Case studies

Affinity Water

Leading the way in water with real-time customer feedback

rant & rave®
The challenge

Some may say utility companies don’t need to worry about customer experience – it’s not like consumers can simply change their water supplier. However, the pressure is on in this sector to improve customer satisfaction, and not just because of tough economic times.

In April 2010, Ofwat introduced a more demanding approach to monitoring customer satisfaction for utility companies. Known as the Service Incentive Mechanism (SIM), the initiative focuses on all aspects of customer engagement, from protecting the consumer and promoting value to safeguarding the future. Keeping customers happy makes good business sense – it improves reputation, creates customer advocacy and cuts the cost of managing complaints and high call volumes.

Even before the introduction of Ofwat’s SIM programme, Affinity Water was already monitoring customer feedback via a bi-annual telephone survey to a selection of 1,000 customers. Whilst this process was providing some useful information, a fairly time consuming questionnaire, which didn’t always take place immediately after the customers had connected with the brand, didn’t provide the most effective analysis.

The introduction of SIM raised the stakes for companies such as Affinity Water, forcing the utility sector to find better ways to measure customer satisfaction in order to avoid financial penalties from the regulator as a result of poor performance.

On the flip side, SIM brings many benefits for good performers. With the incentive of allowing successful water companies some freedom around pricing, as well as the reduction of internal costs associated with good customer management, it was clear to Affinity Water that improving its customer engagement strategy further would boost the number of happy customers, whilst at the same time improve profitability.

“Affinity Water chose Rant & Rave as the supplier for our text messaging feedback system based on their innovative products and services, non-pushy approach, and value for money.

We have found them to be very accommodating to all our requirements. Their products are flexible to our needs, which was an important factor in our choice of supplier. They are very friendly and helpful and really listen. You get a real sense of the company being integrated and a free flow of information working across the teams. They all know what each other is doing.

It’s a pleasure working with Rant & Rave, and in the spirit of NPS, I would recommend them to a friend or colleague!”

Morag Kent
Voice of the Customer Manager
Affinity Water
The solution

Affinity Water was looking for a solution that would bring a real step-change in the management of customer satisfaction. It needed to provide relevant, timely customer feedback which was easy for the customer to give and for the company to analyse.

The obvious choice was Rant & Rave's real-time customer feedback solution technology that allows businesses to talk to customers at moments that matter – when they are fully connected with a brand, not weeks after when their experience may have been forgotten. It provides numerical analysis of feedback with the added benefit of analysing customer thoughts and feelings (via the Sentiment Engine) in real-time.

Affinity Water was impressed by the combination of innovation and value for money offered by Rant & Rave's software, and the fast feedback solution was rolled out to Affinity Water's customers in February 2011 as a Voice of the Customer (VOC) initiative.

Known as 'Talkback', this real-time feedback mechanism is now integral to the Affinity Water's contact centre experience. Customers receive a text message within 24 hours of their call, asking the very simple question: 'After your experience, how likely are you to recommend Affinity Water to your friends or Colleagues?'

In response to this question the customer can choose a rating from 0 to 10, with 0 being 'not at all likely' and 10 being 'extremely likely'. This contributes to the generation of a key measure known as the Net Promoter Score (NPS) - the quantifiable part of the feedback.

Rant & Rave's fast feedback solution then explores the reasons for the customer score by sending a further text inviting the customer to share their thoughts about the service in their own words. These verbatim comments are analysed in real-time, and customer sentiment is translated and fed into a management dashboard, providing qualitative and easy to decipher information on customer responses on any given day.

This real-time analysis can then be responded to immediately with issues being dealt with in a timely manner, whilst all the feedback captured is utilised for longer term planning and a process of continuous improvement.

There is no better way of learning about your business performance than by listening to your customers. They will tell you the good, the bad and the ugly. A proactive customer engagement strategy has allowed us to address all areas of our performance, and made a real difference to our business.

VOC initiatives such as Talkback are imperative to the success of our business. It's all about getting inside the head of the customer and engaging with them. It helps us understand where areas of improvement are and the open question allows customers to really tell you what they are thinking.

Our customers dictate the agenda – and we couldn't do that without real-time.

Morag Kent
Voice of the Customer Manager
Affinity Water
The benefits

Affinity Water receives an average of 3,000 pieces of customer feedback per month, equating to a response rate of 15 per cent. A staggering result, especially when the seemingly benign subject matter is considered. The real-time method has transformed customer feedback figures from 1,000 phone surveys per year to almost 36,000 responses per year. More than 50 percent of those customers who choose to leave a feedback score also choose to add verbatim comments, demonstrating the popularity of this approach to engagement with customers.

In addition, the solution has the immediate benefit of addressing customer dissatisfaction straight away with customers scoring an NPS of 6 and below getting a same day call back to address any issues. Rant & Rave’s fast feedback reports are now part of the fabric of Affinity Water’s business providing critical information for individual, team, management and board level reviews, on a daily, weekly and monthly basis.

The implementation of Rant & Rave’s feedback solution has allowed Affinity Water to quickly identify and address reoccurring customer queries to prevent others from having to raise the same issue. Notable examples include the introduction of online bills in response to customer demand for them and an initiative to proactively call customers to explain why they are unable to have a water meter in response to several queries questioning the process.

Rant & Rave’s customer feedback solution is just one initiative that Affinity Water has implemented to make the voice of its customers a driving force in its business, and the company has been duly rewarded for its efforts. A report published by the Consumer Council for Water revealed Affinity Water has seen a major reduction in customer complaints, recording a massive 35.8% drop for the 2010-2011 period.

Affinity Water is the first UK based Water Company to use the NPS metric to monitor customer satisfaction and to stimulate further customer feedback via text messaging. This revolutionary approach is being used to improve business performance as well as customer experience.
Who we are

Rant & Rave provides customer engagement solutions with a difference.

Created with the belief that fundamentally brands and consumers want the same thing – to deliver and receive great service – half of the FTSE rely on the Rant & Rave platform to proactively communicate with and gather fast feedback from their customers.

By reducing customer effort and taking real-time inspired action, brands are able to transform Ranters into Ravers and happy customers into engaged Ravers – lifelong advocates.

For more information visit, www.rantandrave.com