7 Tips for Keeping Support Agents Motivated & Happy

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Hiring competent team members is only the first step toward continuous organizational success. A second challenge is to maintain employee motivation to retain talent and accomplish long-term success.

Why is it crucial to think about boosting support agents' morale?

Hiring is definitely a costly business for any organization as it involves job vacancy advertisement, hiring an external HR agency (if the organization doesn't have one in-house), conducting background checks for potential employees, onboarding, and training new hires. Given the high cost of hiring and training an employee, it is more crucial to retain an existing employee. It is not hidden that agent attrition is an ongoing problem for many contact centers.

According to Gartner, agent attrition is at its highest during their first 90 days on the job and is a result of support agents being overwhelmed by the responsibilities. Therefore, it has become most important to make employees feel comfortable and happy. Regular employee motivation programs are valuable to making an organization's employee retention process a success. Happier employees are actually more productive. Taking steps to create motivated employees is a significant win for call centers as:

- It decreased recruitment and training costs
- Improves productivity
- Provide better customer service
- Increase customer retention

How to keep support agents motivated and happy?

The support team works very hard to make sure that customers receive the help they need swiftly. However, every day is not the same for them, and occasional bad experiences can get them down. Therefore, continuous motivation from leaders is required to keep their morale high. Motivation should be part of organizational work culture, induced into daily work life instead of periodic motivational event.

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Clearly Define Goals

Whether it is a new or existing support executive, goals should be conveyed to them. The goals set should be realistic, and if there are any metrics to measure their performance, they should be aware of them. The employees should understand what is expected from them and Why. WHY is very important as this will make them feel part of the organization. You should explain to them how their job is beneficial for the organization's growth. For instance, explain to them the importance of sharing customer feedback surveys; how client feedback is crucial for their and business success.

Moreover, reinforcement of goals is also vital. The support manager should hold periodic meetings to highlight how well team members have met the expectations. For the members who are lagging, you should share a performance improvement plan (PIP).

Avoid Micromanagement

Micromanagement (excessive supervision) is detrimental to the well-being of any call center. When a manager is fully involved in an agent's work, it limits creativity, autonomy, and input. Employees feel suffocated in such a work environment and see a manager like a brute boss who is harmful to their performance. Employees want management to trust their capabilities. However, micromanagement destroys this trust, leading to demotivated employees or loss of personnel. Instead, managers can inspire employees to take decisions independently. Make a policy that defines what decisions call center agents can make themselves, and educate and train them on how to make these decisions effectively. It will increase employee morale and create a better customer experience which results in more business gains. Here are a few tips that Harvard Business School Online recommends to avoid micromanagement:

1. **Delegate** — Assign tasks to employees, considering their strengths into account. After the assignment, give them space and freedom to figure out the best way to complete the task.
2. **Set Expectations** — Communicate your expectations and deadlines clearly. Taking time to explain a task will help the team understand what is expected of them.
3. **Support Imperfections** — Give a chance to employees to experiment with different methods. Support executives might make mistakes along the way, but these missteps are opportunities to learn and improve.
4. **Get Feedback** — Ask for feedback, how satisfied are they, and what changes they need in the work culture.

Provide Agents with Right Tools

Without supplying the agents with the right tools, organizations can't set the expectations of high-quality and quantity customer service from agents. Besides the hardware tools like phones and computers, they should be provided with software such as a knowledge base software, feedback system, and customer management systems that ease out their operations. Access to these tools gives support executives access to the information they need to improve the customer experience. A blend of the precise customer service tools will help them rise above manual and repetitive tasks and allow them to get more done in a time-crunched environment. Below are some intuitive tools that you can take benefit of:

- **Knowledge Base Software:** Create an online self-service knowledge base for your customers to reduce the workload of supports agents. You can also set up the internal knowledge base for support executives to store technical documents, company procedures, and already resolved customer queries. Employees can refer to this knowledge base to find the desired information. PHPKB is the best knowledge base software that allows you to set up both internal and external knowledge base with one installation.
- **Call center CRM systems:** Call center CRM systems stores records of customers such as account information and contact history. Call center customer relationship management (CRM) refers to a software tool that agents use to enhance the customer experience and increase efficiency.
- **Customer Feedback:** A customer feedback tool can help you create and share impactful surveys with customers in real-time that helps in taking the right steps to understand customer expectations.

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Flexible Work Environment

Rigid work environments no longer exist, and work-life balance is a new trend. The global workforce is moving towards flexible work schedules, and the COVID-19 situation has accelerated this trend. **Studies show that the facility to work remotely increases employee productivity by 14%.** The increased productivity comes from reduced commuting time, flexible working hours, a quieter and more convenient working environment, and working more minutes per shift because of fewer breaks and sick days. Moreover, Companies that offer more flexibility in work arrangements may have the best chance of attracting top talent at the best price. However, all this is not possible without the proper technology, communication, and most importantly, a motivating leader. Strong leadership is a key to maintaining productivity and employee well-being.

> *Employees expect their leaders to lead, make decisions and support their work.*
>
> ***— Julian***

Appreciations and Recognitions

Feedback plays a vital role to call center motivation. It is a two-way process; giving constructive feedback and receiving honest opinions about your leadership. Feedback should be nonbiased, check the performance reports, listen to call recordings, read customer feedbacks collected through feedback surveys. The more fact-based your feedback is, the more employees will trust you, and this will help them perform better, resulting in improved customer satisfaction. Below are some effective ways to encourage positive behavior and show appreciation.

- Recognition through awards and incentives
- Organize team events and encourage teamwork
- Provide autonomy -- intrinsic motivation
- Flexible work schedules

Lighten up the Workspace

A dull workspace is not very conducive to inspiration and motivation. Your team spends a lot of time at work, so creating an inviting and comfortable environment is essential. Customer service can be challenging; a single call from an angry customer is enough to spoil any agent's day. In such a situation, the last thing they want is a dull office that radiates sadness. Below are some tips to make workspaces more lively:

- Use of bright colors and motivational posters.
- Properly ventilated office space.
- Recreational areas such as indoor play sections, gym.

Growth Opportunities

Encouraging the team to develop new skills, especially by giving them projects or assignments, could enrich their work. Give your team additional responsibilities that enhance their skills. It will not only provide them with a sense of added value but also show that you are working for their best interests.

The greatest motivation is the opportunity for promotion; agents do not want to remain in the same position indefinitely. Employees want to know that they are working towards something, such as a higher position or a raise. By promoting the deserving candidates within the organization; not only keep the promoted employee motivated, but also encourage other employees. With these opportunities, they understand how their performance can lead to valuable growth and impact their position in the company.

Conclusion

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When you’re able to effectively boost employee morale, agents don’t just do their jobs — they do them well. By keeping support agents motivated in your call center, you’ll boost their productivity and employee retention rates as well as your company’s customer service and customer satisfaction levels.

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