



6 Steps to Success

Boosting Customer Satisfaction and Profits Through Outsourced Customer Technical Support

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In golf they say, “Drive for show, but putt for dough”. The meaning is that while the high-visibility drive with all its strength and flash is exciting to watch, executing the small, down-to-earth, four-foot putt – consistently - really improves scoring. Carry that idea over to technology products. *We sell products and solutions* to add customers, but we *provide excellent customer support* to build profitable relationships. The Customer Relationship Management industry evolved from the necessity to provide customer-specific, focused, intuitive customer support. We have learned that satisfied users drive loyalty and retention. This leads to both add-on sales and higher profits.

A flood of customer support requests, ranging from the simple to the impossible, deluges many organizations. In 2004, requests arrive via multiple channels: telephone, e-mail, chat/IM, fax and portals. Some organizations are only bailing water as they struggle against the flood. These organizations are faced with the challenge of gearing up - or expanding - their customer support operations. Building and growing long-term relationships with the organization's most valued customers requires investing in an expensive, resource-intensive platform, capable of winning customer loyalty, every day, through every support request.

How do you build a customer support operation from the ground up, without making serious mistakes and bad investments? The right mix of people, process, practices and technology can be a difficult, delicate relationship channel to create.

For an increasing number of organizations the answer lies in outsourcing. If you haven't already outsourced your technology product customer support, in 2004 you will probably at least consider it. We are talking about turning over some, or all of your customer support requests to a third party...a specialist in customer technical support.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR OUTSOURCING

Outsourcing customer technical support involves both technical and business considerations. First, this appears to be the “Decade of Outsourcing.” IT, call center, telecommunications, CRM and software development periodicals and conferences place a significant emphasis on outsourcing. In the right situation, outsourcing may enable your organization to save money, increase your ROI (*return on investment*) and optimize scarce resources, while providing customers access to timely and successful support.

Imagine yourself a software supplier with a hot, new product. Development, testing, launch, marketing and sales campaigns are behind you. The acceptance is positive. Customers are buying, installing and using your new product. Great! Now, new customers need customer support. If no customer support group is in place, who will handle calls and e-mails from new customers using your product?

One such organization sends customer calls to the engineers and developers closest to the product. The good news is that they *really* understand everything about the software, it's interfaces, even the code. They may not, however, be the patient, customer-friendly representatives it takes to handhold a rookie user through “What's a browser?” questions. Worse, if the developers are handling customer calls, no



one is developing new products and new releases. This can result in the misuse of important resources, resulting loss of productivity, competitive advantage and profit.

Some organizations delegate the task of fielding customer support calls and e-mails to non-technical staff. The idea is that, with experience, they will be able to handle the easy requests, escalating Tier 2 and 3 requests to the developers. This approach can offer more potential problems than the first example. The non-technical staffers may be able to help with passwords but may actually be at a loss when confronted with "What's a browser?" questions. The customer, who can't use the program, loses confidence in the provider and may stifle future sales.

CHOOSING A CUSTOMER SUPPORT PARTNER

Trusting another organization with your client relationships is obviously a critical decision. Six of the most important criteria to be evaluated in your decision are:

1. **Business Stability** – The idea of cutting costs by going with a start-up outsourcer can lead to tragedy. Three techies, a T1 and a toll free number may offer low establishment and recurring fees but might lack the resources, stability and depth needed to sustain client relationships. Find a partner with many years' experience, significant bench strength, a financial track record and repeat clients.
2. **Total Customization** – Your organization is unique. Your clients' requirements may be highly individualized. You may have many differing support agreements. The way you need your callers to be greeted might be a one-of-a-kind. Your triage, patches, fixes and escalations need to be handled to fit your strategy and your customers' requirements. Look for organizations that are extremely flexible and whose technology and practices are highly customizable. Your partner should be easily able to morph to fit you, not the other way around.
3. **Not Your Typical Call Center Outsourcer** – The teleservices industry is made up of dozens of skilled, capable, stable outfits. For non-technical sales, marketing, service, locator, fulfillment, outbound and many other applications, they can do a super job. Most of the employees in most of these firms, however, did not chose an IT or technology career. Often, these organizations are not even interested in technical support engagements because of the high cost of additional training and the possibility of failure. Don't enter into a relationship, which causes the outsourcer to *stretch* too much.
4. **Now-Gen Technology** – Since technology product customer support usually requires information from multiple repositories to come together, you will likely need an outsourcer with CTI (*computer/telephony integration*), eCRM (*electronic customer relationship management*) and a robust service request management system. The support specialist needs client "tombstone" information, accounts, passwords and the service request history. They must also have access to your product information, FAQs (*frequently asked questions*), downloadable fixes and auto-gen e-mail answers. In 2004, the best systems are Web-based and highly customizable.
5. **It's All About People** – In addition to systems, knowledge bases, reporting and APIs (*applications programming interfaces*), it takes special people to provide superior outsourced technology product customer support. First and foremost, you need a partner staffed with customer satisfaction-focused personalities. If they are "bothered" by stupid questions or get rid of callers by escalating everything, you are not well represented. It is often easier to train someone in the technology - who already enjoys talking with customers - than the reverse. Make sure that the majority of the support reps can handle *all* Tier 1 requests solo. There must also be an adequate number of more senior consultants ready to tackle the more challenging Tier 2 requests.



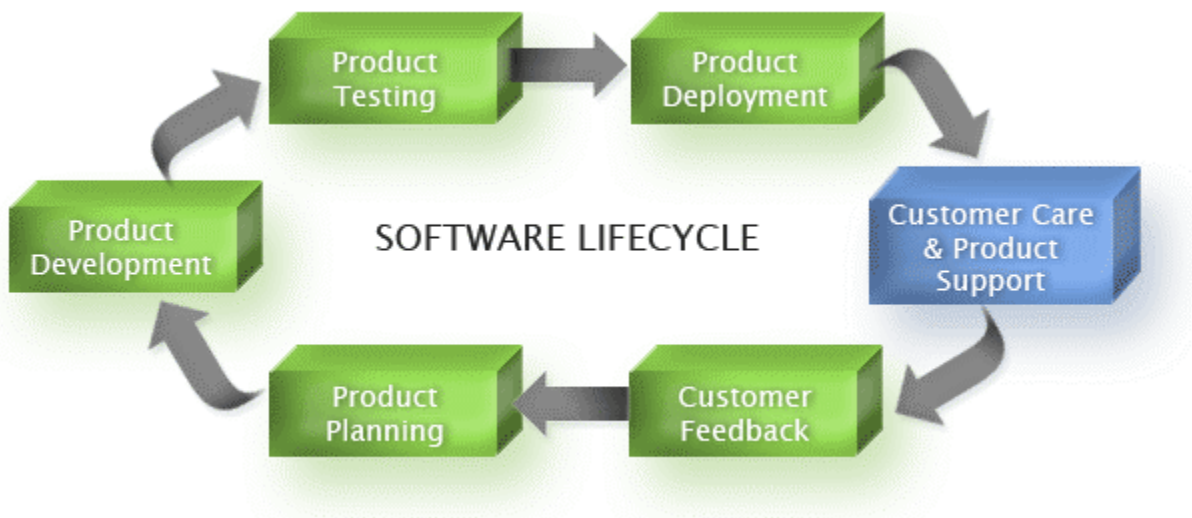
6. **Supporting the Product Lifecycle** – Providing the highest quality customer care is a challenge for any business. For businesses that must support their own software as part of customer care, the challenges are even greater. Find a partner whose strongest expertise is in delivering profitable solutions for software product firms. Seneca Corporation's solutions increase profitability and produce high ROI through:

- Increased customer satisfaction and customer retention
- Lowered costs of total lifecycle support
- Improved product enhancements & responsiveness to the market place
- Enhanced software quality control
- Improved communications between all key elements of the software product lifecycle (from R&D through end-user product support)

Seneca's core business is providing direct support to your end-user customers, and providing the systems that coordinate all support and product development and maintenance activities. We can either supplement your existing customer support (e.g. provide after-hours support), or we can take over full responsibility for your Tier 1 and Tier 2 support. We operate as part of your overall team and coordinate effectively with your own staff and developers. Our services can be provided through our 7x24x365 Technology Support center (through voice, IVR, e-mail and fax), including interactions over the web (our Self-Service Portal, and web-based chat). We can also provide staffing at your own site.

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In addition to end-user support, Seneca can provide services and systems that add substantial value to many other elements of your software development life cycle and related business processes.





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Solutions for Software Product Firms

Integrated Customer Care & Software Product Support

Core Support Requirements	Services & Systems Available from Seneca
 <p>Customer Care & Product Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Customer & Product Support (<i>Tier 1, Tier 2</i>) □ Total outsource, or blended with in-house support □ Business hours, after hours, or 7x24x365 □ Multi-Channel Options (<i>Phone, IVR, eMail, Fax, Chat</i>) □ Supplemental On-Site Technical Support Staffing □ Web-Based Customer Relationship Management Systems □ Web Based Self-Service Portal □ Web submit of service requests □ Review outstanding tickets □ Access to KnowledgeBases (<i>e.g. FAQ's</i>) □ Access to Documents (<i>e.g. manuals, bug fixes</i>) □ Update personal info/customize "My Support Page" □ Summary & Detailed Reporting (<i>ACD, Agent Actions</i>) □ Service Level Agreement Monitoring & Reporting
Additional Components of Software Product LifeCycle	Supplemental Services & Systems from Seneca
 <p>Customer Feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Customer Satisfaction Surveys □ Product Feature Surveys
 <p>Product Planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Summary Reports on Support Services Required □ Root Cause Analysis Reports
 <p>Product Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Web-Based Submission & Tracking of Bug Fixes □ Web-Based Management of Enhancement Requests
 <p>Product Testing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Usage Testing Prior to Product/Patch Release □ Review of Corresponding Documentation □ Development of KnowledgeBases for Support □ Document Management System (<i>e.g. Version Controls</i>)
 <p>Product Deployment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Implementation Support (<i>e.g. Upgrades for Users</i>)



Outsourcing non-core business processes like technology product customer support has the potential to enable organizations to reduce operating costs, optimize resources, focus on business objectives and improve customer loyalty. The challenge is to find the right partner who can - and will - give the customer the support experience you require to build relationships.

About Seneca Corporation

Seneca Corporation is a single source provider for outsourced and in-house technology support and helpdesk services. Clients include Fortune 1000 companies and government agencies. Seneca provides the highest level of phone, email and web-based support. Our approach is highly personalized, providing quality support tailored to the specific needs of the client's users and customers. Seneca enables its clients to focus on their critical missions while providing a wide spectrum of support, services and solutions. Please visit www.seneca.com.

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