Reinventing customer service

How service teams can grow true customer loyalty with Slack as their digital HQ
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Navigating the digital HQ era
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The upheavals of 2020 will have a long-term impact on the way we work. They’ve created an opportunity for every organization to embrace better ways of working—approaches that combine the best of what we had before with the new, more efficient processes discovered during lockdown. Chief among them? The transition to a digital HQ.

Prior to the pandemic, an organization’s physical headquarters served as the nucleus of collaboration and productivity. Digital tools supplemented in-person, synchronous work. But that approach no longer squares with business needs and employee expectations. Today’s work-from-anywhere world requires a digital HQ—a place that connects teams, tools, customers and partners in a digital place that’s fast, flexible and inclusive.

This is especially true for customer service teams. The overnight move to completely remote working disrupted many service processes and call centers. But it also exposed new ways to think about service delivery and how best to support the people who do such important work.

The big challenge: responding to skyrocketing customer expectations while reinventing the way service and support teams operate.

Five themes that dominate the work-from-anywhere world

We’ve spoken with forward-thinking business leaders from all industries, company sizes and disciplines about their transition to a digital HQ. Five big imperatives emerged from our discussions (explored in our e-book Reinventing Work) and they’re relevant for just about every leader:

- Employee engagement needs a digital-first makeover
- Alignment matters now more than ever
- The ecosystem economy demands a new partner playbook
- Customer-led disruption is forcing rapid CX convergence
- The winners are accelerating work through automation
Navigating the digital HQ era

In this guide, we’ll look at what these themes mean for service leaders and show how customer service teams around the world are helping their organizations meet new challenges by adopting Slack as their Digital HQ for Service. With Slack, organizations can bridge the gap between ticketing platforms and the rest of the business, while extending critical service workflows, tools and information to the people whom agents need to deliver excellent customer experiences.

How service teams could benefit* with Slack as their Digital HQ for Service:

Internally improve employee satisfaction, coaching and culture

- **294%**
  return on Slack investment over three years

- **$967,300**
  increase in revenue due to improved customer satisfaction

- **17.4%**
  reduction in escalations

- **15.1%**
  average cut of cost per ticket

- **11.4%**
  average increase in CSAT score

- **9.3%**
  average reduction in resolution time

The Total Economic Impact™ of Slack for Service Teams*

A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Slack, April 2021. All values based on a composite organization.
1.

Employee engagement needs a digital-first makeover
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At the heart of great customer experiences are service agents who are empowered to collaborate effectively and deliver personalized experiences infused with empathy and understanding. These “super agents” are emerging in organizations that make it easy for agents to resolve issues faster and delight customers.

Here’s how managers are optimizing the agent experience and setting their agents up for success in the work-from-anywhere era.

The emergence of streamlined onboarding

The road to becoming a full-fledged support agent used to be littered with outdated docs, lengthy wikis and tedious “fwd:fwd: Do you know the answer to this?” emails. Today Slack’s searchable channels are helping newbies develop the deep product knowledge and strong cross-functional relationships they need to succeed—in a fraction of the time taken previously.

When same-day delivery provider Shipt needed to scale its shopper operations team fast, it used Slack’s Workflow Builder to create a welcome bot called Successor. Successor brought new hires up to speed in record time with a helpful overview of all the available resources (including searchable FAQs) in Slack. Being able to loop in experts in real time via Slack was another major confidence booster for newbies.

“From a communication standpoint, Slack is the lifeblood of our team. We use Slack channels as a collective knowledge base to source answers ... which ultimately helps us successfully deliver on our KPIs.”

Brian Malone, Director of Customer Service, Shipt
Employee engagement needs a digital-first makeover

The rise of micro-coaching

Agents who work remotely can’t raise a hand for help—or lean across to a supervisor for a quick steer.

With Slack as their digital HQ, managers can provide more “micro-coaching”—initiating conversations around performance issues and providing crucial coaching in real time. Because Slack is channel-based, managers have a high-level view of each agent’s struggles with particular issues. Training and coaching opportunities surface faster, and managers can act in real time to drop a link—in a message or channel—to a course in the LMS.

Intuit QuickBooks uses a custom Slack app (a conversational bot, actually) called Quincy to support its agents. When Quincy can’t answer a question, a request for help is automatically sent to the relevant product champion. The product champion then turns the situation into a valuable learning experience for the support agent. Quincy has increased agent confidence by 20% and NPS by 12%.

UNLOCKING AN EXPERT ECOSYSTEM AT INTUIT QUICKBOOKS

More satisfied agents, more satisfied customers:

- **20%** increase in agent confidence
- **36%** increase in agent efficiency
- **12%** increase in NPS

“Micro-coaching is actually driving the skill set to a level we’ve never seen before.”

Omer Khan, former Customer Success Digital Lead, Intuit QuickBooks
Alignment matters now more than ever
As many businesses have found, old-school command-and-control management styles don’t work well in a remote work environment. It’s easy for vital communications to be missed—and harder for leadership to take the pulse of how employees are feeling.

In a time of heightened stress and anxiety, this can lead to loss of alignment, lower morale and more employee burnout. By contrast, organizations that entered the WFH era with a transparent approach to knowledge sharing have succeeded in keeping teams motivated and aligned.

Organizations that increased transparency with employees after March 2020 experienced an 85% increase in employee engagement.

*O.C. Tanner*

Openness as the default management style

For many service teams, Slack has emerged as the platform of choice for two-way internal communications, hosting everything from CEO Ask Me Anything (AMA) sessions to employee pulse polls.
Alignment matters now more than ever

**Slack’s unlimited channels** mean it’s easy to set up dedicated channels for departments, allowing service teams to connect with them and unite the entire company around the customer to troubleshoot or address feedback. And with Slack channel integrations such as **Donut**, agents can connect and engage virtually across time zones with each other or other departments, increasing engagement and the development of authentic relationships.

Channels can also be a space for company announcements and Q&A sessions with senior leadership. Emojis make it easy for employees to indicate their thoughts and feelings about specific communications, while threads make it easy to reply and see how others have replied.

Because Slack is a two-way street, employees feel more involved in company announcements than they do with the old-style CEO emails—and are less likely to overlook vital information as a result.

**Nordstrom’s customer service teams** are distributed across several countries, so keeping everyone on message and up to date is vital. When policy changes happen, Nordstrom relies on core communication channels in Slack to disseminate the news to all their agents at once. And for distributed teams, having Slack as their digital HQ helps make people feel they belong.

“Imagine having 70% of your team working from home. They’re bound to feel excluded. And so we made sure every supervisor includes a one-on-one Slack Call in their daily routine. Supervisors get themselves in front of each agent, facilitating role play and having great conversations about how to serve customers. This goes a long way in ensuring that these agents still feel included in the workforce.”

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**China Scroggins**, Operations Manager for Customer Care, Nordstrom

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1 N.B. This quote has been edited for clarity.
The triumph of collaboration and alignment

Many important conversations take place outside even the most comprehensive support solutions like Salesforce Service Cloud or Zendesk. Which means that support agents often have to hunt down information across different apps (mail inboxes, custom dashboards and knowledge bases) to solve a single ticket.

Savvy service leaders are using Slack as their Digital HQ for Service to connect the entire support stack and integrate all the key service systems in a single place. These integrations also let agents pull ticket information to and from Slack channels and collaborate directly with managers and internal experts on cases—without leaving their primary ticketing tool. As they work on tickets, agents update customer records and other internal databases from Slack to keep everything up to date and moving forward.

RESOLVE ISSUES FASTER

Drive down costs and boost agent productivity*
with Slack as your Digital HQ for Service

9.3% 12.5% 18.3 minutes
avg reduction in more tickets saved per day per agent resolution time resolved monthly

The Total Economic Impact™ of Slack for Service Teams*

A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Slack, April 2021. All values based on a composite organization.
T-Mobile had already been using Slack as its digital HQ, but the combination of the pandemic and its merger with Sprint made the platform even more critical for its service team. As the team members found themselves triaging issues for an influx of new customers—while working remotely—Slack became their hub for collaborating and sharing knowledge.

It’s also their go-to tool for keeping one another updated, which is one of the core areas of focus for Rasha Alkhatib, a customer experience manager on T-Mobile’s customer loyalty team. With channels, digital spaces for collaborating, Alkhatib has an organized and transparent record of her team’s work, which she can surface to her manager as needed.

“A big part of my job is reporting what my team is working on to our manager. We support around 1,000 people, so it’s very important for our manager to know what projects we’re on and where we are in terms of completion.”

Rasha Alkhatib, Customer Experience Manager, T-Mobile
3.
The ecosystem economy demands a new partner playbook.
One of the most intriguing aspects of remote working is that organizational boundaries become less defined. When people collaborate digitally rather than in an office, the distinction between “working with colleagues” and “working with partners” starts to melt away.

This is accelerating a move toward an “ecosystem economy,” where multiple organizations work together to create new products, services and experiences. The more easily they can collaborate—while still maintaining security—the faster new value can be created.

“
It is less and less likely that single firms can offer all the elements a customer needs. And so ecosystems, especially designed ones, are on the rise.”

*Harvard Business Review*

**A drive to form new connections**

The best service teams are building trust and earning loyalty by staying in close contact with customers. They’re also looping in cross-functional partners to help nurture the entire customer journey. But working with customers and partners needs to be as easy as if they were right there with you.

Take ModSquad, a globally distributed crew of customer experience experts who help clients engage with their audiences online. ModSquad uses Slack Connect to create a secure bridge with its by moving conversations out of siloed email threads and into the same place, so everyone can collaborate as if they were on the same team—which is exactly what they are. ModSquad now has more than 50 Slack channels for its clients where files and messages are shared, and projects and support can be coordinated in real time.
The ecosystem economy demands a new partner playbook

Reimagine your service operations with Slack Connect

3x faster ticket resolution
30% reduction in workload for an enterprise support team
64% decrease in backlog of support tickets

*Claims and figures based on specific teams using Slack Connect at their companies. Results may vary at your organization. Learn more here.

Such channels become a secure, shared environment for direct, white-glove support. Customer service teams can be connected to their preferred ticketing system and custom workflows to make it easy for customers to submit requests with all the necessary information. For example, ModSquad uses a Zendesk Slack integration to track service desk tickets, troubleshoot and resolve issues.
The ecosystem economy demands a new partner playbook

Slack has brought us closer to our clients. I see clients pinging Mods to give them kudos if something has been handled well. Or sharing a thumbs-up or celebration emoji if there’s a good CSAT. A ‘thank-you’ from a client truly means the world to us.”

Stephen Dunne, Director of Client Services, ModSquad
Customer-led disruption is forcing rapid CX convergence
Customer-led disruption is forcing rapid CX convergence

Customer experience (CX) was one of the biggest differentiators for businesses even before the upheavals of 2020. Then the year of staying home and working remotely further transformed the way people buy—and their expectations of the companies they buy from.

Customers have come to want and expect an effortless digital experience, whether they’re ordering a takeout coffee via an app or digitally signing a multimillion-dollar IT contract on a video call with a sales rep.

The reduction in face-to-face contact means entire customer journeys are now happening digitally—from awareness to research, purchase and support. Customers want to feel like they’re dealing with a single company whether they’re interacting with sales, marketing or service. In the most customer-centric companies that have adopted a digital HQ, we’re seeing the walls between these teams starting to dissolve, making collaboration seamless and CX unified.

“Three priorities will define customer experience in the post-pandemic era: digital excellence, safe and contactless engagement, and dynamic customer insights.”

_McKinsey, Elevating Customer Experience in the Next Normal_

The last gasp for email and the birth of the digital HQ

Service teams already know that you can’t escalate time-sensitive customer issues via email. With remote work, the fragmentation of communication systems is even more problematic. If you need to loop in an expert, do you use email, a chat app, phone call or support ticket…? This disconnect leads directly to customer service disruption and delay.
Customer-led disruption is forcing rapid CX convergence

Having a digital HQ—a central place for interaction and collaboration—has become critical in bridging the gap between the ticketing tool where agents live and the rest of the organization that doesn’t live there.

**TRANSFORM THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

**Enjoy increased customer retention* with Slack as your Digital HQ for Service**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Increase</th>
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<tr>
<td>CSAT score</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPS score</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer Effort Score</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
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Consider **Xero**, a provider of online accounting software. Until late 2017, Xero was using just about every messaging tool available: Yammer, Flowdock, Google Hangouts, Skype. Nothing was interconnected and there was little opportunity for cross-functional collaboration—information was collected and distributed in silos. Today Xero’s customer experience team has between 30 and 40 Slack channels, and any agent who needs guidance can reach out instantly to SMEs who are online.
Customer-led disruption is forcing rapid CX convergence

With a digital HQ, customer feedback can be swiftly translated into business impact. For instance, agents may flag a recurring technical problem to the dev team, or a persistent billing issue to the finance department. Key customer insights are no longer locked in siloed systems (such as ticketing tools, CRM systems or email chains) or simply delayed by inefficient communication workflows. Response and resolution happens naturally.
Customer-led disruption is forcing rapid CX convergence

What’s more, custom bots in Slack can surface key trends from across many different sources of insights. For instance, a bot can scan support tickets to see that the term “can’t upload” occurred twelve times in a day—clearly something the product team needs to know about.

“Slack is ingrained in the way we communicate and work at Xero. It has enabled faster and more transparent information sharing across our teams, improving employee engagement and ultimately making it easier to build beautiful products.”

Levi Allan, Executive General Manager, Practice and Compliance, Xero

Hybrid customer support journeys become the norm

Customer support is moving beyond service desks to include those best equipped to solve an issue—wherever they may be. But responding quickly, at scale, can be tricky in a hybrid or remote work environment. An effective Digital HQ for Service makes the most of synchronous and asynchronous collaboration to solve customer problems.

By replacing the traditional one-to-one relationship between customers and agents with a one-to-many situation where agents can immediately tap experts for answers in real time, organizations can swarm the toughest challenges with their most qualified personnel.

The edge cloud platform Fastly uses a Slack channel to bring executives and subject-matter experts together to resolve critical support issues. Key participants fire off responses via Slack’s mobile app to keep resolutions moving along—even on weekends.

“With Slack, we can see activity almost instantly, triage events if needed, determine the severity and pull other people in. All in real time.”

Kim Ogletree, VP Customer Success, Fastly
The winners are accelerating work through automation
Intelligent, connected technologies are helping service leaders create a more efficient division of labor between people and software, so agents can spend more time engaging with customers.

For most service leaders, the pandemic accelerated this trend toward optimizing resources and automating processes. And since any change in the world—from a new product launch to a pandemic—generates spikes in customer service requests, automation combined with a digital HQ lets service teams scale up without dropping any balls.

Unifying the support stack becomes a priority

The sheer number of tools that support teams use is often what slows agents down. Seventy-seven percent of support teams use between one and 10 different tools just to do daily tasks, and 44% of teams use between six and 10 tools.

Audiology platform and billing specialist Smartcare streamlined communication between its support staff and clients by integrating apps with its Slack workspaces. By providing a layer of technology to connect Smartcare’s communication with its tech tools, Slack has reduced context switching, simplified administrative tasks and given the team more time to spend with customers.

“Slack is the connective tissue that keeps us all in sync and keeps all the data coordinated.”

Skylar Topham, Co-Founder and CEO, Smartcare
The winners are accelerating work through automation

Process design removes productivity roadblocks

Any repetitive process that eats up valuable time is ripe for automation—and Slack’s drag-and-drop Workflow Builder makes process automation in Slack incredibly simple. It allows any Slack user to create custom workflows for day-to-day processes. A single action can trigger a whole series of events, actions, alerts and data flows.

When Salesforce’s Service Cloud agents need additional support to solve a case, they check existing swarm channels first for similar issues that have already been resolved. If the information they need is not available, they use a custom workflow in Slack to open a form and input key information, including the case number, the urgency level and the subject matter.

Once submitted, the workflow automatically posts this information in the swarm channel with a link to the original report in the ticket system. With the case details available in-channel, engineers, other agents and product specialists with relevant expertise can jump into threads, share ideas on how to solve the problem or dig deeper into their backend systems to figure out a root cause.

“Not only are cases being solved more quickly, but we’re building a collective knowledge base in Slack that agents can reference. This sets us up to solve issues even faster in the future.”

Jim Roth, Executive Vice President of Customer Support, Salesforce

Mobilize the entire company with swarming

Give customers an all-digital, end-to-end experience they will love with Salesforce and Slack.

Learn more here.
Talk to us about setting up your Digital HQ for Service
Talk to us about setting up your Digital HQ for Service

“This isn’t some far-off future; this is now, and next year, and the year after that, if we only embrace the opportunity to reimagine and the responsibility to reinvent.”

Stewart Butterfield, Co-Founder and CEO, Slack

For most service teams, pre-pandemic work was too fragmented, siloed and manual. Going 100% remote wasn’t easy, but it did uncover a host of new opportunities for improving the way service is delivered.

The coming years will be about seizing these opportunities to improve the way customers are supported and service teams are enabled. For more and more service organizations, Slack is the critical piece of the puzzle.

Talk to us about how we’ve helped service teams all over the world find a better way with a Digital HQ for Service—and how we can help you set up yours today.

The business value of Slack for customer service:

Resolve customer tickets with more speed and precision by tapping into the collective knowledge base available in Slack. Integrations with customer support software allow support teams to triage issues quickly and transparently, monitor social chatter and buzz, and even respond to customers directly from Slack.

- 31% average reduction in ticket resolution time
- 8% more tickets routed correctly
- 7% more tickets resolved correctly

The Business Value of Slack*

About Slack

Slack has transformed business communication. It’s the leading channel-based messaging platform, used by millions to align their teams, unify their systems, and drive their businesses forward. Slack offers a secure, enterprise-grade environment that can scale with the largest companies in the world. It is a new layer of the business technology stack where people can work together more effectively, connect all their other software tools and services, and find the information they need to do their best work. Slack is where work happens. Slack is your Digital HQ.

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