

Scaling without Failing:
How the
Cryptocurrency
Industry Can Grow
without Falling Short on
Customer Care

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It's an age of innovation, where bright minds are challenging conventional thinking at every turn. Alternative models are shaking up the status quo, even in the most traditional industries. There's no better example of this phenomenon in action than cryptocurrency. These digital currencies, created and operated through blockchain technology, have fundamentally reinvented the concept of money.

Although the original open source software was just released in 2009, global adoption has been fast and furious.

According to the Cambridge Centre for Alternate Finance, as of April 2017, the combined market value of all cryptocurrencies is \$27 billion, with hundreds of different currencies traded today. The number of people who actively use cryptocurrency now rivals the population of a small country, and continues to trend up at breakneck speed.

This massive growth has supercharged the entire alternative finance ecosystem. Exchanges and wallets are riding the wave, with some tripling or quadrupling their size in a matter of months. Though great for business, this quick-fire adoption has presented the industry with some very real growing pains that include finding a way to scale without degrading customer service, keeping a watchful eye on security and continuously managing regulatory compliance.

Every day, cryptocurrency organizations onboard masses of institutional traders and individuals alike, all of whom require technical support and customer care. Users expect the transaction to be easy and instant; whether they're seasoned investors or new to the cryptocurrency world. If they need help, or have an issue, they expect fast, accurate resolution.

And, some companies just can't keep up.

No one likes to wait days, or weeks for answers, especially when it comes to their money. Slow responses, combined with the digital, can't-see-it-can't-feel-it nature of cryptocurrency, do more than irritate customers. It makes them lose trust—and wonder if their currencies are still there. Someone with \$8,000 in an account, unable to make a withdrawal and also unable to find anyone who can tell him why, typically takes to social media. Multiply that by hundreds, or thousands of posts, and something that may actually be nothing more than a basic user error can quickly turn into a reputational nightmare with negative long-term impact. No response, and the rumors start to spread.

It doesn't help that the ecosystem has a lot of moving parts. So, if something goes wrong, it's difficult to identify whether it's an issue with a router at the exchange, a problem with the wallet or some other error. As with any new technology, new users and a new industry, there are numerous fail points.

Security is also an ongoing challenge that has escalated exponentially as the prices of cryptocurrencies rise. Exchanges and custodial wallets are particularly vulnerable, due to the volume of cryptocurrencies they handle.

As cryptocurrency adoption escalates, so will the incidence of attacks, targeting currencies or personal user information. But, even with tight security measures and authentication protocols in place, no company is immune to breaches, through system hacks, fraudulent social networking or outright theft. Bringing on a mass of new employees to keep up with demand compounds the risk of social networking and other infiltration methods that rely on the probability of simple human error.

On top of everything else, companies have to find a way to scale while managing regulatory compliance. Cryptocurrency exchanges have to comply with the same type of regulations that govern traditional financial institutions. In the U.S., this includes the Know Your Customer (KYC) and Customer Identification Procedures (CIP), as well as other money-laundering protocols. Every country has its own take on compliance standards depending, in part, on whether or not its governing body categorizes cryptocurrencies as securities.

Just keeping up with compliance alone has the potential to derail efficiency in what was designed to be a quick, nimble delivery model.

How Outsourcing Can Remedy the Challenges

To keep up with surging demand, cryptocurrency companies could ramp up their internal customer care organizations, train hundreds of new people and take on overhead expense.

Not only does this approach shift focus away from running the actual business, but, it can bring already declining service levels to new lows. Just finding and training people—particularly people with a working knowledge of cryptocurrencies—is a big undertaking. The inherent learning curve that follows could send already fed-up customers to the message boards or a competitor, or both.

The fastest way to scale at the magnitude and with the agility these companies need is to outsource customer experience support. With the right partner, companies in the cryptocurrency space can meet not only the growing demand, shorten response time and dramatically improve the customer experience, but they can also better manage compliance and reduce security risk.

The key is finding a provider that fits the company culture, user mindset, and takes a next-gen approach to the sometimes-old-school world of outsourced customer care.

Finding the Right Customer Experience Outsourcing Partner

Most players in the cryptocurrency space, like most startups, are new to outsourcing. So, where should they begin?

The best approach is to start with the basics to narrow down the options. Any provider that doesn't offer multiple channels of contact and 24-hour support in multiple language won't be a fit in the world of cryptocurrency.

Unlike more traditional companies, the unique nature of the cryptocurrency industry requires attributes that go beyond traditional customer care. The best fit is a provider that's skilled with working with first-time outsourcing customers and has these characteristics:

History of Successfully Scaling for Next Generation Startups

One of the great benefits of outsourcing is the ability to scale. But, cryptocurrency companies typically need that capability turbocharged, in terms of both volume and timelines. Look for a provider with a proven record of working with companies that are completely reordering their industries, like cryptocurrency players are doing in the traditional financial services industry.

Ask specifics on scaling. Many providers are good at ramping up to handle two or three times the volume for organizations with mature customer experience teams and processes in place. But, new companies often need to ramp on a larger scale, more rapidly. Growth industries, like cryptocurrency, should seek out a provider that has experience scaling in the 3,000 percent to 5,000 percent range, as well as a client list of startups known for great service.

Ability to Recruit Passionate Cryptocurrency Users

Cryptocurrency exchanges and wallets attract a unique customer base that's typically younger, tech-savvy and passionate about cryptocurrencies. When they decide to chat, phone or use social channels to connect with a human being for customer support, they want fast, accurate answers from someone "like them" in terms of age, technical aptitude and knowledge of cryptocurrencies.

No one wants a mechanic who doesn't know how to drive a car. No cryptocurrency user wants to get help from someone who has only read about the concept. It's critical for companies to engage a provider that can not only scale, but scale with an army of digital customer experience experts who already embrace the option. Typically, customer experience providers who dedicate teams to a single customer, instead of parsing them out among many, are most likely to offer this level of specialization.

Mature, Omnichannel Customer Support Options

Providing an exceptional customer experience means giving people choices. Seek out providers with well-established, omnichannel support options, including chat, in-app, voice, email, social media and text—and ensure that the experience is seamless.

Experienced with Financial Industry Regulatory Compliance

For now, and as far as anyone can see into the future, regulatory compliance is a fact of life. It's critical to work with a provider that has experience with and deep knowledge of financial industry regulations. That typically means finding a vendor that works with other financial clients, and already has a mechanism in place to educate staff, and refine processes as regulatory requirements change.

Innovative Use of Technology

In addition to hiring the right people, the provider should invest in and fully utilize technology to support their teams so they can provide a better experience. Tools, like integrated artificial intelligence, speed resolution and anticipate customer need. Advanced Learning Management Systems, used for training, ramp up the operation more quickly and enable the outsourcer to better respond to changing demands.

The ability to mine and analyze data from customer interactions can provide insight to help improve operations, as well as pinpoint exactly where new users are getting stuck. Companies can use this information to beef up website FAQs, chatbot scripts or other digital tools to help users get answers to basic, frequently asked questions more easily.

100 Percent Cloud-based Operation

It's a simple fact: cloud is more agile than legacy systems. By seeking out an outsourcing provider that is cloud based, companies can shorten transition times to around 30-60 days and also set up additional personnel as needs increase.

A cloud-based deployment also reduces security risk because no company data is stored on the outsourcing provider's system. In case of disaster, weather issues or other unforeseen circumstances, the operation can be back up and running with minimal disruption of service—something that's particularly critical with cryptocurrency support.

Cultural Fit

The best outsourcing relationships have more than a capabilities match; they also have a cultural fit. So, it makes sense to work with a customer experience partner with a startup's soul; one that's constantly innovating, and pushing the envelope, like the companies it supports.

It's also critical to get a feel for how the organization treats its employees. Low attrition rates typically mean happy employees who have career opportunities within the company. It's simple human nature: employees who are treated well and love what they do are going to perform at a higher level for the long run.

Making a Smooth Transition to Outsourced Customer Care

Some customer experience outsourcing providers require a significant amount of client time during the overall transition process. Cryptocurrency companies that are already out of arms and legs don't have the manpower to devote to managing the lift and shift—nor the required expertise.

While it's not a common practice, some providers are willing to handle the bulk of the lift and shift on their customer's behalf. It's a clear indication that the provider is flexible and focused on making their clients' lives easier from the beginning.

Typically, the process begins with gaining an understanding of implementation scope, which includes gathering documents, understanding existing technical configurations and putting together job descriptions of the customer experience personnel who will be recruited.

While recruiting is going on, the provider maps out training strategies, reporting and quality measurement configurations, and nails down the technology implementation.

The staff is trained, and begins a two week "nesting" phase where they start production under the close supervision of trainers, team leads, and the client. It's like on-the-job training, in which the customer experience team fine-tunes their performance before going into full production.

The idea is to make the shift as simple for clients and their customers as possible, with solid service delivery from day one.

Realizing the Benefits

At the onset, outsourcing enables cryptocurrency exchanges and wallets to handle their ever-growing customer base—getting the help they need to meet the increased volume of user inquiries, without delay. But, with the right partner, that's just the beginning of the potential benefits of outsourcing. The best relationships are collaborative, with the provider proactively addressing new challenges that are certain to arise—particularly in an industry that's continually changing and morphing as it grows.

No question, the cryptocurrency industry is exploding, with exchanges and wallets alike scrambling to meet the demands of a burgeoning global customer base. By shifting the burden of customer support to an agile, cloud-based outsourcing provider, exchanges and wallets can dramatically improve service, and position for the future—wherever that leads.

Sources:

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