



VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER – PART 2

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ENHANCING THE VOC PROCESS

Second, turning VOC insights into action.



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ENHANCING THE VOC PROCESS

SECOND, TURNING VOC INSIGHTS INTO ACTION.

The Voice of the Customer (VOC) process is strategically critical because it reduces preventable problems and improves products and their delivery. Every dollar invested in a well-designed VOC program typically returns [10–20 times](#) the ROI of the same dollar invested in direct customer service.

[Part 1](#) of this two-part article, based on our 2026 survey conducted by Customer Care Measurement & Consulting (CCMC) with Contact Center Pipeline, addressed the foundational architecture of a strong VOC process: governance, unified data collection, and AI-enabled analysis.

This second article focuses on what leading organizations do after the analysis is complete: how they report VOC insight, assign ownership, execute action plans, track results, and address the blind spots that still limit impact.

REPORTING THAT DRIVES DECISIONS, NOT JUST DASHBOARDS

Reporting now goes far beyond data tables to visualization, prioritization, recommendations for action, and accountability.

1 Lisa Oswald, Global Head of Member Services, Travelzoo described the

use of “a living chart of issues across the customer journey by type of product,” which continues from one reporting period to the next, keeping all issues in view while conveying shifts in intensity and progress toward resolution.

2 Leaders assign each VOC issue to an individual manager who is responsible for enlisting support from other functional areas. The report often suggests which function is best positioned to take the lead in mitigation or resolution.

3 The most successful VOC analysis groups suggest outcome targets (mitigation or elimination of the issues) and process metrics that can be tracked weekly or monthly.

4 Quality and process improvement often provide rapid-prototyping expertise in the pilot testing of concepts prior to full implementation. This reduces the risk of acting on an issue identified by the VOC process.

5 At Nestlé Purina and Travelzoo, revenue-based business cases are produced for each issue, as well as for clusters of issues that imply strategic initiatives and product or service innovations.

6 Extrapolating the number of complaints to the number of customers affected—and then estimating the revenue impact of a month of inaction—is a powerful way to precipitate commitment.

The multiplier factor is usually 8–20X cost impact and is estimated via a survey of a random sample of customers to determine both problem prevalence and complaint behavior.

For example, multipliers of between eight and 15 problems for each complaint voiced were found in a [survey of 8,000 consumers](#) by major consumer product goods (CPG) companies in 2024.

7 Leading programs actively encourage frontline staff to submit both emerging issues and new ideas.

Feedback on the impact of prior input is critical to sustaining participation by showing employees that they are being heard and their ideas are, at least sometimes, being implemented.

One company's VOC activity was recently recognized for submitting the winning "next best marketing idea" for innovative marketing. Top management has allocated significant funds to pilot test the concept, which is currently under development.

In another company, this front-line-input process has been termed "the wacky ideas report," which was avidly read by Product Management.

Product managers valued the report because it surfaced aspects of product design that had not been considered, but based on contact center input, turned out to be competitive advantages.

Starbucks, HP, and Lego (not companies that participated in this study) have used similar input and recognition mechanisms for both employees and customers to identify new opportunities for products and marketing.

8 Separate, relatively unfiltered reports of ideas and suggestions for process improvements are encouraged from both customers and staff members.

For example, one auto manufacturer supported this input process via a simple email channel to the service center's root-cause analyst, where CSRs could submit case numbers, along with comments or suggestions.

FEEDBACK ON THE IMPACT OF PRIOR INPUT IS CRITICAL TO SUSTAINING PARTICIPATION BY SHOWING EMPLOYEES THAT THEY ARE BEING HEARD...

9 Michelin, Nestlé Purina, and Travelzoo all use storytelling and customer quotes to humanize the data and show the emotional impact of issues. At Michelin, wave files of phone calls are played on the plant floor for operating staff to underscore the importance of the issue.

10 Quantified estimates of the impact of word of mouth/mouse (WOM/M) are now gaining far more traction with Marketing and Product Management as a positive output of the customer experience (CX) and the service experience.

CMOS' THREE BAD ASSUMPTIONS

The role of the chief marketing officer (CMO) can be undermined by their failure to attend to a few basic norms of organizational management. This is where CX and service executives can help by reminding their CMOs of the following three bad assumptions.

1. No news is good news

The problems you *don't* hear do the most damage.

2. Transparency is the kiss of death: customers don't want to know about limitations

Transparency is a delighter. Warning customers keeps them out of trouble and avoids problems.

For example, one insurance company's welcome letter generated *more* revenue because it highlighted what was not covered, providing vital information that the customers actually wanted to know about, leading to them buying riders for more insurance on the uninsured areas.

3. Soliciting complaints and questions is dumb and expensive

Complaint rates are a function of visibility, message, and customers' skills with the products.

ACTION PLANNING, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION

Part 1 established that strong analysis is necessary but not sufficient. The next requirement is disciplined execution.

Once issues and priorities are formalized, a manager is assigned to each point of pain (POP) or issue and given the authority to coordinate across functions. That person then convenes an action-planning group to determine next steps.

Responsibility for each POP should be assigned to a specific manager, even if the issue is cross-functional. The assigned manager is then responsible for gaining cross-functional cooperation with implicit approval from senior management. (This approach is described in *The Amazon Way*, written by John Rossman.)

Quality or continuous improvement often takes the lead in rapid prototyping of solutions to be tested, with the VOC/ Insights department assisting in developing both process and outcome measures.

Each action plan aimed at a particular POP should have process metrics, outcome metrics, and ownership by a single executive responsible for implementation.

The benefit of action plans associated with specific POPs is that their occurrence and complaints can be easily counted, making progress or lack of progress explicit. Results are much harder to fudge.

Communication by executives to internal and external audiences, both formally at multiple levels and informally through Town Halls, and in a manner that elicits their interest and absorption of the material, is critical.

When issue actions are communicated in those forums, everyone knows management supports the effort, and management has publicly committed to addressing the issue.

Almost all leading companies use storytelling as a mechanism to humanize the data for internal audiences such as product, plant, and operations employees, like contact center agents and supervisors, as well as back-office and IT staff.

TRACKING RESULTS AND ALIGNING INCENTIVES

Once action plans are executed, each issue or global strategy should have quarterly or monthly tracking of process metrics.

Executives should be kept apprised of each initiative and there should be frequent involvement, recognition, and feedback to frontline employees and selected customers.

A global scorecard of issues raised by the VOC process versus issues mitigated or completely resolved is the ultimate tracking mechanism.

SIX COMMON BLIND SPOTS THAT QUIETLY UNDERMINE VOC ROI

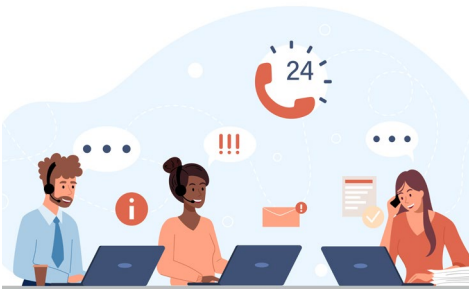
Even among strong performers, several weaknesses, in the absence of key parameters and practices, continue to limit VOC impact:

1. Knowledge of the percentage of customers acquired via positive WOM/M

Without this parameter, it is hard to prove that great service and delight are truly delivering a robust payoff.

2. A global issue classification scheme across all parts of the company

Without a consistent classification scheme, problem data are diluted, fragmented, or "lost," leading to weaker business cases.



3. A simple channel—such as an email box—for frontline employees to report preventable issues to a root-cause analyst, with monthly feedback on what was done

Without such a channel, CSRs simply fix each problem and move on without flagging emerging or perennial issues missed by the VOC or quality management (QM) processes.

4. An agreed-upon long-term value of a loyal customer

Without this parameter, it is hard to develop an accepted business case for the revenue impact of problems and customer delight.



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5. Asking quality, operations, and product managers how they use VOC reports

If the VOC "customers" are never asked whether they are getting value—including recent examples of impact—the VOC process will continue producing unactionable output.

VOC report recipients should be asked, "What did you do with the last VOC report I sent you?" Answers may include "scanned it," "read it but took no action," or "took action on at least one item," ideally with a specific example of action and impact.

You may be depressed by the responses, but at least then you know and can make improvements. *If you don't ask, your VOC impact may be wishful thinking.* For when action is taken, those stories provide strong support for investment in VOC. But if no action is taken, barriers can be identified and mitigated.

6. Not overtly asking, at least yearly, "How many of the issues identified by the VOC process have been fixed and what has been the revenue contribution of preventing those issues?"

If there is no attempt to quantify the issues affected by VOC, much of the effort and resources invested may be wasted.

FIVE LOW-COST MOVES TO ENHANCE VOC IMPACT

- Quantify the number of customers affected by an issue, scaling up by using a multiplier; use 10:1 as a conservative estimate if real data is not available.
- Educate senior executives on the tip-of-the-iceberg multiplier, WOM/M customer acquisition, and the amplified impact of transparency and problem prevention.
- Provide a simple channel for employees to report weird or preventable contacts and to contribute marketing and product development ideas from the front line.

YOU MAY BE DEPRESSED BY THE RESPONSES, BUT AT LEAST THEN YOU KNOW AND CAN MAKE IMPROVEMENTS.

- Focus on issues shared by customers and frontline employees.
- Introduce WOM/M into impact calculations to include social posts and reviews. Point out to product managers that the most successful companies have high levels of customer conquest from WOM/M referrals.

MAKING THE STRATEGIC CASE FOR VOC

Investment in an enhanced VOC process provides, on average, roughly 15 times the ROI of equivalent investment in frontline service and CX activities.



QUANTIFY THE NUMBER OF CUSTOMERS AFFECTED BY AN ISSUE, SCALING UP BY USING A MULTIPLIER...

The first step in demonstrating this payoff is to ask, "What is being done with the existing VOC, and how can its impact be measured?"

A second step is to create a global estimate of the number of customers encountering some type of problem and multiply that number by a conservative revenue value per customer.

Finally, engage Product Management and Marketing on the idea of using VOC to enhance WOM/M, pointing out that the cheapest effective marketing is, as Mike Jannini, former President of The Cheesecake Factory, said, "Letting your customers do your marketing for you!"

IN CLOSING

This second article is designed to stand on its own, but it is best read as the companion to [Part 1](#), which explains the foundational architecture of high-impact VOC: executive ownership, unified data collection, and AI-enabled analysis.

Together, Part 1 and Part 2 provide a complete framework for redesigning VOC as a strategic growth and improvement engine. 📌



*John Goodman is Vice Chairman of Customer Care Measurement and Consulting (CCMC). He has assisted 45 of the Fortune 100 companies. Harper Collins published the second edition of his book, *CX 3.0* featuring updates on AI and other technologies as well as research in April 2024.*

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