5 WAYS
MANUFACTURERS CAN EXCEED
RISING CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

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CLOUD ERP

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Introduction

Manufacturers are in a distinctly new world. The old days of just a few years ago, where products and brands could compete strictly on quality and performance, are over. Today's consumers experience one-click customizations, personalized marketing, and instant customer service in their online experiences, so when they get to work, those manufacturing customers increasingly expect the same customer experience from their solution providers.

Rising customer expectations are colliding with increased competition from more adept, agile, and modernized manufacturing alternatives.

In the recent [“State of Service” report by Salesforce,](#) 91% of purchasers say good customer service makes them more likely to purchase from that vendor again, and 83% expect to have an immediate interaction with a person when they contact customer service.

The essence is this: to compete in manufacturing today, your customer service must be both exceptional and fast. That's not easy if you're working on cumbersome, disconnected systems or using slow, manual customer service processes. But there are ways to improve customer service, and the time to get started is now.
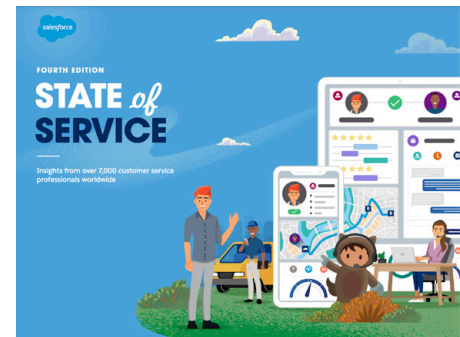
Customers Expect Great Service.
A Consolidated Platform Delivers It.

Rising customer service expectations is not a new trend, but it has accelerated over the past year. In the same Salesforce report mentioned above, nearly two-thirds say the pandemic has raised their standards for customer service. They want an instant response, from a single contact, and nearly all (82%) expect even complex problems to be solved by that single person. In other words, every customer wants to be treated as if they were your only customer.
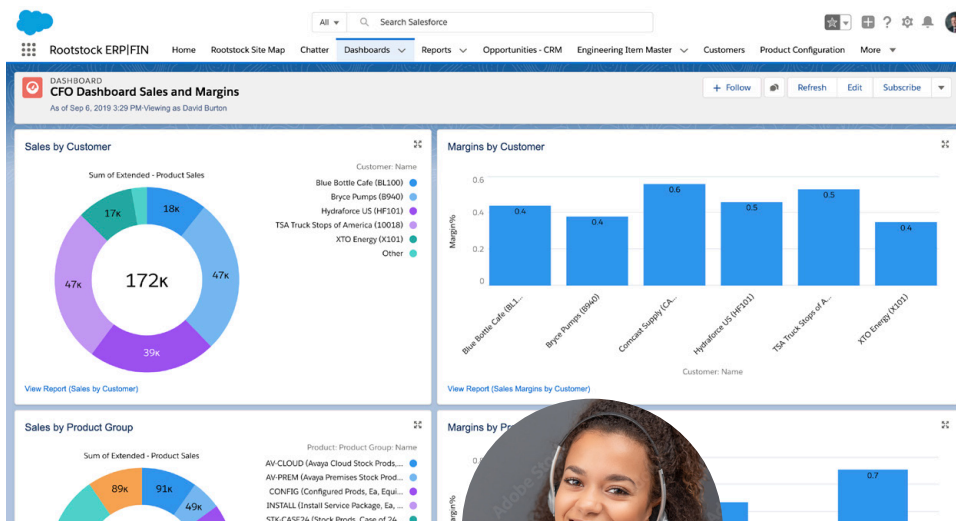
Consider for a moment how you can meet that expectation. Your customer service teams must have the bandwidth to respond to every incoming query, the agility to field multiple simultaneous conversations, and access to every bit of required order, inventory, field service, and other customer information. So, your customer service processes must be extremely efficient, agents must have modern tools and training, and their systems must be intuitive, integrated, and flexible.

82% OF CUSTOMERS expect even complex problems to be solved by a single person.

In other words, every customer wants to be treated as if they were your only customer.

It's time to rethink your approach to customer service. The best starting point is in the platform you're already using to run the sales processes that bring new customers onboard but can also be easily extended to include field service, production, operations, logistics, partners, and so much more: Salesforce.

5 Ways to Improve Customer Service for Manufacturers

Improving customer service is a challenge but improving customer service for manufacturers adds layers of complexity that only modern, connected technologies can overcome. Customer questions typically require access to parts inventories and bills of materials because responses are based on service level agreements (SLA) and purchase history information. Field service dispatches need access to scheduling tools and creation of work orders, and more complex problems might require engineering support or getting suppliers involved, and more.

Salesforce provides the platform to run your entire business, which streamlines processes across every required touchpoint in the customer service journey. Building on a single platform also gives everyone from sales and service to finance and engineering easy access to the data required to simplify, automate, and accelerate how your manufacturing business responds to every customer. Going deeper, the combined history of customer, purchase, production and service data is instantly available to provide broader context to improve your customer service efforts, whether it's via net promoter score (NPS), churn rates, process audits, or customer feedback. It all resides in a single system.

Today's customers expect (some demand) a high level of service. To exceed those expectations requires a customer-first approach, both to your service processes and the technology that facilitates it. It may sound daunting, but here are five ways to start improving your manufacturing customer service today.

SALESFORCE PROVIDES THE PLATFORM to run your entire business, which streamlines processes across every required touch-point in the customer service journey.

1. **Unify** Customer Service Around the Customer

Customers expect fast and accurate answers. That puts pressure on customer service agents to find them. So, make it easy by unifying customer service processes around the customer instead of around your systems, silos, and thinking. It sounds obvious, but many platforms do not support such thinking.

Modernization is the key here. Customer service agents need speed and efficiency, which requires visibility into customer, sales, product, order, service, and other data. But modern customers appreciate self-service access to their own data in your system—why not give it to them. Modern customer service solutions connect agents and customers, no matter which channels they choose.

A real-time, single source of business truth is critical, too. Even as email and phone support still reign as the primary connection mechanism, support via social media, chat, and automated bots are increasingly popular with both customers and manufacturers. That requires a single solution that can manage omni-channel customer support, especially as the same customer can hop across channels as they work towards issue resolution. The data can also then be easily analyzed to identify engineering or production issues, get ahead of customer trends, and further mitigate future customer service issues.

Remember that everyone who speaks with a customer is providing customer service. So don't just empower agents while engineers, sales reps, field service, and others are left in the dark. Extend that complete 360° view of the customer to everyone who interacts with a customer so that customer experiences one voice, one brand, and one company.

59% OF INTERACTIONS
with business buyers happen online

(source: State of Service, Fourth Edition, Salesforce, 2021)

2. Strengthen Product Knowledge to Drive Resolutions

Resolving issues as quickly as possible is important to customers, but they also want a good experience along the way. In fact, 86% of customers are willing to pay for a better experience, according to Salesforce. That can directly impact your bottom line and justify the investment in better, more connected tools.

But agents can't be as effective at resolution if they lack the data, tools, and guidance to support that experience. A modern platform provides effective tools, easy access to data, and resources to engage with customers how they choose. And an intelligent solution on a single platform guides agents to faster, more effective resolutions.

The common denominator for manufacturing customer support, however, is product knowledge. Agents must be familiar with their products, understand usage and maintenance, and have access to engineering and production resources when needed. Training is the key to create a solid baseline of product knowledge, but artificial intelligence (AI) can supplement training with contextual help that makes every agent—and even automated bots—a product expert.

86% OF CUSTOMERS
are willing to pay for a better experience, according to Salesforce.

AI and natural language processing (NLP) bring a conversational experience and deep knowledge to every customer service interaction. With innovations like Salesforce Einstein, AI can manage much of the customer service conversation via chatbots and improve speed and accuracy for customer service agents by combining data, tools, and guidance in every customer conversation. And, again, all the data flows back into a single platform for analysis and continuously improving customer service.

How do I drive better customer experiences?

One conversation at a time.
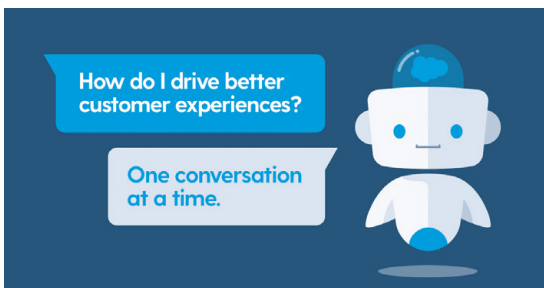
Read "How to Drive a Better Customer Experience"

Learn how AI, NLP, chatbots, and Einstein work together to enhance customer service.

3. Deliver Quality Service **Fast**

More than two-thirds of organizations, according to the Salesforce "State of Service" report, say high-quality information and speed of resolution are both important to reaching their customer service goals. Unfortunately, less than one-third say they excel at response times and resolution times. So how can agents find speed while ensuring quality?
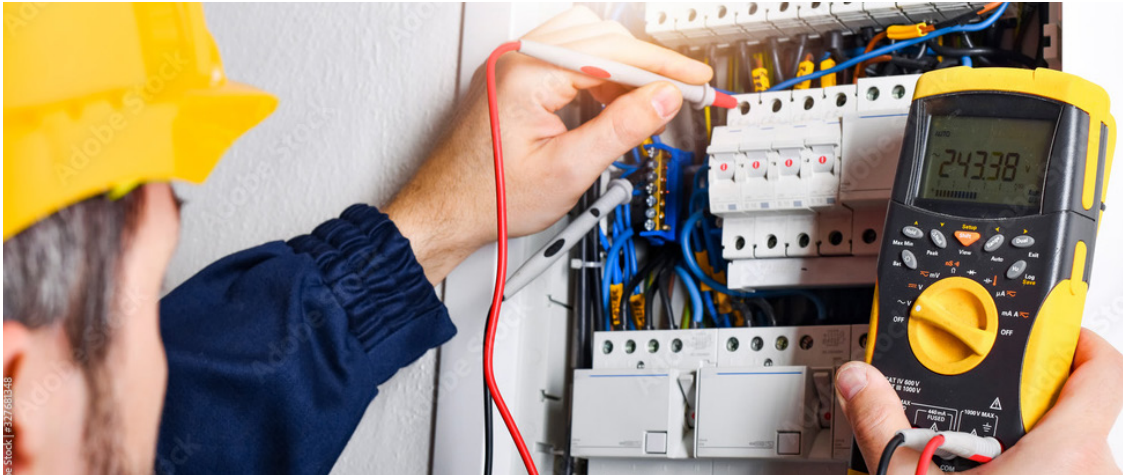
Optimizing and streamlining processes is obviously critical. That includes field service engagements where personnel are required to get to job sites safely and efficiently, and then quickly resolve the issues. But ideally, manufacturers look for ways to solve issues without requiring a field service appointment in the first place. Combing data to analyze field service effectiveness can help you understand when in-person visits could have been avoided by providing customers with more or more helpful information earlier in the process. Again, it comes back to empowering agents to share information and insights with customers to resolve issues quickly and/or through digital or self-service channels.

More manufacturers are relying on automation and AI to increase productivity in customer service. By automating basic data gathering of customer, product, and order information; giving agents and field service reps access to colleagues and internal resources; and providing intelligent recommendations for next steps; customer service has the time to focus on more value-added work or complex issues.

High performing field service teams are 3.2x more likely to collaborate with their colleagues.

(source: State of Service, Fourth Edition, Salesforce, 2021)

4. Take Care of Your Team

Research by Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute found that the "manufacturing skills gap" could result in more than 2 million unfilled manufacturing jobs by 2030. That's less than a decade away, and telegraphs the impending challenge of finding, hiring and keeping the workers you need. Although exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic, many industries are already reporting lack of skilled workers as their biggest impediment to growth.

The pandemic showed us how resilient workers can be, but it also showed how valuable workers at all levels are to company success. Its impact continues to be top-of-mind as supply chain disruptions, transportation issues, and frontline workforce shortfalls constrain manufacturing output.

Taking care of your workers is an obvious approach, but with customer service agents already being pressured to do more for more demanding customers, it requires transformational change. The agility to pivot to flexible hours, remote work, mobile capabilities, and workload balancing were enabled and improved through connected, cloud-based technology solutions. Moreover, streamlined training, real-time access to accurate information, collaboration, and employee empowerment, all lead to higher job satisfaction and retention.

Remember too, that mental and physical health check-ins can provide an early warning of burnout that worker dissatisfaction and churn. Technology can provide data-driven insights to see when workloads and case volumes are resulting in lost productivity and unhappy agents. AI can spot at-risk workers before it's too late to adjust, and robust collaboration tools can keep remote workers connected with colleagues and facilitate feedback channels for managers.

63%
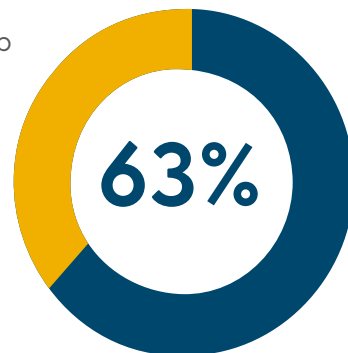
63% of manufacturers are struggling to fill critical roles despite high unemployment.

(source: "The 63% Resilience of Manufacturing", The Workforce Institute, 2021)

5. Strive for Continuous Improvement

The same technology that enables customer service can also be used to empower, energize, and enhance how everyone in your business interacts and engages with customers. Finding optimization and improvement opportunities frequently boils down to data analysis, and having a common platform for everything from production to sales to service ensures you're seeing the complete picture for your end-to-end business, especially in how it impacts customers.

Popular metrics such as customer satisfaction, retention or churn, response times, cost per contact, and others can be easily visualized through dashboards and automated reports when using a modern platform.

A modern connected platform can also expose production, finance, sales and marketing to data relevant for their contribution to customer satisfaction and can provide more insight into how your products, services, and customer support are working together to drive your overall business.

Automation and AI again come in to play here, especially when improving both the productivity and happiness of your customer service agents as well as toward the goal of customer satisfaction. AI can intelligently classify incoming cases, automatically provide self-service options or guide cases to the best available agent. Automated chatbots are also becoming more popular, with a 67% increase in usage since 2018, according to Salesforce. These now-familiar bots can give more customers more answers in less time, all with zero agent interaction. Moreover, the resolution data is then used to optimize future customer service interactions, providing a closed-loop for continuously improving both agent and self-service interactions.

The point is twofold: customers will always expect more, and your competitors may already be doing more. When it comes to customer service, the bar is being continuously raised. Only by investing in your customer service team and providing them with modern solutions they need can you outperform customer expectations.
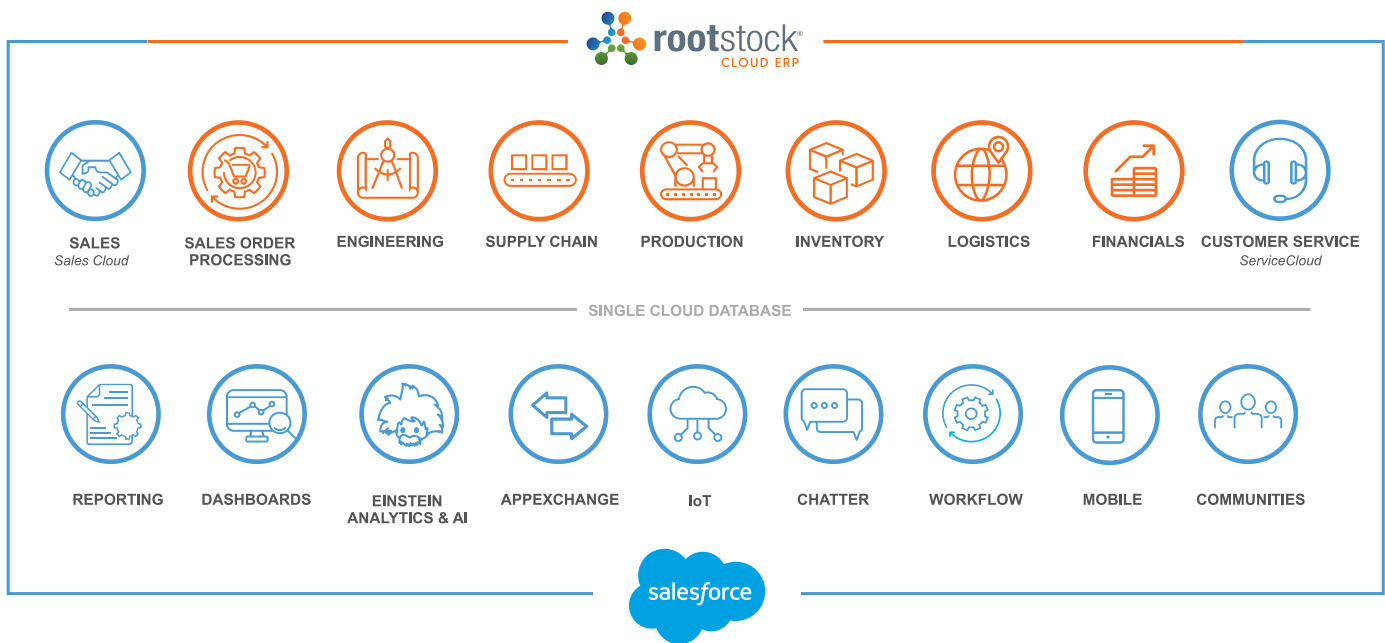

70% of customer support leaders plan to increase budgets in 2021.

(source: "Strategic Trends and Priorities for Service and Support Leaders in 2021", Gartner, 2021)

Customer Service Belongs on Your Business Platform

Customer service is a critical competency in a manufacturing business. Customers expect more, competitors are doing more, and you need to invest more to ensure a satisfying customer experience. Building customer service on the same technology platform that runs the other critical, customer-facing components of your manufacturing business provides a common database, interface, and workflow engine to maximize insights and effectiveness. And when that platform can be extended connect sales and service with operations, purchasing, finance, logistics and any other function of manufacturing, the decision is clear.

Rootstock on the Salesforce Platform enables you to optimize everything from a sales through purchase and into every eventual customer service interaction. Those customers get satisfying, personalized results based on their complete history, can engage via the channels they prefer, and get fast access to the answers they seek. Give your manufacturing operations the platform they need to automate, scale, and streamline support—from every department.
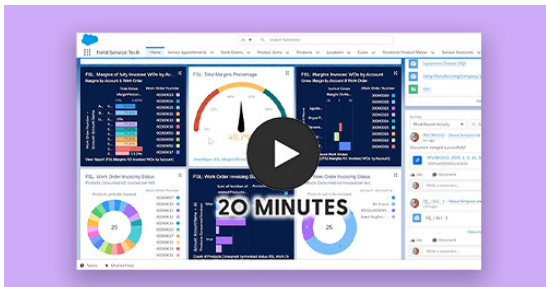

rootstock® CLOUD ERP

| SALES
Sales Cloud | SALES ORDER
PROCESSING | ENGINEERING | SUPPLY CHAIN | PRODUCTION | INVENTORY | LOGISTICS | FINANCIALS | CUSTOMER SERVICE
ServiceCloud |

SINGLE CLOUD DATABASE

| REPORTING | DASHBOARDS | EINSTEIN
ANALYTICS & AI | APPEXCHANGE | IoT | CHATTER | WORKFLOW | MOBILE | COMMUNITIES |

salesforce

Learn How Rootstock Cloud ERP Enhances Service for Manufacturers

Rootstock Cloud ERP provides the integrated solution manufacturers need to leverage the power of their Salesforce Platform. It's integrated with Salesforce Service Cloud to connect customer information, operational data, and service insights in a single interface. The combination lets you track service history across products and customers, customize workflows to match customer needs and internal processes, and build agile, low-code, customizable experiences to quickly meet growing customer expectations.

Combining Rootstock Cloud ERP with Salesforce Service Cloud gives you a complete view of every customer interaction. That's visibility that call center personnel, customer service agents, and field service reps can use to provide superior service in less time. That's also visibility that data operations, engineering, and leadership can use to maximize effectiveness across your entire manufacturing organization.

With Rootstock Cloud ERP and Salesforce Service Cloud, you get:

- A connected, 360° view of the customer from every custom support lens: sales, production, finance and service.

- Customizable service workflows to match your own desktop, mobile, and field processes using a simple point-and-click, low-code interface.

- The power and intelligence to perform as a single, cohesive, and effective company—especially from the customer's point of view.

To learn more, in this 20-minute webinette see Rootstock Cloud ERP and Salesforce Field Service in action
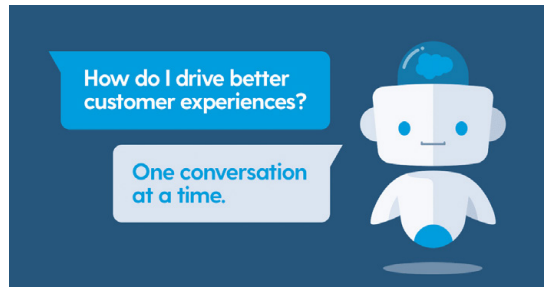
Read the blog post: How to Drive Better Customer Experience One Conversation at a Time?