Understanding the Voice of the Customer

How to effectively leverage customer insight with business discovery analytics
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Executive summary

Customers interact with your brand in many ways through many disparate channels. For example, they interact directly via the website or mobile apps, they call into the contact center, and visit retail locations. They also interact with your brand indirectly by engaging other customers and prospects on a myriad of social networking platforms.

Every one of these distinct interactions is an ingredient in the overall customer experience. Each individual ingredient is important to understanding, and ultimately revealing, the Voice of the Customer.

A new definition for voice of the customer

The old definition was siloed. The new definition is comprehensive

Today, Voice of the Customer has a number of different industry definitions centered around customer surveys, focus groups and other forms of market research. One thing can be said about these definitions: they are narrow.

Frequently, companies undertake Voice of the Customer (VoC) projects to better understand what customers want and, hopefully, will pay for. Until now, these projects have been myopic in nature and constrained by technology. No longer - the paradigm has changed.

“The scope of VoC initiatives should be more far-reaching than most organizations appreciate. It should be viewed as a cross-departmental strategy that embraces a variety of channels, data sources and analytical techniques.”

—Gartner

Going forward, Voice of the Customer will be viewed as far-reaching, inclusive and entirely technology-enabled. Technology now exists to move Voice of the Customer from departmental project stature to a transformative and foundational business approach.

The new definition for Voice of the Customer should be: The complete understanding of customer opinions and sentiment attached to your brand, products and services, regardless of channel or touchpoint.

Leading businesses that embrace a comprehensive and automated approach to understanding the ongoing Voice of the Customer will develop and sustain a valuable competitive advantage.

Business discovery includes unstructured data

A comprehensive approach to the information requires a comprehensive approach to the enabling technology

Businesses have long been able to collect and analyze structured data; information that fits neatly into the rows and columns of a traditional database. In fact, old-style, survey-centric VoC projects have always been designed around the capabilities of the relational database. Net Promoter or customer satisfaction scores are two common examples.

However, there’s a fatal flaw in relying on the structured data alone. The structured approach requires the responder to fit their opinions into the limiting construct of the survey questions and underlying database. If the actual opinion is not anticipated in the response options, you don’t get the complete story. The structured data is valuable, but because it’s inherently constrained, it is not comprehensive.
The real insight is gleaned from the human-friendly or unstructured data; the contact center recordings, tweets, blog posts, online product reviews and verbatim answers to open-ended survey questions. This unstructured data is where the untapped customer knowledge exists. Until now, companies have been forced to assign employees to mine for gems. Or, like most businesses, they’ve just focused on the structured information and ignored the labor-intensive goldmine of unstructured information.

Unfortunately for database-centric, legacy systems, unstructured data already comprises 85% of the world’s data. Ignoring it is no longer a sustainable strategy, and with the current growth trajectory, hiring additional analysts to interpret the data isn’t realistic either.

The only answer is technology... technology that uncovers truths in your data regardless of the data’s form. This is done by leveraging context to derive the conceptual meaning of the interactions, so that human functions can be automated. A technology-enabled understanding of both the structured and unstructured data, combined, is exponentially more valuable than the structured data alone.

At HP Autonomy, we call this analytics platform Business Discovery because it facilitates a profoundly more powerful engine for discovering yet-unseen insights and trends that define the business. The HP Autonomy Business Discovery solution inherently reads and understands all data - both structured and unstructured - seamlessly.

Business Discovery is the engine that makes the Voice of the Customer transformation attainable. This white paper will outline a strategy for leveraging the collective data from customer interactions for your organization in order to further your Business Discovery efforts to enable Voice of the Customer insights.

“Valuable sources of customer VoC data are plentiful, ranging from survey results to social media dialogues. Such sources provide valuable venues for analysis, but analytics in such isolation inherently limit opportunities to understand how customers feel.”

—Gartner

**Turning insights into business results**

**Knowing what to look for is no longer the biggest hurdle**

Imagine a scenario where you introduce a new line of sport sunglasses and a few short days after the launch there is a very small number of call center interactions and social media chatter complaining about lens discoloration due to certain types of sunscreen. Since the volumes are statistically insignificant and you hadn’t anticipated the problem, how would you know what to look for? Without a conceptual understanding of the information through a Business Discovery solution, these VoC blind spots are numerous.
“Consumers are focused on their needs, not on your channels.”

—Gartner

HP Autonomy’s unique technology automatically and in real time analyzes and organizes any volume and type of data including audio, video, web, email, point of sale, chat and social media into logical self-similar conceptual clusters based on related or similar ideas.

Suddenly, the once formidable task of knowing what is in your multiple customer data repositories is automated. Compare this to traditional Business Intelligence (BI) solutions focused on structured data which remain siloed in nature. With Business Discovery, Voice of the Customer data readily avails itself to its user base, simplifying the discovery and subsequent decision making process to optimize business results for customer-facing functions.

Moving beyond disparate customer interaction data is the first step in becoming channel-agnostic, understanding Voice of the Customer data and becoming action-oriented in response to the new insights.

Process any file type or language, from any system

A format-agnostic solution is a requirement

Businesses need a system where all interaction data, across all touchpoints and media types, can be aggregated and analyzed. This system must be able to read the data from the systems where the interaction occurred. For scale, data shouldn’t have to be moved or reproduced, as the systems that create the data are optimized for managing those interactions and reproduction leads to expiration.

As a result, this system must be open and flexible enough to connect to any repository, and scalable enough to manage the potentially enormous volume of data. Processing any type of data presents its own challenges and your multichannel analytics application must be able to handle all types in real time.

Analyze and organize data

Automating the data organization around meaning

It’s no simple task to take data from across various channels, media and languages, and then organize it by relevant concepts so that patterns and sentiment can be identified.

Traditional keyword technology falls short because it only allows users to find and retrieve data. These keyword-based engines cannot comprehend the meaning of information, which limits them to finding those interactions in which a specific word occurs.

This inability to understand information means that other relevant interactions that are conceptually relevant but use different words are overlooked. Similarly, interactions with a meaning entirely different to the search terms are frequently returned, resulting in many false positive results that will skew your findings and force inappropriate actions to be taken or a lack of confidence in the relevance of the system.

Only Autonomy Business Discovery, which takes all processed data and evaluates its meaning within the context of the entire corpus of data, can handle this intensive task.
Identify patterns and sentiment

Patterns in the entire corpus of data present themselves automatically

The right insight empowers organizations to deliver the right experience to the right person at the right time. Based on a real-time understanding of customer interactions, patterns, behaviors, histories and interests across multiple channels, this solution provides a competitive differentiator for enhancing customer engagement and driving revenue.

Successful organizations will adopt an approach that leverages proven mathematical techniques and algorithms of inference and statistical analysis to extract meaning from both structured and unstructured information and make it available throughout the customer lifecycle, from profiling and segmentation to dynamic, real-time web content delivery and call center support.

Create informed and compelling customer experiences

Leveraging ongoing VoC insights, it’s time to adjust or create new experiences

Business discovery-enabled organizations rapidly enhance the customer experience or roll out new experiences such as new campaign pages, agent contact center scripts or enhanced in-store signage. A flexible system that enables business users to be directly involved in making those changes is critical to the success of optimizing business processes to react to new opportunities or changes in market dynamics.

Even successful websites, social media offers and contact center scripts have room for improvement. With a multivariate testing solution integrated into an ongoing content creation and launch planning process, organizations can be confident that they have the optimal customer experience to increase conversion rates and customer satisfaction.

“An enterprise’s reputation — its brand — is never built solely via advertising and promotional activities. It is mainly built through individual interactions at customer touch points.”

—Gartner

Getting started

Voice of the Customer insights must drive change

Regardless of how individuals engage with your brand, you will need to determine how to capture and process the data from all those interactions before you can analyze them for patterns and sentiment. Ideally, business users will be able to view and report on the data from a common interface while leaving all data in its original repository.
Once your organization understands key patterns and sentiment, it can then determine actionable strategies for improving the customer experience to increase sales, loyalty or lower costs. Changes will be made across channels to deliver a more targeted and relevant experience to the customer.

The right people, processes and technology must be in place to realize your objectives from implementing this Voice of the Customer strategy.

There is only one platform that delivers true Voice of the Customer insights – HP Autonomy Business Discovery.

**About HP Autonomy**

HP Autonomy is a global leader in software that processes human information, or unstructured data, including social media, email, video, audio, text and web pages, etc. Autonomy’s powerful management and analytic tools for structured information together with its ability to extract meaning in real time from all forms of information, regardless of format, is a powerful tool for companies seeking to get the most out of their data. HP Autonomy’s product portfolio helps power companies through enterprise search analytics, business process management and OEM operations. HP Autonomy also offers information governance solutions in areas such as eDiscovery, content management and compliance, as well as marketing solutions that help companies grow revenue, such as web content management, online marketing optimization and rich media management.

Please visit [autonomy.com](http://autonomy.com) to find out more.

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