

PagerDuty

Where Real-Time Work
Meets Customer Service

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The Age of the Always-On Customer Experience

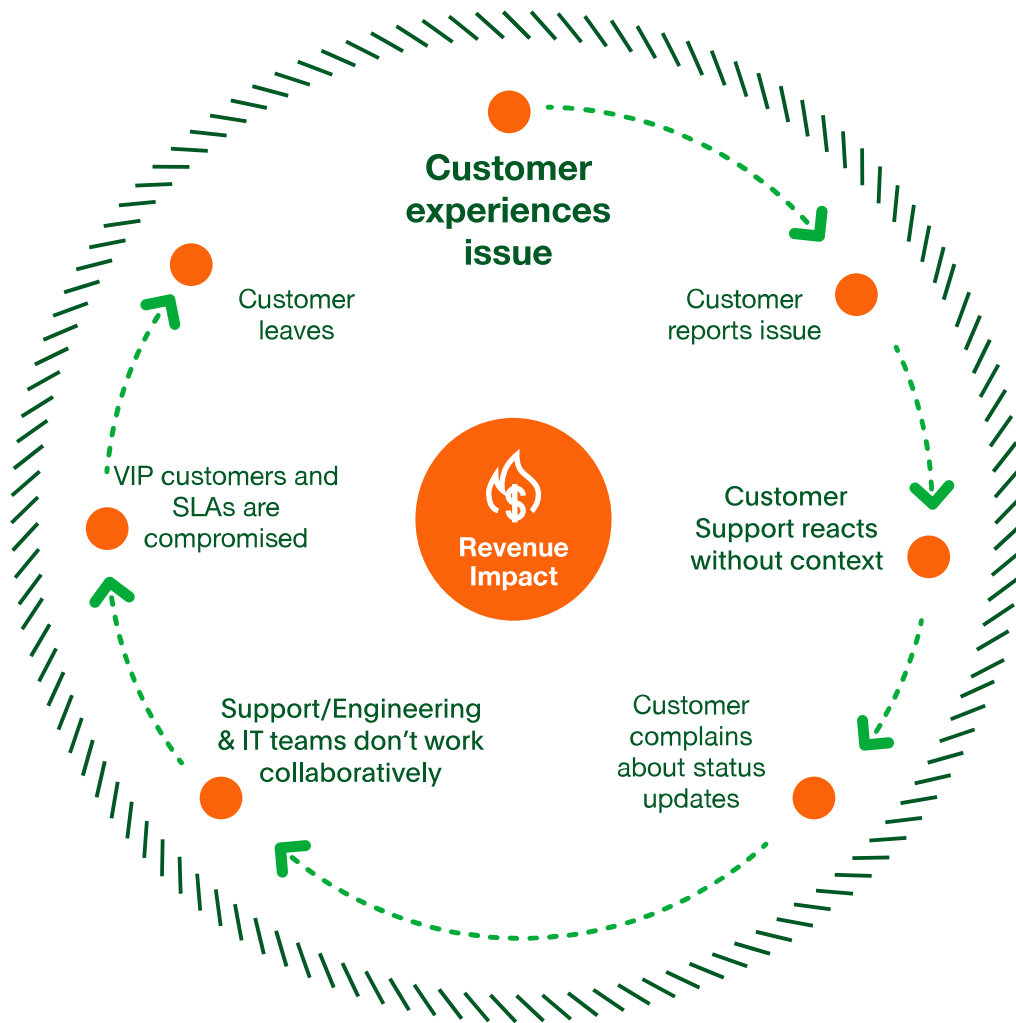
Digital transformation is top of mind for many companies, and IT leaders are tasked to arm the business with the ability to scale and become more agile—all while moving faster. Be it banking, travel, retail, health, or entertainment, no industry is left unturned. The way we live and work has become fully digitalized, and this means consumers now expect flawless digital experiences in real time. When things don't work, they can start looking for options elsewhere. Having solely digital experiences makes building loyalty much more difficult, but when customers have a great customer service experience, that has a huge impact on their trust and satisfaction with the brand.

In fact, according to an [article from Salesforce](#), 80% of consumers say that the experience a company provides is just as important as its products and services.

The global pandemic has forced both consumers and businesses alike towards a digital-first or digital-only model, which, in turn, has placed an added strain on customer service organizations to quickly adapt in order to stay responsive in a world where the customer experience is everything.

As businesses focus more and more on customer experience, customer-facing organizations like customer service and support are experiencing greater overlap with their technical counterparts when it comes to challenges and opportunities for real-time work. Both are learning that they need to transition from a reactive state to a more proactive, preventative posture in order to meet the growing expectations of the customer.

This ebook is written with customer-facing organization leadership in mind to review trends and best practices where real-time operations principles can be applied to the customer organization. The industry has shifted such that technical teams and Customer Service have more reason to be aligned than ever before to meet the demands of the always-on modern customer. There's a huge opportunity for cross-collaboration to help the two sides get on the same page about tackling challenges brought upon by the mix of people, technology, and processes so that they can resolve issues faster and keep morale high.



Reactive mode is bad for everyone

Teams are stressed and overwhelmed. It can be challenging to collaborate and have access to the right information when there is a disconnect around tools, people and process. Customers pay the price and ultimately look for alternatives and leave.

The Changing Role of Customer Service for the Digital Business

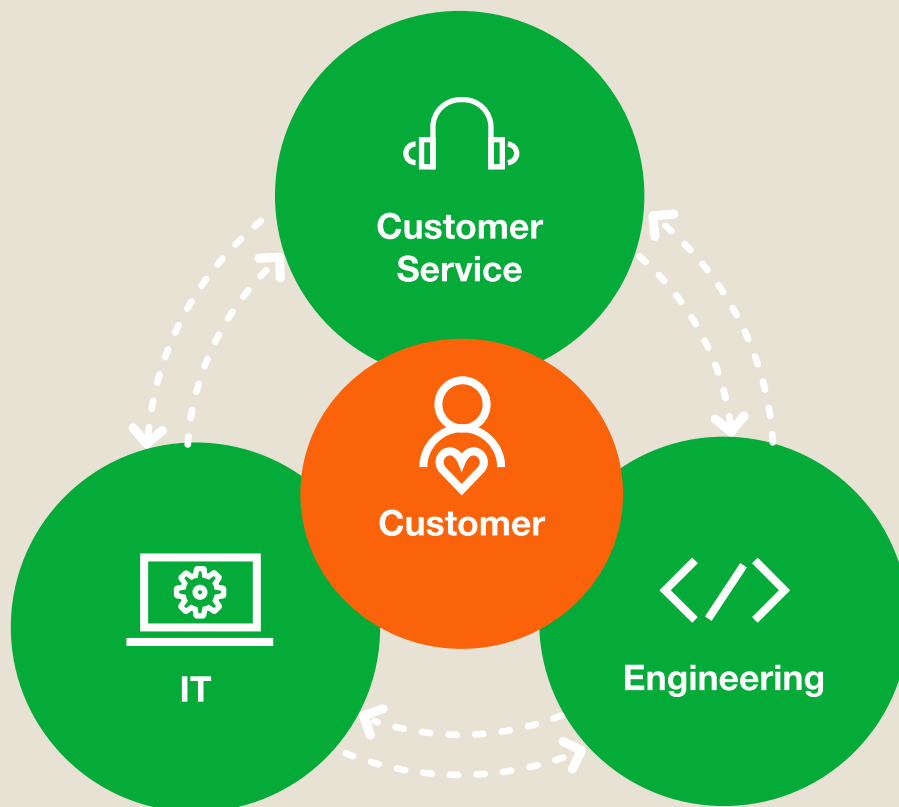
Customer service sits on the front lines when it comes to addressing digital customer issues—a pretty difficult job when you consider the scale and volume of digital feedback that comes in. And with the new normal driving customer service teams to do more with less and organizations prioritizing the move towards digital-only customer experiences, customer service requires a new approach.

Customer service agents and managers are no longer just logging in issues from customers and passing them on to technical teams hoping for the best. They are now taking ownership of issues end to end by orchestrating a response, looping in the right technical and management teams, and proactively updating customers.

This means that the critical role of the ITOps and DevOps “incident commander”—the decision-maker responsible for delegating tasks and listening to input from subject matter experts during a major incident—must now expand to include the customer service organization in an all-digital world where communication is vital to keeping customers informed and happy.

It's inevitable that things will break. But when they do, customers expect things to be resolved quickly and with a high degree of transparency and proactive communication. What customers remember most often is the experience during the incident and not the incident itself. It's now business-critical that your developers, ITOps, and customer service teams can work closely together to solve customer-facing issues.

Transparency in the response correlates with a customer's willingness to accept incidents that impact them. In other words, it isn't merely that there was an incident—it's how you handle it that matters.



Empower collaboration

By enabling IT, developer and customer service teams with bidirectional communication, we are making it easier for them to collaborate as a united front when solving customer issues. With shared visibility and context, they are able to solve customer issues faster. Direct line of communication means that SLAs and VIP customers are prioritized.

An Interview With PagerDuty's Chief Customer Officer, Manjula Talreja



As Chief Customer Officer, Manjula Talreja leads PagerDuty's global customer success group, including customer success, professional services, support, renewals, and PagerDuty University. Her passion is in advising her customers in their digital transformation journey.

Q: As Chief Customer Officer at PagerDuty you must spend a lot of time talking about digital transformation. Is there an inflection point that you've noticed during your career?

A: I would call it an acceleration versus an inflection point. Customers are increasingly expecting a digital experience, more so due to the pandemic in 2020 than ever before. This is resulting in the acceleration of digital transformation. Traditional workflows are falling short when maintaining an always-on environment, especially as teams are widely distributed and not in the offices, which is why companies need to transform their operating model via real-time operations.

Q: What is the role for customer service in real-time work and maintaining that customer experience in the face of potential downtime?

A: [Research by McKinsey](#) shows the world of customer experience is moving to "Hyperpersonalized care and 'care of one.'" Two key tenets of delivering this new experience are reacting to customers before they even know they need you and implementing real-time tools. The benefits of providing this personalized experience include deeper customer trust and loyalty, reduced costs, and increased revenue.

The value of the "experience" is validated by lessons I have learned in my customer-facing roles; for example, customers don't remember the actual incident, but rather the experience during the disruption of their service. Customers expect software to fail but also expect that the experience the vendor provides them to be world-class. During a disruption, the customer service organization is on the front lines of the customer experience and must be empowered with clear, actionable information. Driving real-time operations by streamlining the remediation processes in Engineering and IT, coupled with a proactive stance for customer communication and engagement, is how the business can optimize the customer experience.

Q: How have customer organizations had to evolve?

A: Customer support, service, and success organizations have been successful in the past by focusing on delighting customers with speed to queries they have—in other words, by taking a reactive stance. These organizations are now evolving to engage with customers to drive adoption of their product, proactively engaging on outages and disruptions in new and different ways with increased transparency more than ever before.

Customer support leaders are driving new operating models across people, processes, and technology that are closely integrated with their engineering and IT counterparts to enable real-time operations and provide a bilateral communication with customers. If there is a disruption, a proactive customer organization is reaching out to customers, staying in communication, and owning the narrative to build trust and customer confidence rather than reacting and managing unplanned work.

Q: What are some secrets of success for customer leaders to deliver on those customer expectations when outages are bound to happen?

A: Alignment between customer service, engineering, and the business is paramount to smooth orchestration of a positive customer experience, even if downtime occurs. The great news is that engineering organizations have been impacted by similar asks from the business to focus on customer experience, so partnership with customer service is likely already in place and alignment can only help.

An integral part across engineering and support coming together is getting on the same page about monitoring the customer experience. This can mean both adopting a proactive posture, aligning on a unified process for handling issues, and looking at the same alerts, metrics, and dashboards.

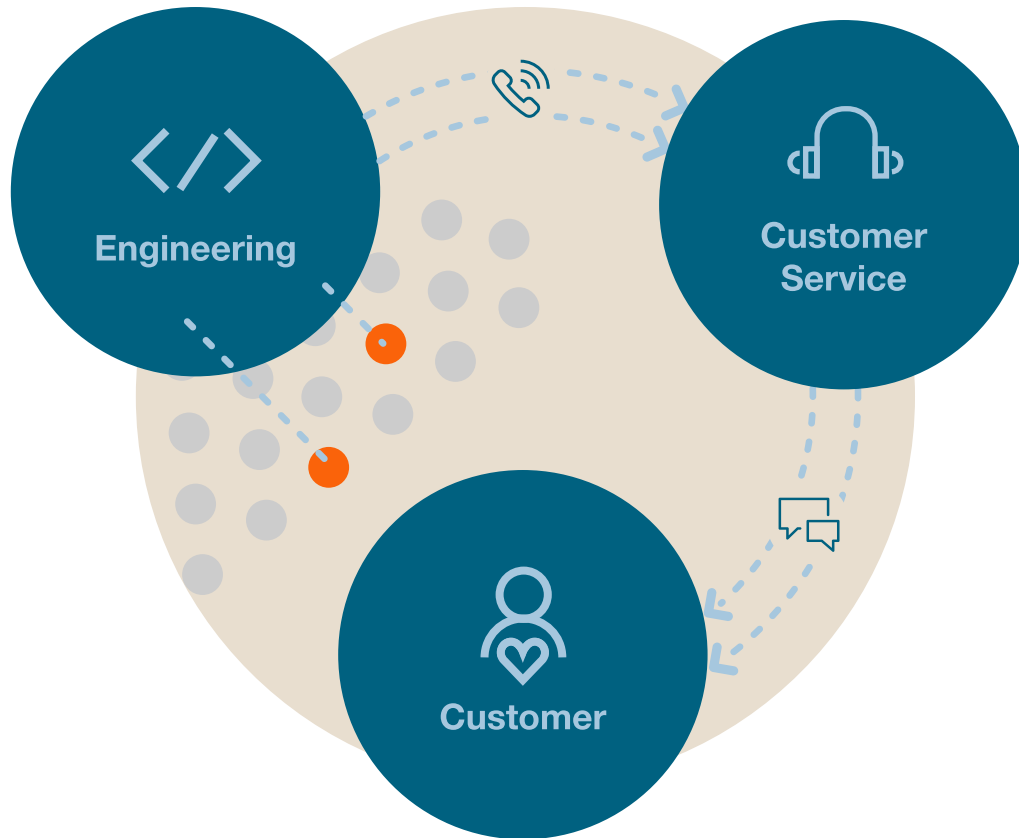
Q: How can customer service leaders interested in championing this alignment get started?

A: I'd start by looking at your business and trying to determine the types of activities that need to happen in real time, and using the answers to identify areas where you can provide an elevated customer experience.

For example:

- How are you (or anyone customer-facing) kept up-to-date when there is a service degradation?
- How are other business stakeholders notified of a customer-impacting issue?
- Do you have time-sensitive support inquiries (e.g., VIP customers)?
- Are there response time SLAs that you need to hit?
- Does your company have an incident management process and how are the customer-facing teams involved?

With the shift to always-on technologies, the role of customer-facing teams has been elevated. Now is the time for service leaders to drive the conversation to get the company aligned around how they can get ahead of customer disruption and to ensure that when there are challenges, your customers come out the other end pleased with the quality of response and support they received.



Get ahead of customer issue with proactive service and customer outreach

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Challenges for the Modern Customer Service Organization

As we've mentioned, it used to be solely the role of software developers and ITOps teams to create and maintain the digital experience for customers. But what happens when a customer identifies an issue that makes them unable to use your service?

Their first line of contact is almost always the customer service team, who historically lacked the tooling, communication paths, and knowledge to help solve these issues. In the past, customer service reps would apologize to customers and then pass along this information to the technical teams who could take the steps needed to solve the problem.

Most support teams today are still working in reactive mode fielding customer-reported issues and are doing it with fewer people and resources. They don't have an integrated tool stack and end up working across many different disconnected tools to resolve issues; for example, one for case management, one for real-time collaboration with their team, and still others for cross-team communication. This creates a lot of manual work and wastes critical time. Furthermore, they can't escalate critical customer-impacting problems that can lead to breached SLAs and poor handling of VIP customers—causing significant negative impact to the business and bottom line.

Today, customer service teams need real-time status updates for business services and customer-facing applications. To effectively address customer issues, they need to understand how potential sources of digital issues impact customers, so they can help identify them and route to the right teams to remediate. When software issues do happen, they need the ability to quickly escalate to the right teams, in real time, which will help increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, and help decrease churn.

Five Lessons Learned From DevOps Applied to a Customer Service Model



#1: Focusing on the Customer Experience

Delivering an always-on seamless customer experience is what drives the requirement for digital operations management, which makes sure everything under the hood is working and fixing it quickly when something breaks.

Why this matters to Customer Service: When things go wrong, customer service is on the front lines for providing timely and proactive updates.



#2: Gain a Holistic View

Having a clear line of sight into and across infrastructure environments is key for assessing and keeping a pulse on issues that may come up.

Why this matters to Customer Service: Technical teams have already acknowledged this need—what many customer service teams don't realize is they can benefit from having access to the same integrated tool stack. This alignment and a direct line of communication with other teams will help them serve customers when it matters most.



#3: Keep an Eye on Business Value

Delivering a positive customer experience during outages and downtime is critical when it comes to retaining customers and driving business value.

Why this matters to Customer Service: To shift to a predominantly proactive mode, Customer Service decision-makers need to look beyond resolution and response times and start looking at how many issues are being proactively resolved vs. reported by customers. They also need to pay attention to CSAT and NPS scores because those are directly tied to service and experience.



#4: Empower Your Teams and Boost Morale

Creating streamlined processes and clear-cut roles and responsibilities for handling situations when things aren't working are key to helping with employee morale when problems arise.

Why this matters to Customer Service: Trying to service unhappy customers while acting as a defacto incident commander is stressful. By giving teams the tools they need for effective cross collaboration, agents will feel more empowered in managing the resolution process, improving team morale and individual job satisfaction.



#5: Shift From Reactive to Proactive

Utilizing more automation and establishing a culture of continuous learning to better anticipate and swiftly remediate issues is critical to upleveling teams responsible for real-time work.

Why this matters to Customer Service: You shouldn't be learning about issues from your customers. Leverage machine learning to inform customers before they know about a problem, along with information on what to expect next, and provide differentiated responses for impacted customers.

Businesses need to focus on customer retention because it's more cost effective to keep a customer happy than to acquire a new one. Customer service is a critical part of this journey, especially in the digital world. Gaining access to visibility, tools, and processes will help customer service organizations scale and deliver better end-user experiences as a whole.

Sign up for a free trial

To learn more about PagerDuty's offering for Customer Service teams, visit www.pagerduty.com/use-cases/customer-service-support

About PagerDuty

PagerDuty, Inc. (NYSE:PD) is a leader in digital operations management. In an always-on world, organizations of all sizes trust PagerDuty to help them deliver a perfect digital experience to their customers, every time. Teams use PagerDuty to identify issues and opportunities in real time and bring together the right people to fix problems faster and prevent them in the future. Notable customers including GE, Vodafone, Box, and American Eagle Outfitters.

To learn more and try PagerDuty for free, visit www.pagerduty.com.