Time to Shine

How to Make Sure Clients See the Value You Deliver

ca technologies

At a Glance

As a service provider, the hard reality is this: Doing great work and delivering exceptional value to clients isn't enough—it's the baseline. If key decision makers don't experience the value being delivered on a consistent basis, your foothold within the account can be more easily challenged. If the only thing a budget ratifier sees of your work is the monthly invoice that gets routed, your services may be deemed expendable, no matter how much benefit your company is actually delivering.

When it comes to customer satisfaction, the perception is the reality. That's why it's important to not just deliver, but demonstrate, value. Following are a few reasons why the topic of demonstrating value is so critical to service providers:

- **Short organizational memories**. Within client organizations, leadership will change over time. The managers that approve your invoices and renewals today, may not remember the criteria that led to you to being selected as their provider. New executives that step in may not understand the intricacies of your services or the intangibles your team brings to the mix.

- **Cost concerns**. Particularly if things are going smoothly, executives may not see the effort and expertise your team applies to keep things that way. They may just see an invoice and wonder whether the cost is justified.

- **Competitors**. Your customers are constantly being courted by competitors. It's important to always remember that a good customer for your business will be a highly prized target for your competitors. To win the customer's business initially, you had to do the heavy lifting, conveying the validity of your services, your team and your model. All a competitor has to do is demonstrate that they're faster or cheaper, and they could potentially take your business away.

The Six Venues for Demonstrating Value

There are six fundamental ways your service provider business can demonstrate value to customers:

Reports

Reporting is a key means to demonstrate value, a tangible deliverable that can serve to remind the customer that the service provider is delivering the services required, and that everything is working well as a result. When it comes to reporting, customer preferences and requirements can run the gamut. Some customers may want to have a detailed report on the performance metrics of every server delivered to their inbox every morning. Other customers may only want a high level SLA attainment report delivered at the end of each month. No matter what they're looking for, endeavor to meet and, to the extent feasible, exceed these demands. Ask customers about their information needs, deliver on what they're looking for and iterate as needed over time.

Dashboards

Where reports are typically created to cover a specific time period, dashboards tend to provide in-the-moment status of specific metrics. Dashboards can demonstrate value by providing online, on-demand status to customers, illustrating the service providers' ongoing commitment and effort on behalf of the client.

Dashboards should be developed to meet the needs of specific users. If you're providing user experience reporting, a dashboard recapping measurements of synthetic transactions can be useful for a business user. For technical teams, it is helpful to provide dashboards that provide at-a-glance views of the status of specific systems, coupled with capabilities for drilling down to get more detailed metrics. Other dashboards could be created that may be useful to the entire end user community, such as graphs that display numbers of tickets open and average hold time.

Portals

Portals can demonstrate immense value to customers by providing a central, unified way for users to get self-service, 24x7 access to the information and services they need. Because they provide self-service access to users, customer portals can be a great way for your business to reduce the time it would otherwise spend on gathering and distributing reports. Further, customer portals can deliver exceptional value by delivering convenience to users. Toward that end, portals should offer access to all relevant service desk functions. Once logged in to the

portal, users should be able to create new tickets, view ticket histories, get updates on open ticket status and close existing tickets.

Superior Customer Service

Delivering superior customer service helps ensure customers are happy with your company, and it helps build up political capital, so if things should go awry for any reason, they'll be more accommodating. Humility, consistency and politeness are the hallmarks of excellent customer service. While these traits may be easy to talk about, they can be more challenging to deliver on a consistent basis, particularly for front-line service desk analysts constantly dealing with issues and complaints. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon all representatives to deliver superior service.

To track and quantify your team's performance in this area, conduct a survey at the close of every ticket that involved interaction between your staff members and clients. This survey information can be used in several ways:

- First, it can be used as a coaching mechanism for internal teams.

- Second, it can form the basis of a metric that gets published, offering another proof point as to the value being delivered. For example, it would be compelling if the service provider could report that, for the past 90 days, customer surveys indicate a 96.4% satisfaction rating. (The provider can also offer to explain the process for tracking this metric if the customer wants to know more.)

- Third, these numbers can be used for further analysis. For example, they can be broken down by customer, highlighting trends and potential issues at various customer engagements. For incidents in which customers report dissatisfaction, examine what happened. Are they

dissatisfied because they're a silver-level customer and they had to pay for a call at 10:00 pm? That's not an issue with the service desk, but just a matter of the customer not understanding the terms of the contract. On the other hand, a survey reporting dissatisfaction may highlight a legitimate issue with an agent, process or tool, so it's vital to assess and learn from the results coming in.

Strategic Meetings

Strategic meetings represent an important opportunity to demonstrate value, both because of the role they play in customer satisfaction, and also because they are revenue generating opportunities. For example, on a quarterly basis, it's important to have business review meetings with clients, ideally in person. These quarterly business reviews should focus on assessing prior activities and discussing higher level trends that may lead to additional service opportunities. Outline what your team accomplished in the prior quarter and discuss the client's new opportunities and projects.

It is in these strategic meetings that your team can deliver and demonstrate value through an ongoing and trusted advisor relationship. Rather than simply reporting that everything's fine, these meetings are an opportunity to truly demonstrate the nature of the partnership they have with your organization, and show that you're committed to helping them grow and accomplish goals over the long term. Take these opportunities to truly listen to customers, ask open ended questions, get insights into their plans in the coming months and try to understand the role technology will play in achieving their objectives. Then you can come back to subsequent meetings to present new service offerings that are aligned with their business needs.

Tactical Meetings

Tactical meetings represent an opportunity to demonstrate value by underscoring your team's commitment to cultivating a partnership, seeing projects through to completion and helping them be more successful.

Tactical meetings can be conducted in response to specific one-time cases, or they can take place on a regular basis. For example, over the course of a significant technology migration that spans two months, you may want to have tactical meetings scheduled on a weekly basis.

You may also be asked by the customer to attend ongoing status meetings with relevant teams to ensure the project is running according to plan with the teams and make yourself available should the customer need additional support with the project.

Compared to a VAR or system integrator, who may take a more "one-and-done" approach to executing a project, as a service provider, the project should be viewed as part of a long-term engagement. By taking a long-term perspective even into these tactical meetings, you can demonstrate value by showing that you're not just there to sell technology or provide "green/yellow/red" reports, you're there to make sure projects ultimately meet the goals that were established at the outset.

Through the tactical meetings, you can uncover opportunities to provide assistance where otherwise the customer may not think to ask for help. For example, in a tactical meeting, one of your team members may discover that the client is moving their headquarters into a new building. While your organization may not be tasked with making the move, there may be several areas where your team can help support the effort to ensure a seamless transition.

Conclusion

Success in managed services requires both science and art. Customer service, how you deliver that service, the offerings you choose to deliver and the service level agreements you establish represent the science—the objective, measurable tactics you need to execute to fulfill your obligations. Demonstrating value represents the art of managed services. It isn't enough to deliver great service and hope your customers recognize the value. The most successful service providers are the ones that strike the right balance between the science and art of managed services and recognize the value of both to a happy customer.

About This Document: Developed by the CA Service Provider Center of Excellence

This document has been written by the CA Service Provider Center of Excellence team and is intended to provide our service provider partners with the guidance they need to address some of their most pressing challenges. Our team has rich expertise in service provider businesses, strategic consulting, technical deployments, sales and marketing. Our documents are informed by the Center of Excellence team's extensive experience over the past ten years in helping build successful service provider businesses and by interviews with some of our most successful service provider partners. This document is provided for informational purposes only and on an as-is basis. The guidance and results described herein are based on the unique experiences of our staff and partners, and may not be applicable to all organizations.

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