

IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:

How Order-to-Cash Automation Unites Your Most Strategic Teams

A Guide for Customer-Centric Professionals

ESKER®



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction **4**

O2C Automation **7**

Automation Outcomes **8**

5 Teams **9**

- Order Management 10
- E-Commerce 12
- Logistics & Distribution 14
- Accounts Receivable 16
- Sales 18

Delivering a Superior Customer Experience **20**

Conclusion **22**

- Get to Know Esker 23
- Related Content 24

BY THE YEAR 2020, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WILL OVERTAKE PRICE AND PRODUCT AS THE KEY BRAND DIFFERENTIATOR.

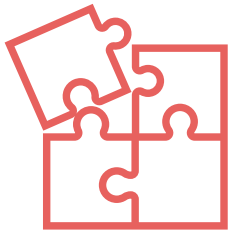
(2014). Customers 2020: The Future of B-to-B Customer Experience. Retrieved from http://www.walkerinfo.com/customers2020

INTRODUCTION

UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND COMPANY SUCCESS

There's no doubt about it: Efficient order-to-cash (O2C) processes are important to company success. Nonetheless, they can be a challenge to attain. As different teams pursue their own goals and self-interests — utilizing separate systems and applications in the process — what's best for the organization as a whole is often put on the backburner. Which is exactly why companies need to rethink traditional O2C processes and focus on the strategic end-goal for all: an improved **customer experience**.

Why now? Because expectations have changed. Today's customers care more about their experience and the ease of which they can do business with a company. In other words, customer service tactics from even 5-10 years ago simply don't cut it anymore. Organizations that fail to adapt and evolve their service strategies are at risk of gaining and retaining business.



PIECING IT TOGETHER

Problem is, most companies try to tackle this issue on a team-by-team basis rather than as a combined effort. It's not until the O2C cycle is viewed holistically, that every team and team member can be a champion of the customer experience. When teams work in harmony, immense business benefits are gained throughout the O2C cycle. And it all starts with having an effective base solution in place.

INTRODUCTION

UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND COMPANY SUCCESS

There's no doubt about it: Efficient order-to-cash (O2C) processes are important to company success. Nonetheless, they can be a challenge to attain. As different teams pursue their own goals and self-interests — utilizing separate systems and applications in the process — what's best for the organization as a whole is often put on the backburner. Which is exactly why companies need to rethink traditional O2C processes and focus on the strategic end-goal for all: an improved **customer experience**.

Why now? Because expectations have changed. Today's customers care more about their experience and the ease of which they can do business with a company. In other words, customer service tactics from even 5-10 years ago simply don't cut it anymore. Organizations that fail to adapt and evolve their service strategies are at risk of gaining and retaining business.

As defined by Forrester Consulting, the customer experience is "how customers perceive their interactions with your company." In other words, it's

what customers think and how they feel about your company.

PIECING IT TOGETHER

Problem is, most companies try to tackle this issue on a team-by-team basis rather than as a combined effort. It's not until the O2C cycle is viewed holistically that every team and team member can be a champion of the customer experience. When teams work in harmony, immense business benefits are gained throughout the O2C cycle. And it all starts with having an effective back-end in place.

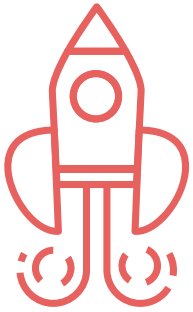
U.S. BUSINESSES LOSE $41 BILLION EACH YEAR DUE TO POOR CUSTOMER SERVICE.

(2015, August 27). The multibillion dollar cost of poor customer service [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://www.newvoicemedia.com/blog/the-multibillion-dollar-cost-of-poor-customer-service-infographic/

O2C AUTOMATION

UNITING TEAMS TO IMPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Luckily, there's a solution that unites teams in their efforts to create an optimal customer experience: O2C automation. Spanning processes such as order management and accounts receivable, automation provides users with a single, integrated platform to drive added value and efficiency in every phase of the O2C cycle. By leveraging an automation solution:



Companies ...

- Reduce operational waste
- Enhance visibility and accuracy into documents
- Strengthen vital business relationships
- Close the gap between order, invoice and payment reception
- Improve cash flow

Employees ...

- Focus on customers instead of manual tasks
- Increase processing speed
- Feel more fulfilled by their job
- Accurately process documents
- Quickly respond to customer issues

MORE THAN AN ERP. MORE THAN EFFICIENCY.

Companies using ERP systems are already enjoying many business benefits — but considerable manual gaps still exist. Best-in-class automation solutions go beyond the basic functionalities of an ERP system to fill these gaps and provide companies and customers with a streamlined experience from beginning to end.

The objective is facilitating a balance between personal touch and efficiency. Automation doesn't work by replacing staff, instead, it gives them the time and tools they require to do their jobs more effectively and improve the customer experience.

AUTOMATION OUTCOMES

O2C RESULTS FROM REAL COMPANIES

When you implement a best-in-class automation solution, the results are astounding. See for yourself.

Fulfilling customer orders faster

Avoiding costly reshipping and reprocessing fees

ASSA ABLOY

- Reduced order processing time from 60 to 2 hours
- 30% reduction in processing errors

TOSHIBA BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

- Achieved a ROI of $342k
- Attained a 28% e-invoice adoption rate

Increasing positive company cash flow

Elevating process efficiency

Freeing up staff for more value-added activities

Tessenderlo KERLEY

- 70% decrease in invoice processing time
- 80% decrease in order processing time

MEDRAD

Performance. For life.™

- Increased customer satisfaction by 7.5%
- Increased employee satisfaction by 13%

Need we say more?

LOWRY SOLUTIONS

- Lowered average invoice time past due from 23 to 9.4 days

Saving both time and money

5 TEAMS

THAT CAN MAKE OR BREAK THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

There are many different teams and individuals that influence customer experience, but these five might just be the most important. In the coming pages, we explore how manual processes impact their daily activities and why automation is the answer to their plight.



ORDER MANAGEMENT

WHERE SPEED & SIMPLICITY MATTER MOST

Think of accuracy as the engine that drives the O2C machine. For order management, hand-keying data and manually managing resources is the equivalent of driving on all spares — dangerous to efficiency.

The desire to process orders and resolve disputes as quickly as possible makes O2C automation a perfect fit for customer service folks. A positive customer experience is all-but-guaranteed, thanks to the team's ability to:

Ditch manual data entry. By eliminating paper and the need to manually enter order information, CSRs can focus on activities that better utilize their skill set and improve customer relationships.

Resolve issues quickly and easily. Within the same interface as their customer orders, CSRs can log, track and manage all claims — negating the need to transfer calls to a different department or rep. Say "Adios" to issues that used to slip through the cracks.

Identify priority orders. Urgent orders are flagged and placed at the top of the queue for CSRs to easily recognize, ensuring no order is overlooked and every priority customer's SLA is met or exceeded.

Manage resources based on metrics. Customizable dashboards deliver real-time data on workflow numbers that help managers strategically allocate resources to where they're needed most. This easy access to clear metrics and visibility drives efficiency throughout the O2C cycle by providing accurate insight into order management.

Avoid costly errors. Missed orders can have devastating consequences. Automation helps customer service avoid these with a mix of recognition technologies that automatically and accurately extract order data.



WHY EXECUTIVES CARE:

There's nothing more frustrating to executives than a high customer churn rate with no visibility as to why. But those are the consequences of a manually-based order management department — leading many executives to invest in automation. Reducing time spent on manual tasks and improving visibility along the way allows CSRs to focus on creating a great customer experience every time. Not just when they have the time.

49% OF CONSUMERS

HAVE STOPPED DOING BUSINESS WITH AT LEAST ONE COMPANY IN THE LAST YEAR BECAUSE OF POOR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.

(2016, October 26). 2016 Aspect Consumer Experience Index. Retrieved from https://www.aspect.com/globalassets/2016-aspect-consumerexperience-index-survey_index-results-final.pdf

E-COMMERCE

NAVIGATING WEB ORDERS OF EVERY SHAPE AND SIZE

Conducting business online is tricky as communication with customers is largely via electronic channels. With quality of service making all the difference here, manual processes are an unwelcome element in the daily workload of e-commerce leaders trying to achieve a high level of efficiency.

That's why e-commerce priorities align perfectly with what O2C automation can provide — including the capability to:



Process all order types. Whether an order arrives via fax, email or EDI, built-in and auto-learning recognition technologies ensure that the required data is captured and the order is accurately processed — eliminating any reliance on IT when it comes to processing various order formats.



Minimize customer (and company) effort. Thanks to an online self-service portal, customers can submit orders 24/7/365, connect with staff to resolve issues, or even make a payment for a nearly effortless experience on both ends. For companies, automation makes expanding brick and mortar operations to the Internet an easy transition.



Increase efficiency across the board. From increased processing speed by minimizing manual tasks to boosted employee productivity thanks to instant access to information, efficiency is maximized with an automation solution. Added bonus: It's super easy to set up.



Avoid EDI "bomb outs." With automation, there's no worry of EDI-related slowdowns or an entire batch failing thanks to the solution's ability to capture EDI data and transform it into a human-readable PDF. That's time, money and IT help saved.



WHY EXECUTIVES CARE:

The last thing executive management wants to hear is that doing business with their company is difficult. But with manual processes running the show, it often is. Which is why executives adore automation's ease-of-use. Streamlined order processing through a collaborative portal makes it quick and easy to do business with the company — making customers and management happy-campers.

THE TOP THREE DRIVERS OF E-COMMERCE CENTER AROUND THE CUSTOMER:

1. TO MEET CUSTOMERS' DEMAND TO PURCHASE ONLINE
2. TO REACH OUT TO NEW MARKETS, TARGET MORE CUSTOMERS AND EXPAND CURRENT BUSINESS
3. TO BETTER SERVE CUSTOMERS, PROVIDE MORE OPTIONS AND BE MORE TRANSPARENT

Dharmasthira, Y. (2017, January 27). User Survey Analysis: Digital Commerce Platform Growth Trends and Directions. Gartner, Inc.

LOGISTICS & DISTRIBUTION

AVOIDING BOTTLENECKS AT ALL COSTS

From order entry errors and poor demand planning to overstock fees and overtime expenses, there are a lot of issues that these folks have to worry about in a manual environment.

Automation's ability to support the customer experience while driving greater process efficiency, is a welcome addition in any supply chain. Team members will love their newfound ability to:

Reduce operational waste. Hard and soft costs associated with logistics and distribution are reduced thanks to less physical labor, fewer supplies used and increased accuracy.

Meet customer SLAs. Receiving goods faster and more accurately enhances the customer experience and increases chances of them becoming repeat customers.

See every shipped/received order. Real-time analytics delivered through customizable dashboards provides staff with accurate visibility into demand, leading to improved demand planning and forecasting.

Avoid costly delays. Thanks to fewer manual tasks involved in going from point A to point B, delays are avoided and supply chain leaders no longer need worry about restocking, reshipping and reprocessing fees.



WHY EXECUTIVES CARE:

If there are two things that really get executives' blood boiling, it's wasteful spending and damaged customer relationships. Unfortunately, that's exactly the end result of poor performance by planning and logistics. Executives love automation for a reason. By minimizing manual tasks and maximizing visibility, they can be assured that operational costs are kept in check, customer SLAs are being met, and the business reputation remains preserved.

91% OF UNHAPPY CUSTOMERS

WILL NOT WILLINGLY DO BUSINESS WITH YOU AGAIN.

75 Customer Service Facts, Quotes & Statistics [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://www.helpscout.net/75-customer-service-factsquotes-statistics/

ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

DELIVERING A CUSTOMER-FRIENDLY POST-SALE EXPERIENCE

Companies need to tread carefully here. The process of billing and collections is a delicate dance with customers — one made more difficult with bounced emails, incorrect or missing account information and lengthy reconciliation periods due to manual bottlenecks.

O2C automation seamlessly complements the billing and collections team's need to cut down administrative work and enhance communication by allowing them to:

Prevent lost invoices. Since all invoices are either routed through an electronic workflow and tracked with a bounced email report and activity log or sent via postal mail and tracked for delivery, billing and collections can rest assured that documents are never lost along the way.

Manage priorities. Rather than spending valuable time manually managing their priorities, automation allows staff to spend time on more value-added tasks by automatically generating task lists based on their assigned customers and accounts. Aging reports may also be created within the solution based on customizable filters.

Increase positive cash flow. Automated reminders and self-service tools increase the speed at which invoices are paid, improving cash flow and keeping more money in companies' pockets.

Keep an eye on company money. With 100% visibility into where money is going and if they're getting paid, businesses can ensure money isn't being leaked. Over time, even small invoices that aren't being paid add up to large amounts of money being lost — but not when you have customizable dashboards showing you when it happens, why and how much.

WHY EXECUTIVES CARE:

Customers not paying their bills can cause executives to hit the panic button. After all, just a few unpaid accounts can put organizations in the red for thousands of dollars. That's where automation comes in handy. An online, self-service portal offers customers a convenient way to pay — improving the bottom line while providing enhanced insight into company cash flow. Button pushing eliminated!

TWO-THIRDS

OF CUSTOMERS PREFER SELF-SERVICE OPTIONS, SUCH AS AN ONLINE PORTAL, OVER SPEAKING TO A CSR.

(2012, May 10). "The Tide Has Turned: Nuance Research Finds Most Consumers Would Rather Self-Serve Over Speaking with A Live Agent"

SALES

CULTIVATING MORE SALES THROUGH HAPPIER CUSTOMERS

It's not all about selling to customers — it's also connecting with them. Something that's nearly impossible when the majority of time is spent looking up and organizing customer and account information.

For sales, that critical step is simplified with instant access to information and online collaboration tools that are part of O2C solutions. Sales team members using automation can:

Get more done thanks to instant accessibility. Automation's ability to link tasks directly to a specific account or customer allows sales reps to find the details they need to serve customers quickly and move on to more important tasks.

Gain valuable customer insight. Customer and account information is easily accessible within customizable dashboards, making it a breeze for sales to rapidly deliver accurate information to customers calling with questions.

Receive fewer calls. With a messaging tool built in to the online portal, customers no longer need to rely on contacting sales for answers to order-related questions — leaving sales people with more time to focus on their job.

Focus on making money. Not being bogged down by administrative tasks, sales people are able to concentrate on customers and selling. That extra time equates to bringing in more money for themselves and the company.

WHY EXECUTIVES CARE:

Ask any executive, cash control is critical … but nearly impossible without 100% visibility. It's one of the consequence of manual-based process controls — just one reason why more executives are turning to an automated solution than ever before. With built-in dispute resolution and a dashboard providing complete process transparency, they can rest easy knowing that vital business functions are being monitored, fraud is being prevented and an audit trail is maintained.

58% OF CONSUMERS FEEL UNDERAPPRECIATED BY THE COMPANIES THEY DO BUSINESS WITH.

(2016, October 26). 2016 Aspect Consumer Experience Index. Retrieved from https://www.aspect.com/globalassets/2016-aspect-consumerexperience-index-survey_index-results-final.pdf

DELIVERING A SUPERIOR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

HOW COLLABORATION BENEFITS THE CUSTOMER

As the true movers and shakers of your business, customers have come to expect a certain level of service. That means prompt and accurate delivery of goods and services along with self-service tools to resolve any issues on their time — not yours. The best way to give them that? By uniting your O2C teams with automation.

Getting teams to work together effectively isn't as simple as holding a monthly meeting. It requires a single platform where they can collaborate, gather and evaluate information, and work within. It requires automation. Teams working together through an automation solution ultimately benefits the customer with an efficient, streamlined experience.

Instant access to the information your teams need allow them to serve customers quickly and accurately, leaving debacles created by manual processes in the dust. The addition of self-service tools further enhances the customer experience by allowing customers to take control of their business — whether it be ordering from an e-catalog or resolving an issue — in a central location where all teams can come together to assist customers.

86% OF CUSTOMERS ARE WILLING TO PAY 25% MORE TO GET A BETTER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.

RightNow Technologies Follow. (2012, January 10). 2011 Customer Experience Impact Report. Retrieved March 08, 2017, from https://www.slideshare.net/RightNow/2011-customer-experience-impact-report

CONCLUSION

UNITING YOUR TEAMS FOR THE GOOD OF THE CUSTOMER

To put it simply: The best way to enhance the customer experience is to unite the five aforementioned teams with a single solution. Think of automation as the base for success. Addressing the root causes of inefficiency makes future initiatives much easier to implement. Whether it concerns your company's collaboration, organization, training or whatever else, having a base solution in place paves the way for a smooth transition — making it a great investment for today and tomorrow.

As you already know, the customer experience is based on customers' interactions with multiple teams in a single organization. Any gaps or delays put that experience at risk. Automation is intended to fill those gaps that lead to an inadequate customer experience — not completely overhaul the way you do business. It achieves this by automating the parts that need automating and leaving the rest to you. After all, you know your business best.

Getting these teams on board can seem daunting, so we hope this eBook will help as you navigate your way to an enhanced customer experience through unification and automation. Go team!



GET TO KNOW ESKER

YOU WON'T BE DISAPPOINTED

At Esker, we're always working to help our clients achieve their ultimate goal: an improved customer experience. Our suite of solutions spanning the O2C cycle enable staff to ditch paper-based processes and focus on enhancing their customer dealings. With automation, customers have direct access to documents and the ability to reach out to staff at their convenience, leaving them feeling valued, understood and engaged.

After more than 30 years in the automation biz, we've gotten pretty good at it. Our solutions help companies drive effective and value-added activities throughout a multitude of business processes. Be it order-to-cash, purchase-to-pay or document delivery, we're here to help.



3 DATA CENTERS

MULTITENANT PLAFORM

HIPAA/HITECH COMPLIANCE

SSAE 16 & ISAE 3402 COMPLIANCE

24/7 AVAILABILITY

PAY-AS-YOU-GO

As a worldwide leader in document process automation software, Esker operates in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia Pacific, with global headquarters in Lyon, France and U.S. base in Madison, Wisconsin. Wherever paper needs quitting, that's where you'll find us.

RELATED CONTENT

BECAUSE KNOWLEDGE IS POWER



WHITE PAPER: BUILDING A BUSINESS CASE FOR ORDER PROCESSING AUTOMATION

You know order processing automation is the real deal, but getting buy-in from upper management can be a battle. This white paper is your secret weapon. Shhh.

INSTANT DOWNLOAD



WHITE PAPER: CLOSING THE ORDER-TO-CASH PERFORMANCE GAP

Even with an ERP system or other business application in place, gaps in efficiency still exist. Instead of ignoring them, close them up using this white paper as your guide. Go on, get to work.

INSTANT DOWNLOAD

WE LOVE WHEN YOU SHARE!

Learn more at esker.com or join the conversation at blog.esker.com.


ESKER®
Document Process Automation