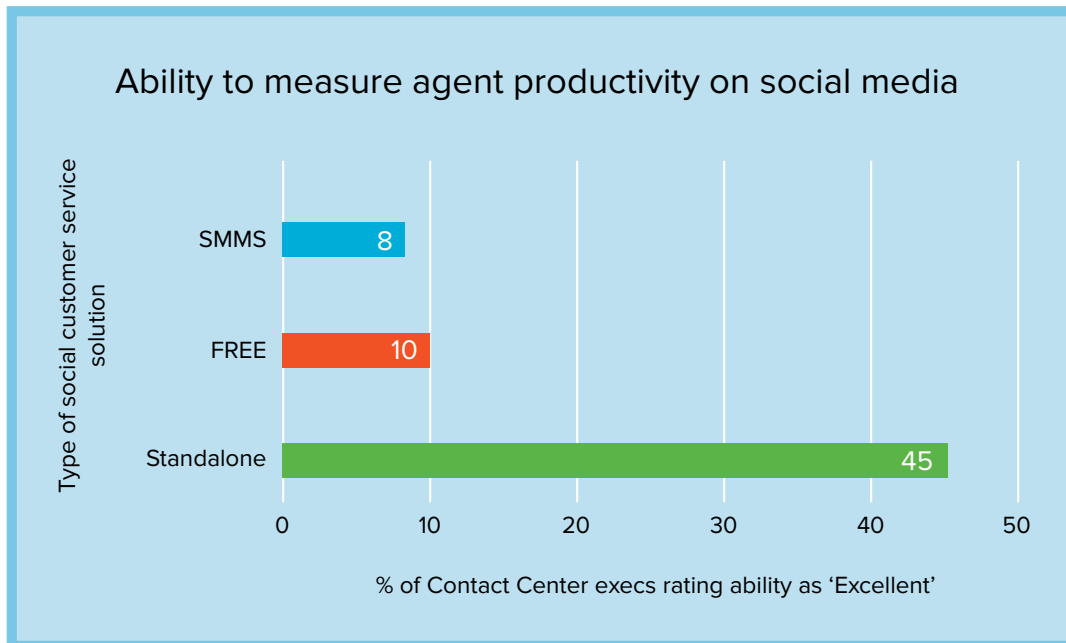• Standardize social customer service delivery across agents

Contact Center executives reported significantly higher levels of customer service performance when using a dedicated social customer care platform versus a general SMMS.

In fact, the data shows that using an all-in-one SMMS is hardly better (and sometimes worse) than using a free solution to do social media customer service.

We believe this study demonstrates that all-in-one SMMS are failing at customer service.
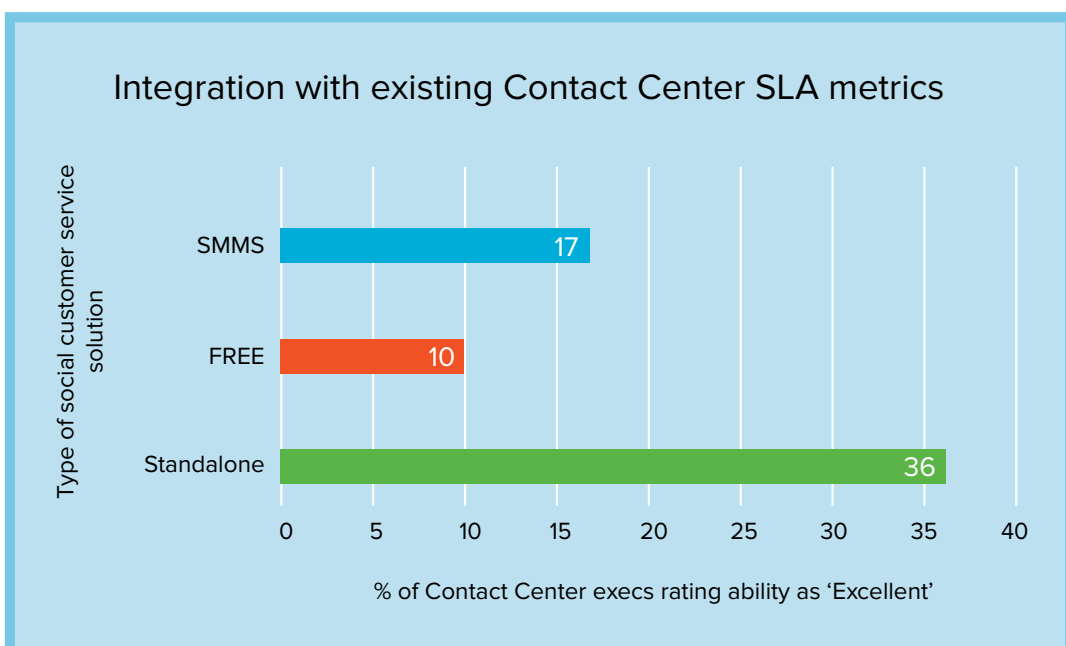
Key survey findings

45% of dedicated social customer service solution users rated their ability to measure and optimize agent productivity as Excellent, versus 10% of free solution users and 8% of SMMS.

Ability to measure agent productivity on social media

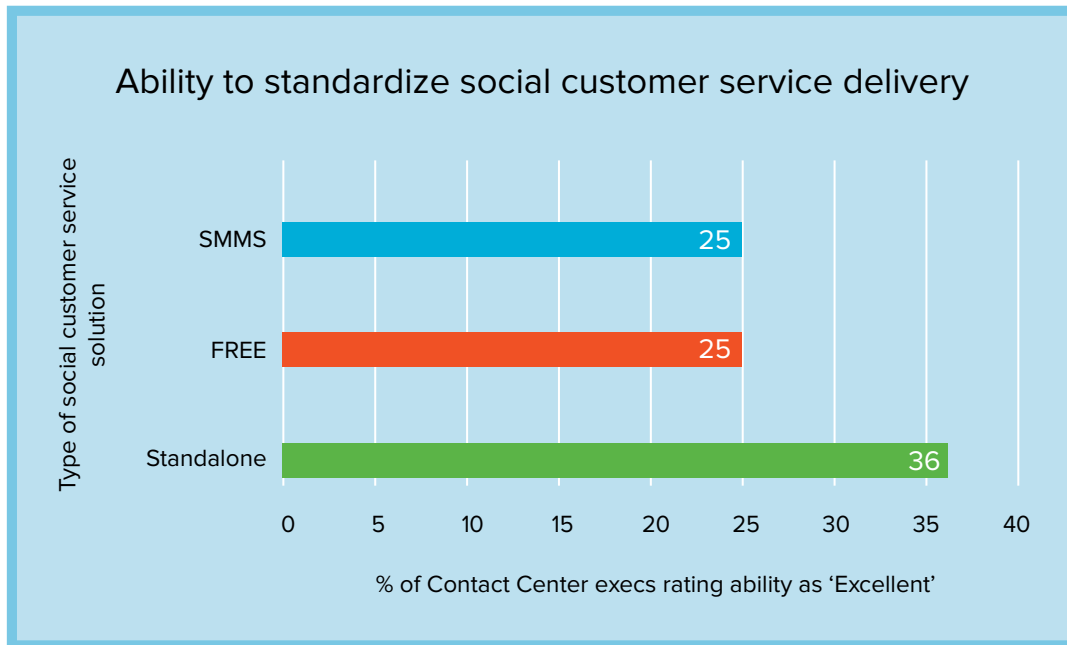| Type of social customer service solution	% of Contact Center execs rating ability as 'Excellent'
SMMS	8
FREE	10
Standalone	45

Base: 159 US and UK Customer Service decision-makers. Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Conversocial, March 2014.

36% of dedicated social customer service solution users rated their ability to use the same SLA metrics as traditional channels as Excellent, versus 10% of free solution users and 17% of SMMS users.

Integration with existing Contact Center SLA metrics

Type of social customer service solution	% of Contact Center execs rating ability as 'Excellent'
SMMS	17
FREE	10
Standalone	36

Base: 159 US and UK Customer Service decision-makers. Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Conversocial, March 2014.

36% of dedicated social customer service solution users rated their standardization of delivery of social customer service across agents as Excellent, versus 25% of free solution users, 25% of SMMS users.

Ability to standardize social customer service delivery

Type of social customer service solution

SMMS	25
FREE	25
Standalone	36

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40

% of Contact Center execs rating ability as 'Excellent'

Base: 159 US and UK Customer Service decision-makers. Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Conversocial, March 2014.

Closing thoughts

Ultimately, dedicated solutions allow customer service teams to do what they do best – serve the customer. These teams are not focused on reaching as many people as possible, building brand awareness or adding subscribers like Marketing colleagues.

Dedicated social customer service solutions provide the tools to deliver what Contact Center teams actually want:

• The ability to deliver a timely and awe-inspiring social customer experience

• An increase in operational efficiency and cost-savings

• Ensuring a well-managed and limited risk organization

• A platform that fits seamlessly and effortlessly into existing Contact Center systems

There are many aspects of social media that make it different from traditional customer service channels - especially its public, one-to-many nature. But when a customer reaches out for help, they don't care about the 'channel'. They just want a great service experience, where they are helped quickly by a knowledgeable agent who can fix their problem, without jumping through hoops.

To deliver this kind of service at scale, it is essential for social media to be fully integrated into the Contact Center: allowing agents to be managed and resourced properly, with the same efficiency metrics as other channels; and with integration of data across different service channels so a customer can move seamlessly between social, email and phone.

At Conversocial we believe that Marketing and Customer Service should work closer together. But this comes through real, human relationships - not by siloing social media into a single tool that doesn't allow Customer Service to reach its full potential.

Who we are

Founded in 2009, Conversocial has constantly led the way in the evolution of social customer service. Our cloud software is used in the Contact Centers of hundreds of major retailers, banks, telcos and other brands to enable them to manage the high volumes of complaints and questions they receive through social networks.

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Powering Enterprise Social Customer Service