



Delivering Quality Customer Service In The Right Language, At The Right Time

Why developing a translation strategy is a key part of any AI-empowered customer service content operation.

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FOREWORD

In today's globalized marketplace, where consumers demand more personalized and seamless customer experiences, effective and expedient communication becomes increasingly evident. With the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its applications in content operations, translation strategies have become a key component of a successful global customer service operation. This thesis will examine how a content translation strategy that relies on AI technology is helping to accentuate three key areas of customer service: improving customer satisfaction, increasing customer loyalty, and driving revenue growth. As pioneers of Language Operations (LangOps) -- a cross-disciplinary function that helps global businesses communicate effectively with their multilingual customers and other stakeholders -- Unbabel is thrilled to see this research put forth, as it aligns with what we see in the macroenvironment with brands struggling to cater to their customers across different regions of the world.



INTRODUCTION – WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE

Deliver the right message, to the right person, at the right time.

That mantra has long been a mantra of marketing and customer experience. However, even today, when marketers have the most sophisticated technology at their fingertips, most businesses can only manage to do one or two of the three at any given moment. They may understand their audiences enough to recognize the best customers. They may have enough resources to develop the right messages for these customers. And they may have the technology to present audiences with the precise message at the right time. Delivering all three requires the skills, time, and technology that so many businesses just haven't invested in as yet.

And ironically, within the whole of the customer experience, there may be no more pressing need to do all three than when it comes to providing stellar customer service.

In customer service, the pressure to present the right content is extraordinarily high. Delivering that content quickly is paramount. And ensuring the content is clear, high-quality, and valuable to the recipient is absolutely critical. In customer service, there is no room for "miscommunication." In fact, when consumers were asked to name their top three priorities for customer support, "High Quality" (40%), "Fast Resolution of Issues" (46%), and "Quick Response" (47%) came out on top. In other words: a quality message, to the right person, faster than they expect it.¹

Certainly, many capabilities are required for a company to be able to deliver these three requirements in customer service all at once. But one single capability stands out as perhaps the most important step that encapsulates all three: delivering quality content in the language your customer understands.

TRANSLATION STRATEGY: A HIGH-QUALITY, REAL-TIME APPROACH

Translation is one of the most challenging aspects of managing today's multichannel digital content ecosystem. Just like every other aspect of the modern customer experience, customer service is delivered through static content interfaces like websites, and online how-to's, algorithmic and dynamic content displays such as interactive tools and communities, and actual human employees using real-time conversational interfaces. And sometimes all of this is happening simultaneously.

So how are businesses scaling their real-time, quality content translation efforts in the most optimal way? How are they arming their customer service agents with the best information in the right language, as well as enabling completely multilingual, self-service efforts such as online chat, email, or online FAQs?

Our experience at Content Marketing Institute (CMI) is that an important step successful companies take is this: as they are developing their overarching content strategy for customer service, they are also developing a translation strategy to accompany it.

TRANSLATION: A CORE COMPONENT OF AN OVERALL CONTENT STRATEGY

Just as there are specific activities for marketing and communications content, translation – and specific customer-service language operations – should also be a key part of a broader content strategy.

Additionally, also like marketing and communications, artificial intelligence (AI) is beginning to play a key role in helping content teams create, deliver, and optimize the customer experience across all touchpoints of their journey. New advancements are providing opportunities for more efficient, higher-quality, and more available translations for customer service teams.

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As a translation strategy takes hold in any business, it has to account for three broader trends in customer service and support organizations:

- 1.** The move from purely reactive, efficiency-focused customer service efforts to proactive customer experience efforts. In other words, one of the best ways to resolve customer issues is to address them before they ever become issues.
- 2.** Divergent paths for challenge resolution, ensuring that customers have multiple ways to interact with the service and resolution functions. Businesses can decrease time to resolution by making multiple paths available to the customer (from self-service to high-touch, real-time service).
- 3.** Creating an “intelligent data” approach to ensure trust is being built over time. Customers must understand the reason for providing truthful (or accurate) data that may be used to personalize their experience or resolve their issue. Businesses must be circumspect about how this exchange is conducted and has evolved.

This guide highlights how a content translation strategy and technology help to accentuate these three areas of customer service.

THE CONTENT PROBLEM OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

The last few years have been disruptive indeed for customer experience solutions. While the global pandemic accelerated a number of digital transformation disruptions, one of the most pronounced was the heightened expectations of digital customer experiences. The requirements for real-time responsiveness, quality of interaction, and speed to resolution all increased. While some industries such as retail, travel, gaming/entertainment, technology, and financial services were more challenged than others, the common thread for all companies was the increase in digital customer service calls and chats into remote contact centers.

Today, digital-first customer service is vital to a customer experience strategy. Research from Gartner finds that 56% of customer service leaders are adding new channels or features into their existing channels. Additionally, 70% of customers are using self-service channels as part of their resolution journey.²

However, digital-first doesn't mean digital-only. Technology is not replacing the human factor. That same Gartner research found that only 9% of customers can fully resolve their issues using self-service technology experiences alone.

This aligns well with the clients we work with at CMI. We find that most businesses discover how important the human element is only after the technology is slow or in some way fails to deliver value to the customer. But when we explore the challenge more deeply, it isn't that the technology failed – it's that the content within the technology failed. The human is just better equipped to contextualize the content that the customer needs. This means that similar to generating value at every other part of the customer's journey, the modern challenge of customer service is a content challenge; one facilitated by both technology and humans.

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Lastly, and most importantly, the rapid evolution of this digital-first approach is due to the explosive emergence of global e-commerce and online shopping. Consumers now realize the world is much smaller, and while they are drawn to brands that present products in their preferred language, they are just as willing to switch from those that don't. Research shows that 68% of consumers would be willing to change to brands that offered services/products in their preferred language.³

The implication of this combination of exponential growth of global customers and the digital-first approach is that more technology and more humans must deliver consistently higher-quality content-driven experiences. However, if businesses cannot serve those experiences in a language the customer understands, the quality of the content, the sophistication of the technology, or the skill, empathy, or emotion of the representative doesn't matter at all.

Yes, today's quality customer service experience is about delivering the right message to the right person at the right time. But the right language is the core first ingredient of that approach.

A translation strategy is a key component of any overall content strategy for customer service.

A CUSTOMER SERVICE CONTENT TRANSLATION STRATEGY

One of the most important aspects of any content strategy is that businesses must decide how to create and manage low-value content vs. high-value content. Businesses will spend tremendous amounts of money and resources on crafting and managing just the right branded content for customer-facing or sales experiences but may spend much less on managing instructional, onboarding, or other services-oriented content. Further, language translation often falls into an even lower category, where many brands may use free or low-cost services even for their highest-value content. Put simply: many brands have, historically, de-prioritized creating high-quality content at the customer service level, and even more have de-prioritized the quality of translation services.

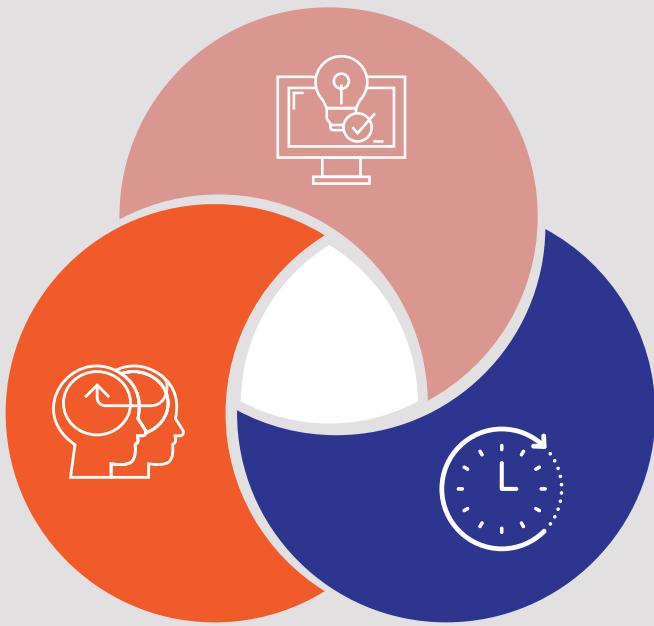
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For customer service content, this is a recipe for disaster.

Successful companies are prioritizing translation as a core component of their overall content strategy. And when you realize that almost 70% of global consumers believe that it's extremely or very important that brands offer an end-to-end customer experience in their preferred language, you can begin to see that translation is a key component of the customer service content strategy.

At Content Marketing Institute, we have developed a three-pillar strategy that works well for businesses assessing the needs of a People + Process + Technology translation strategy. Solving for these three pillars can help you pressure test your current capability to deliver the highest-quality translated content experience in a customer service environment.





RIGHT CONTENT

Human + Machine

- ▶ Integrated human and dynamic content interfaces
- ▶ Real-time triggers for humans to intervene
- ▶ Internally facing tech to deliver preferred language

RIGHT TIME

Speed + Agility

- ▶ Specific translation process for customer service content
- ▶ Understand requirements for evergreen vs. ephemeral content
- ▶ Inject translation for the appropriate tech at the right time

RIGHT PERSON

AI + Humanized Automation

- ▶ Understand interfaces where humans can/will intervene
- ▶ Using AI to learn how to send real-time signal to humans
- ▶ Translation tools that can learn based on real-time behavior

The three pillars are as follows:

1 Human + Machine = Right Content

In a perfect world, a brand might hire customer service reps fluent in languages for every market they serve. This would ensure that the right content could be delivered in every customer service interaction. But not only is this impractical, but it also cannot scale – cost efficiently – at the same pace as the business.

But we also know that high-quality, personal customer service is a skill that cannot be easily duplicated by a machine. We know that automation makes things much more scalable, and easier, but we also know that in quality customer service, having a person available when needed is critical. Humans can more readily recognize the intent, emotion, and personality quirks that make up any customer service action.

When it comes to serving customers with translated content, internally facing translation technology can now enable customer service agents to be instantly multilingual and able to resolve issues in real-time while infusing more emotion and empathy than technology alone. This can include integration with the brand's library of "canned" responses which are immediately available across languages for common issues – as well as real-time translation for more conversational or ad hoc chat interactions across multiple channels. Further, some technologies/integrations are able to "hand off" from digital to human, where the language, and even specific brand or industry terminology, stays consistent, but the interaction moves fluidly between human digital chat, email, static FAQs, or even social media.

It is this balance of human and technology integration that provides better qualitative insight into individual interactions, while achieving both scale and speed of delivery of a smooth experience.

Action To Take: Explore how an internally facing translation technology can be a language multiplier to human customer agents, helping them apply their talents to not just recognize the unique needs of individual customers but also assist them in their preferred language in real time.

2 Speed + Agility = Right Time

When we think of modern “workflow,” we usually think of technology (what buttons get pushed and when). However, relying on siloed processes that have been either forced by old technology, or lifted and shifted from old methods of doing things is one of the most common reasons that customer service content interactions fail. A common example of this is the multiple 1-800 numbers for customer service that is entirely dependent on what the customer’s challenge is.

But remember, in this case it’s not the technology that fails, it’s the content that businesses put inside the technology.

“Workflows” are just behavior patterns that create consistency in our work. When it comes to content, workflows must help us connect the information and content flow across the experiences that will ultimately display them.

So when it comes to “translation workflow” for customer service content, decisions have to be made about when, where, and how content will be translated. Do it too early in the creation process and – while you may gain consistency across all the content – you may slow down and/or create an inefficient process for adding new content or changing existing content. But do it too late and – while you may save resources by not translating everything – you may reduce your ability to create valuable, consistent, and contextual translated experiences quickly.

The key is to map the different classes of content – from slower-evolving content (i.e., Product FAQs, how-to documentation, contractual or purchase information, etc.) to the more ephemeral or real-time elements of customer service content (i.e., email responses, chat, campaign information, announcements, etc.). Make a determination about which content classes will be translated early in the content creation process, because they need to be consistent, formatted, or otherwise makes sense with respect to the classes of content that will be more real-time.

Then look for translation assistance technology or a service that integrates directly into your current customer service applications and workflow but can also evolve as your workflow, processes, and channels evolve.

Actions To Take: Review all of your customer service digital channels – email, chat, FAQs, chatbots, social media – and all the technologies you are leveraging. Plot your content creation, management, and activation process across all of those channels, and separate them according to most evergreen (rarely change) vs. most ephemeral (change in real-time). Then, create a process where there is shared understanding of where and when that content will be translated. Consider translation technology especially for the more real-time interactions, where instant translation capabilities let any customer representative, regardless of language fluency, interact with the customer and enhance their digital experiences by making them more emotional and empathetic than automation alone.

3 Humanized Automation + AI = Right Person

The development of automation and hybrid AI technologies has had an exponential impact on how content is displayed to customers at every part of the customer’s journey. Businesses have taken on a mandate to leverage customer data and create personalized digital experiences.

In customer service, AI has been powering many of the automated interfaces for a few years, with varying degrees of success. Recent developments in generative content have certainly added a sophisticated layer to both content creation and the “intelligence” of these solutions.

However, many early implementations of AI into customer service applications were nothing more than algorithmic rules treating customer interactions as “if/then” statements rather than a contextual solution to unique problems.

One area where AI can play a strong role is in a content translation strategy. The key is to understand where in the process you want to apply automation and artificial intelligence. Much like the first pillar, a healthy infusion of human participation is needed to make AI-driven interfaces even better. Specific customer agents need the right signals to know when to step in and tune the content based on the uniqueness of the person’s needs. This is where AI in a translation strategy can be enormously helpful, as it can begin to learn from the human interactions, to suggest specific phrasing or change the content to address the situation for just *this* customer’s needs.

Additionally, look for tools that can learn and integrate into customer service technologies, so they will be able to determine where and when specific translated content should be developed based on behavior, channel, or even language.

Actions To Take: Identify in your customer service channels where automation and/or AI can help to dynamically identify unique people and/or situations. Examine where these audiences and needs may be channel-specific, situation-specific, or even region-specific. Look to technologies that can help you combine a hybrid approach of human-driven awareness and AI-generated translated content to create personalized customer service experiences at scale.

CONCLUSION: DELIVER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN ANY LANGUAGE

The importance of translation management in shaping a digital customer experience cannot be overstated. In our increasingly globalized world, businesses have to adapt to the needs and expectations of an increasingly diverse customer base. Why?

▶ To help businesses deliver quality content

A great customer service translation strategy ensures that businesses can provide accurate and consistent information across various platforms and communication channels in exactly the right context. In an age where customers demand quick and easily accessible information, maintaining clear and coherent messaging is vital. This consistency not only helps avoid confusion and misinformation but also promotes a seamless customer experience, reflecting positively on the brand.

▶ To help businesses deliver to the right people

An effective customer service translation management strategy helps businesses to deliver a much more personal content experience. It demonstrates a company's commitment to understanding and valuing unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It starts any customer service issue off on the right foot, helping customers feel more engaged, respected, and connected to the brand.

▶ To help businesses deliver value in the customer's time

By providing multilingual support in customer service, businesses demonstrate an understanding of, and commitment to, serving customers with varying needs and preferences at different times. This inclusivity helps companies expand their customer service approach and develop much more proactive customer experiences that answer questions and solve challenges even before the customer has them.

Even with today's sophisticated technology, most businesses struggle to deliver against one or two of the above, much less all three. But if any business wants to solve for all three in customer service, implementing a robust translation strategy is the first critical step. Integrating customer experiences in any language is one way for businesses to stay ahead of their competition and continue to meet the evolving needs and preferences of their diverse customer base.



About Content Marketing Institute

Content Marketing Institute (CMI) exists to do one thing: advance the practice of content marketing through online education and in-person and digital events. We create and curate content experiences that teach marketers and creators from Technology brands, small businesses, and agencies how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multichannel storytelling. Global brands turn to CMI for strategic consultation, training, and research. Organizations from around the world send teams to Content Marketing World, the largest content marketing-focused event, ContentTECH Summit, and CMI virtual events. Our community of 215,000+ content marketers shares camaraderie and conversation. CMI is organized by Informa Connect. To learn more, visit www.contentmarketinginstitute.com.

About Unbabel

Unbabel eliminates language barriers so that businesses can thrive across cultures and geographies. The company's Language Operations platform blends advanced artificial intelligence with humans in the loop, for fast, efficient, high-quality translations that get smarter over time. Unbabel helps enterprises grow into new global markets and builds customer trust by creating more consistent, high-quality multilingual customer experiences across marketing and customer service. Based in San Francisco, CA, Unbabel works with leading brands such as Booking.com, Nestle, Panasonic, Patagonia, and UPS, to communicate effortlessly with customers around the world, no matter what language they speak.

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1. [Unbabel Global Multilingual CX Report, 2021](#)
 2. [Rethink Your Customer Service Strategy to Drive Self-Service](#)
 3. [Unbabel Global Multilingual Cx Report, 2021](#)