



Four Ways to Enhance Contact Center Efficiency and Brand Value During Disasters

Natural and man-made disasters are life altering events for those directly impacted and present a very complex set of challenges for those attempting to service and support the victims. Managed poorly, these situations can create massive operational inefficiencies, unwanted compliance and regulatory exposure, and irreparable brand damage. But managed well, these crises present an opportunity to significantly enhance long term customer loyalty while simultaneously maximizing the efficiency of your contact center operations.

A Growing Challenge

The number of people affected by natural or man-made disasters is expected to continue increasing at a rapid pace over the next few years:

- Four of the last six years have seen a record number of natural disasters with damages that **exceeded \$1B per event**
- The population in Gulf Coast and East Coast shoreline counties, those most exposed to extreme weather events, has **increased by an astonishing 43%** since 1980
- The **growth in the number of man-made disasters** such as acts of terror, mass shootings, and, in some cases, wildfires, shows no signs of abating

These macro trends, combined with increasing regulatory scrutiny in certain industries such as financial services, make it more critical than ever for customer-centric organizations to have robust strategies and tools to effectively navigate these challenging situations.

The Current State is Sub-Optimal

While many organizations have a process to manage customer communications during times of crisis, it is too often fraught with manual procedures that create wasted time, errors, and inconsistencies that ultimately lead to massive inefficiencies, sub-optimal customer interactions and increased brand risk. With the number of disaster events on the rise, it is apparent that superior processes are needed.



A Better Way Forward

ContactRelief's research combined with the experiences of its customers shows that there are **4 key steps** organizations can take to enhance both contact center operational efficiency and brand value during times of crisis:

Efficiently maximize situational awareness

The most successful companies have an automated, centralized process by which they gather near real-time information on what disaster events currently exist, the specific geographic locations and customers impacted, and the severity and expected duration of the impact. Too often, a company's situational awareness function consists of a risk or operations manager trying to monitor a few news feeds, web sites or mobile alerts for developing crisis situations all while trying to perform their routine job functions. Ultimately this process results in missed, inaccurate, and untimely information, all of which leads to a suboptimal response and customer experience.

Establish defensible and repeatable decision-making criteria

Although robust situational awareness about crisis events is critical, using this information to formulate and implement a customer communication strategy is equally important. Extremely valuable time is lost when too many hours are spent formulating response scenarios on the spot. Best practices in this area require pre-established response scenarios based on numerous factors including event type, severity, estimated population impacted and expected duration. This not only enables a faster organizational response to customers but also reduces regulatory and brand risk of disparate treatment.

Devise a proactive, customer-centric communication program

Many of the most impactful and destructive disasters, such as hurricanes, wildfires, and severe flooding, have a fair amount of time between when they are first identified or predicted and when they actually begin to impact consumers. Proactive outreach to customers during this time with information, offers of assistance or simple well wishes can be invaluable in building long term loyalty. Numerous studies have found that consumers believe exemplary customer service comes not from routine, day-to-day transactions but rather during extreme situations such as these.

Ensure consistent program implementation

Consumers today have more, varied touchpoints with your organization (both internally and through third party partners) than ever before. Any inconsistency in strategy or treatment along this customer journey can dramatically erode trust and opinion of your company and services. It is critical that companies have a process to consistently implement their customer communication strategy across all areas of the organization or your attempts to assist your customer and enhance your brand will be lost.

Companies that incorporate these principles into their customer communication strategy during times of crisis have reported increased efficiency in both strategy formulation and execution as well as exceptionally positive feedback from both consumers and regulators regarding their approach. Genesys AppFoundry partner, ContactRelief, provides the Disaster Decision Engine for PureCloud and PureConnect to assist Genesys customers in implementing these concepts into their overall strategy.