

# Self-Service Customer Portal Benefits for MSPs



Transformation for Managed Service Providers



## Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE COST TO SERVE CONUNDRUM .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE POWER OF SELF-SERVICE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>WHAT GARTNER SAYS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>HOW DIGITAL SELF-SERVICE PROVIDES LONG-TERM ROI.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>THE COST SAVINGS AND BENEFITS OF A POPX CUSTOMER PORTAL .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>8</b>

## Introduction

The cost of customer services at Managed Service Providers (MSPs) has ballooned, due to the increasing demands of a growing customer base, to the point that they are becoming unaffordable. The dependence on human interface and contact centres is now reducing due to deteriorated services and high costs. The huge increase in the number of processes, applications and user databases that need to be maintained means more complexity, resulting in the growing margin for human error when processes rely on manual tasks. Data stored in multiple locations consumes more time to integrate and can be prone to discrepancies. All this fragmentation is a tremendous burden on MSPs as the quality of the customer experience continues to fall below expectations and the cost to serve escalates.

**According to a Gartner study, the customer servicing costs of answering email can vary from \$2.50 per transaction to as high as \$40.**

## The cost to serve conundrum

The big challenge for MSPs is to provide satisfactory customer service, in an increasingly competitive environment but without allowing costs to spiral out of control. Customer's demanding expectations, however, are constantly eroding profit margins, making service automation and self-service primary requirements. Users now expect technical support, service catalogs, account and billing information and access to personalised data to be the baseline experience when interacting online via their service provider's portal.

Left unchecked, these concerning trends are pushing MSPs to focus more on trying to manage their costs, rather than improving service quality, and will result in the following virtuous circle of events:

- **High customer services costs:**  
Call centres are still widely used, requiring costly human interfaces. With more complexity and the number of customers growing the costs are out of control.
- **Dispersed customer data:**  
Customer information such as address, contacts, orders, products purchase history and billing is stored in multiple systems that are a combination of Ticketing, CRM, ERP, Finance and proprietary tools. Managing all those integrations, if indeed they are linked at all, requires longer call time and increased cost. Customer service representatives have to go through information stored in several systems to answer a simple customer query.
- **Growing complexity:**  
There is an increase in applications, data, functionalities and users, much of which is directly related to the diversification of services offered. Delayed processing cycles of data, issue resolution and response times mean the customer is left waiting for longer.
- **Inconsistent information:**  
Disparate and inconsistent customer information on preferences, contact details and status can quickly lead to customer dissatisfaction and lower customer lifetime value.

- **Slow response times:**  
The response time taken to answer user queries is further delayed due to the growth in the number of users and the resulting volume of inbound support calls, many of which require more time to resolve due to their complex nature. Further, the risk of erroneous data being processed is high due to the excessive levels of pressure experienced by customer service personnel.
- **Increased competition:**  
Many services companies have adopted self-service portals to deliver secure instant information to users via multiple channels, such as smartphones, laptops and tablets. The improvement this allows in the quality of the user experience, means enhanced customer acquisition and retention for those MSPs that get it right.

### The power of self-service

Customer portals provide consolidated, customised and up-to-date information, with the power to self-serve for help, information, buying new services and interacting directly with the service provider. The relationship of a customer portal to any digital transformation initiative is significant. The portal surfaces many of the benefits of transformation directly to the customer and is the key piece of the jigsaw that makes the full ROI in transformation possible.

Focusing your transformation efforts only on back-office operational improvements, without linking this directly to the customer experience, distances the customer from all the hard work and benefits that automation brings - these benefits can help make their lives easier and turn them into stickier, long-term clients.

Providing customers with the ability to self-serve, with complete transparency in the following key aspects of their services must be a priority:

- Provisioning
- Reporting
- Support
- Billing

Two of the biggest customer experience failings of MSPs are on-boarding processes and billing. The lack of transparency in billing especially is regarded as the most common and frustrating customer experience issue. Solving the problem means effective billing can then become a strategic asset.

To do this, and indeed improve all customer experience touchpoints, MSPs must focus on four key areas of development:

1. Increase automation.
2. Personalise information and offers.
3. Provide more transparency and advice to customers.
4. Communicate the value of the services delivered.

## What Gartner says

According to Gartner, by 2022, 85% of all customer service interactions will begin with self-service. Customer self-service will make up for 64% of all customer engagement.



Self-service is critical in improving customer service. A customer portal must include self-service elements to be a truly effective and valuable tool. Well-implemented self-service can provide the following long-term benefits:

- Lower support calls.
- Faster support response times.
- Greater volume of support handled.
- Free-up time to spend adding value to customers.
- Increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.

**“81% of customers attempt to take care of matters themselves before reaching out to a live representative.”** - Harvard Business Review.

MSPs that embrace the full benefits of a customer portal will differentiate themselves from competitors and liberate new cross and upsell opportunities. Investing in the customer experience is the quickest opportunity for all stakeholders to benefit.

How digital self-service provides long-term ROI



**DECREASE IN NUMBER OF SUPPORT CALLS**

Customers can easily find the answers they are looking for online, lowering the number of inbound support calls and increasing resource capacity to deal with real issues.



**INCREASE IN PORTAL TRAFFIC**

Self-service establishes brand credibility and trust, as customers view the portal as a useful tool they can depend on any time of the day or night and visit more frequently.



**LOWER RESPONSE TIMES**

As customers take advantage of the quick access to information readily available to them in the portal, customer service reps use their time to handle more complicated questions and better serve high-value customers with rapid response time.



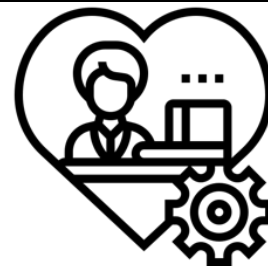
**INCREASE IN TOTAL SUPPORT VOLUME HANDLED**

Self-service enables more customers to be served more quickly and satisfactorily, significantly improving both the employee and customer experience. Customers stay happier longer and employees are more motivated as their work is more rewarding.



**DECREASE IN TOTAL SUPPORT COSTS**

Maintaining self-service channels is much cheaper than managing live support channels and solves the issue of exponentially increasing costs as the customer base grows.



**INCREASE IN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

Self-service allows customers to select the ideal method of communication and manage their interactions with you. This creates the experience they prefer, promoting a positive relationship.

## The cost savings and benefits of a POPX customer portal

The benefits of a self-service customer portal run far and wide, however, here are some of the specific cost savings and benefits that can be quantified. Self-service and automation work together to increase existing resource capacity up-to 40% by making teams more efficient, effective and eradicating human error:

- **Portal Workflows:**

By automating manual and repetitive tasks with workflows to efficiently execute processes that run the portal's key features, you can be confident they are concluded quickly and accurately.

**Saving:** Rapid customer interactions that are accurate, delivering 'right first-time' outcomes with no costly re-work required. It is estimated that accurate automated processes can save up-to 30% of customer services overheads.

- **Portal Integrations:**

Integrate to internal, third party and supplier systems, ensuring data pipelines are fully operational and maintained and that workflows are powered by the right data.

**Benefit:** The right up-to-date information is always available to customers and the portal constantly displays the latest information in the customer dashboard. POPX takes care of all portal integrations and their maintenance, saving the cost of hiring up-to 3 integration developers.

- **Account Management:**

Provides personalised access to information about services purchased, service descriptions, SLAs, service catalog, pricing and purchasing options. Having this information at the customer's fingertips speeds up all interactions and new opportunities for customers to buy, allowing sales teams to focus their efforts more productively.

**Saving:** It is estimated that account management teams can significantly increase productivity by freeing up-to 10 man-days a month per sales head.

- **Case (Incident) Management:**

This facility allows customers to report problems and get answers to questions regarding their products and services. They can track the progress of incidents and new services requested.

**Saving:** It is estimated that the efficiency gains of rapid problem resolution can reduce customer service overheads up-to 30%.

- **Knowledge Management:**

Helps customers find answers to questions fast through FAQs, knowledge base, chatbots and live agent chat.

**Saving:** This can contribute up-to an additional 10% saving in customer services overheads.

- **Performance Monitoring & Reporting:**

Access to live monitoring and online reports showing the status, performance and overall health of a customer's live services.

**Saving:** By automating the creation and delivery of live monitoring and performance reports, it is estimated that up-to 20 man-days per month can be saved per customer services team.

- **Customer Satisfaction & Retention:**

A fit-for-purpose MSP customer portal, providing access to all relevant information and functionality under a single pane of glass, combined with self-service options, delivers the customer experience clients demand in today's fast-moving economy.

**Benefit:** It is estimated that a fully functional and deployed customer portal will help improve customer services Net Promoter score by up-to 30 points and can increase customer retention by up-to 25%.

- **Liberate new online sales channels:**

A complete service catalog with service descriptions, SLAs, pricing and options to buy online immediately exposes existing customers to the full portfolio available to them, helping increase cross and upsell opportunities without incurring significant cost of sales.

**Benefit:** An online service catalog that delivers instant ordering can help increase sales to existing clients up-to 35%.

## Conclusion

Self-service is the gateway to automation, it goes hand in hand with a great customer experience, and the customer portal has become the central point of focus for all customer interactions. The portal must be the single pane of glass for customers to view their services and is an opportunity to impress them with full transparency, an online buying experience that cuts time and cost from the sales process and much more.

The constant drive for MSPs to reduce costs through service automation must run in parallel with business as usual. All too often, it's a temporary project or done in someone's spare time, when it should be a top strategic priority for any MSP looking to improve their EBITDA.





[www.popx.co.uk](http://www.popx.co.uk)   
+44 (0) 203 488 0676   
Unit 2 - Invicta Park, Dartford, DA1 5BU 