

How Wireless Carriers Can Increase Customer Loyalty While Saving Money

An Opportunity to Turn Customer-Reported Network Problems into a Competitive Advantage

An Empower Geographics Executive White Paper



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Executive Summary

- Due to a slowdown in subscriber additions, ongoing customer churn, and a tough economic and wireless industry climate, wireless carriers must focus on increasing customer loyalty and cutting costs in order to maintain profitability.
- Customer loyalty is determined by customer satisfaction. In the wireless industry, the top two drivers of customer satisfaction are call quality and customer service. Yet both call quality and customer service — and therefore loyalty — remain issues, with 27 percent of people having switched carriers at least once since using wireless service.
- Twenty percent of wireless subscribers state that improved coverage is the top item their service provider could address to keep them from switching to another carrier. At the same time, 25 percent of subscribers state they experience poor coverage, poor sound quality, or dropped calls.
- To increase customer loyalty and retention, wireless carriers must resolve customer complaints about network service problems. Carriers that can address customer issues while simultaneously decreasing costs will win on two fronts.
- Wireless carriers need a solution that expedites the handling and resolution of customer-reported network problems, and that works with existing trouble ticketing and/or CRM systems.
- A key to this solution is the collection and use of location information across departments. Knowing the location of reported troubles in relation to coverage, network status, and cell status enables wireless carriers to pinpoint, analyze, and resolve network complaints quickly and accurately. It also provides valuable trend data to prioritize network improvements. The result will be increased customer retention and operational efficiency.

A Big Asset: Customer-Reported Network Problems

Addressing customer-reported network problems presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the wireless carrier.

The challenge lies in being able to provide customers with satisfactory answers to their call quality complaints while minimizing the creation of trouble tickets and involvement from Engineering.

The opportunity lies in collecting and using information that customers willingly provide. This information — the location and time of problem calls — is not easily obtained by other means. Customers are simply in more places throughout the coverage area than the provider could ever be, 24-hours a day, and are constantly evaluating call quality every time they use their phone. If they complain about network service in a particular location, other subscribers are certainly experiencing the same problem. Drive testing and metering are helpful in locating problem areas, but can only approximate what the customer is actually experiencing. What's more, these tests may not be performed often enough to help resolve intermittent, nagging problems that negatively impact service.

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Location Information: Critical to Solving Customer Issues

Properly utilized, location information can offer significant operational advantages. Since wireless service is facilities-based — that is, dependent on having cell towers and switches in place — the location and surrounding geography of these facilities are critical elements in determining quality of wireless service.

In order to troubleshoot and resolve service quality issues, Customer Care, Engineering, and Network Operations personnel must be able to access and understand location information:

- **Customer Care.** When subscribers report problems, Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) should be able to pinpoint the location and time of the customer problem, and immediately correlate the problem to information on coverage (past, present or proposed), network status, and cell status. This will allow CSRs to know the cause of the problem and provide answers to the customer. In this scenario, CSRs essentially become “network authorities” who are able to answer customer complaints. They will be able to close the vast majority of customer-reported network problems on the first call. Fewer trouble

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tickets will be created because CSRs will only create trouble tickets for bona fide problems, thus leading to operational savings.

- **Engineering and Network Operations.** Engineering will receive fewer, but more complete, trouble tickets from Customer Care because CSRs will already be closing the vast majority of trouble calls. The tickets Engineering and Network Operations do receive will include the location, time, and type of reported trouble. This will enable faster, more effective, and more efficient response. In addition, when the location of problems is tracked, Engineering can be alerted automatically to statistically significant clusters of reported trouble, enabling them to prioritize network maintenance and improvements. This will create additional operational efficiencies, save money, and ultimately improve customer retention because network quality and wireless service will improve.

Five Steps Become One

A location-based system can help you reduce the steps, effort, costs and resources required to resolve subscriber-reported network complaints, leading to operational efficiencies and more satisfied customers.

A location-based system can reduce the steps, effort, costs, and resources required to resolve network complaints. For example, a typical work process for resolving complaints might be comprised of five steps:

1. Customer reports problem to CSR
2. CSR sends problem to Engineer
3. Engineer researches problem
4. Engineer sends problem resolution to CSR
5. CSR calls customer back with answer

A location-based system, on the other hand, reduces five steps to one step. That's because CSRs will have at their fingertips all the information required to manage the customer complaint: location and type of problem, time of problem, in coverage or roaming, cell and sector status, known trouble spots, and planned improvements. In addition, if this system contains links to the subscriber billing system or CRM system, CSRs will be able to access customer profiles and history that will help them better prioritize customer service.

Wireless carriers should look for a one-call resolution system that works with existing trouble ticketing and CRM systems.

One-Call Resolution: Beyond Other Systems

In a market where multiple vendors position themselves as the panacea for wireless customer care and trouble ticketing, carriers should look for a location-based system that allows them to respond to customer complaints on the first call: A *location-based, one-call resolution system*. This system, when designed to work with existing trouble ticketing and CRM systems, offers the following advantages:

Unique Use of Location Information

The foundation of a wireless network is location. Correlating the location of a customer-reported network problem to network coverage, network status, and cell status at the time of the reported problem provides Customer Care with information they need to resolve the customer's issue on the first and only call.

Real Time and Historical Network and Cell Status

Armed with network and cell status information, CSRs will know if the network (or cell) was up or down; and if coverage at that location was marginal, non-existent, scheduled for improvement, or proposed. Because they have this information to address the customer issue, CSRs can eliminate steps, reduce callbacks, and decrease the number of Engineering trouble tickets they generate.

Designed for Multiple Departments

Improving the customer experience, and ultimately loyalty and profitability, is an integrated effort involving Customer Care, Engineering, and Network Operations. A modular system will provide unique functionality for each department and can grow and change as the carrier's needs change.

Integrates Critical Information

Linking the billing and CRM systems to trouble tickets will show the value and spending status of the customer who reported a problem. This information can help ensure that carriers "serve their best customers best."

Resolves Discrepancies in Time

Synchronizing the time of problem with the network status at that time will account for the fact that callers typically report problems after they occur. Other time discrepancies can be resolved: for instance, when the caller is in one time zone, the CSR in another, and the network element handling for the call in yet another.

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A location-based, one-call resolution system offers quantifiable operational benefits that can lead to significant ROI for the wireless carrier.

A Summary of Operational Benefits

During an economic downturn, operational efficiencies are paramount. A location-based, one-call resolution system offers the following operational benefits:

Reduce . . .

- Reduce the amount of time a CSR spends collecting the data from a customer on a trouble related call. CSRs can, in turn, spend more time building relations with subscribers, helping to keep subscribers happier and more loyal to the provider.
- Reduce the amount of time it takes to share customer-reported problems with appropriate parties throughout your organization.
- Reduce the amount of time required for Engineering to solve or fix problems because now they have more accurate and timely data about subscribers' problems from CSRs.
- Reduce the total volume of trouble calls related to network problems because CSRs are addressing trouble issues with subscribers online and in real time.
- Reduce CSR turnover by reducing stress related to not having information and meaningful answers for irate customers with unresolved issues.

Increase . . .

- Increase a CSR's opportunity to provide subscribers with one-call resolution.
- Increase operational synergies between Customer Service, Engineering, and Network Operations that will enhance customer experiences and reduce defections.
- Increase a wireless carrier's ability to differentiate services in the market through superior customer care and a high quality network.
- Increase opportunities to acquire and retain valuable customers.
- Increase the quality of information to support capital appropriations decisions and network planning strategies.

About Empower Geographics

Empower Geographics has years of expertise and domain knowledge in the wireless telecommunications industry. Empower Geographics works closely with some of the nation's leading telecommunications carriers to help solve business problems by assessing needs and designing, developing, and implementing solutions. Our expertise includes Market Analysis, Market Penetration Studies, Market-Driven Network Planning, Network Planning and Performance Analysis, Buildout, Direct Marketing, Sales Territory Alignment, Customer Problem Resolution, and Customer Care.

Empower OneCall™, a location-based, one-call resolution system for customer-reported network problems, is designed 100 percent from the ground up exclusively for wireless carriers. It is used by large and small wireless carriers nationwide to achieve significant increases in operational efficiencies and customer satisfaction.

Visit www.empower.com for more information or call toll free 1-888-627-7767.