



Best Practice Guide

Web Customer Service: putting customer experience first

Customer experience on the web really is all if you want to achieve the most important business goals of retaining customers, containing costs and increasing your sales – particularly as your website is increasingly your customers' main point of contact with your brand.

This guide takes you on a tour of the 'must have' features for successful Web based customer service in order to provide the best customer experience online and generate more sales and brand loyalty.

Listen to the voice of
your customers:

They want good
service whichever
channel they contact
you through.

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1. Make Self-service visible

Customers want to ask questions in lots of places on your website, so make it easy for them to use self-service wherever they are.

Don't hide the Ask a Question box away in a corner or just on selected pages but make it visible and easy to access across your entire site, from the home page onwards. The easier it is to find and the more welcoming it is the more people will use it as the first point of contact rather than sending an email or picking up the phone, improving the overall customer experience.



Seamlessly integrating self-service across its entire site has enabled Haven Holidays to reduce incoming emails by half, while increasing sales by 5 per cent.

Top tip:

- Strategically add links to your site's Web Self-service wherever you think customers may need help such as online forms and known drop off points in order to reduce abandonment.



Haven holidays the leading provider of UK family holidays and short breaks.

www.haven.com

Success story: benefits of online customer service

- Holiday sales increased by 5%
- Inbound emails reduced by half
- Email handling time cut by 40%

Solution: Eptica Self-service and Email Management

2. Make self-service simple

It only takes a couple of seconds for customers to decide whether or not they are prepared to engage with your Web self-service system. Make a good first impression by adopting a clean and uncluttered design that makes it look both painless and obvious what they have to do to find the answers they want. **Essentially don't put customers off by overloading self-service pages with too much information.**



The three absolute 'must have' usability features are:

1. A large 'Ask a Question' box that both invites and allows customers to ask a complete question.
2. Simple, highlighted navigation to specific key topics
3. A view of the top questions that other customers have been asking

Analyse the language that your customers use and the tone of your brand to ensure that self-service matches them seamlessly. This will attract customers to use your system by making asking a question obvious and straightforward. Look at tailoring it to the area of the site they are in, so that the relevant content area is presented automatically before customers even need to type in a query to save more time and improve customer experience.

By matching self-service to its brand personality, fashion retailer Republic's online customers have adopted self-service quickly and in high numbers. As a consequence the retailer has reduced inbound contact, avoided historically huge customer service peaks and achieved record breaking online sales growth while still maintaining the highest service levels.



Republic the leading multi-brand fashion retailer and top 10 Hitwise ecommerce site.

www.republic.com

Success story:
benefits of online customer service

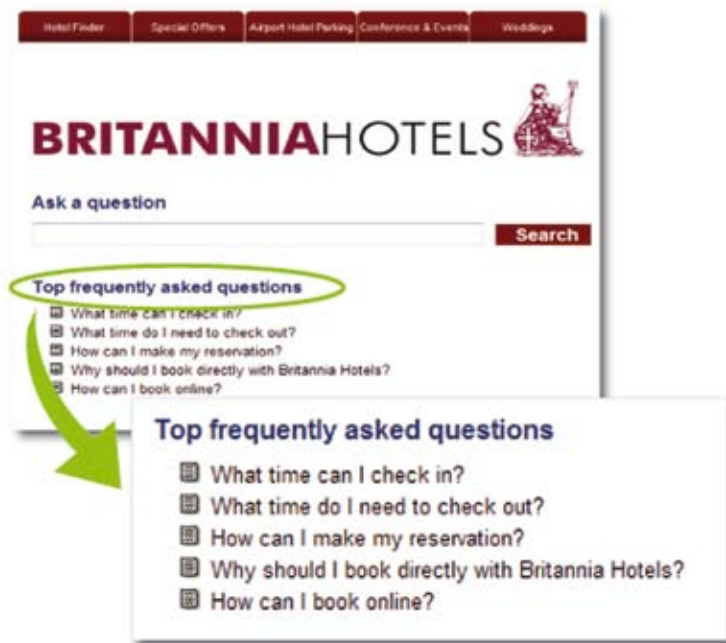
- Only 6% of Republic self-service users escalate to email
- Email first contact resolution increased to 98%
- Email turnaround – 80% within 24 hours

Solution:
Eptica Self-service and Email Management

3. Use the wisdom of crowds

Where self-service really helps is in answering straightforward questions, freeing up your customer service staff to deliver personalised answers to more complex queries. Normally, at least 80 per cent of questions asked are common to most situations, so use this knowledge to make it easier for your customers to get the information they want.

Use a solution that dynamically displays your most popular questions and answers visibly at the front of your self-service pages, so customers can access them with a single click without needing to type a single word.



Analysing the most popular questions asked also gives you an unparalleled awareness of what your total customer base wants to know, meaning you can tailor content, products and services to their changing needs quickly and effectively.



Britannia Hotels Group the largest privately owned hotels chain in the UK.

www.britanniahotels.com

Success story: benefits of online customer service

- 16% increase in productivity
- Reduction in sick days by linking email performance stats to agents' productivity bonus
- Reduced reservation operating costs
- Inbound faxes converted to emails for faster processing

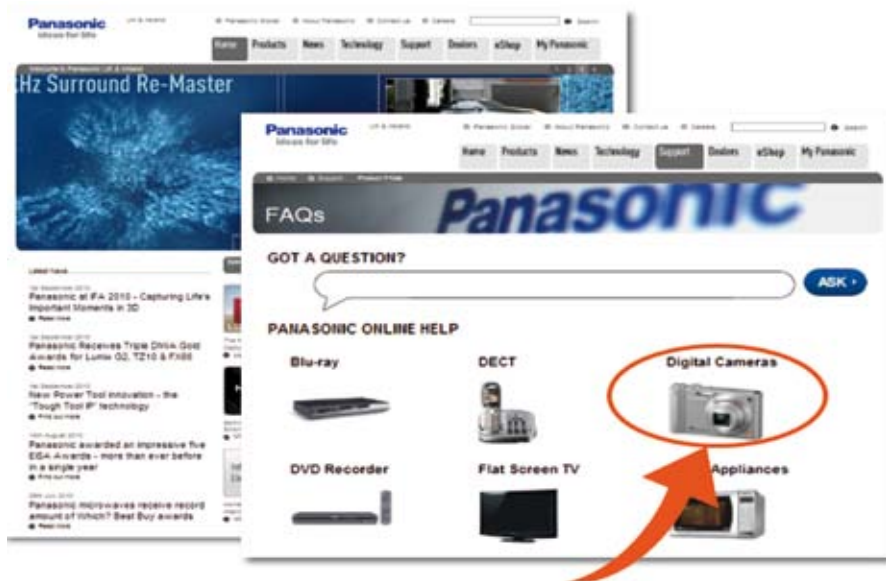
Solution: Eptica Self-service, Email Management and Fax-Letter-SMS

4. Brand it!

Self-service is an integral part of your website so the experience of using it needs to closely match the rest of your site.

Make sure that your self-service look and feel is consistent, even if it is hosted separately. Work with your technology provider and web team to **carry through your brand guidelines into self-service pages**. This will reassure customers and give them confidence to ask questions as they see self-service as a seamless part of the overall customer experience, rather than an add-on or after thought.

Panasonic's FAQ pages mirror the overall branding of the site, making it straightforward and simple to ask questions, encouraging use of self-service and increasing satisfaction.



5. Make navigation visual

A picture instantly attracts interest, so use them wherever you can within self-service. Enticing graphics and pictures draw people in, helping them quickly navigate to specific areas, while adding visual depth to your site.

For sites with an international reach, pictures of products act as shortcuts that sidestep language issues and engage your customers, wherever they are. **By introducing visual navigation to its self-service knowledge base using images of major product families Panasonic has added to the user experience on its website, all boosting customer satisfaction.**

Top tip



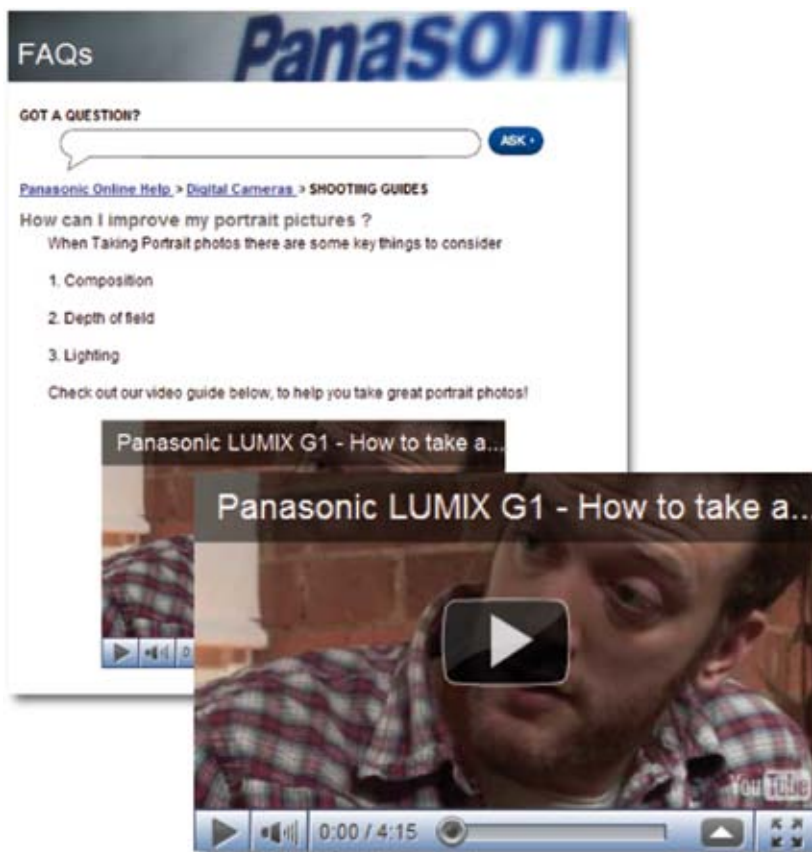
Personas aren't just the domain of virtual assistants or chat bots.

Use images to create a more personal attachment to your brand through Self-service.

6. Use multimedia answers

The web is not just about text. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video can be worth a million. So **don't just tell people how to do something, show them - using either illustrations or cost-effective short film clips.**

Bringing answers to life shows your commitment to customers and drives engagement with your brand by giving real depth to your answers.



Panasonic's easy to follow video answers allow customers to use their products fully and confidently. Technical support queries to Panasonic that could involve lengthy calls, can now be addressed by the customer watching a short video which is accessible immediately through Web Self-service.

As well as providing the potential to dramatically reduce inbound support enquiries and costs, video answers significantly enhance the experience for customers who can access and replay them any time of day or night at their convenience.



Panasonic one of the largest electronic product manufacturers in the world.

www.panasonic.co.uk

Success story:
benefits of online customer service

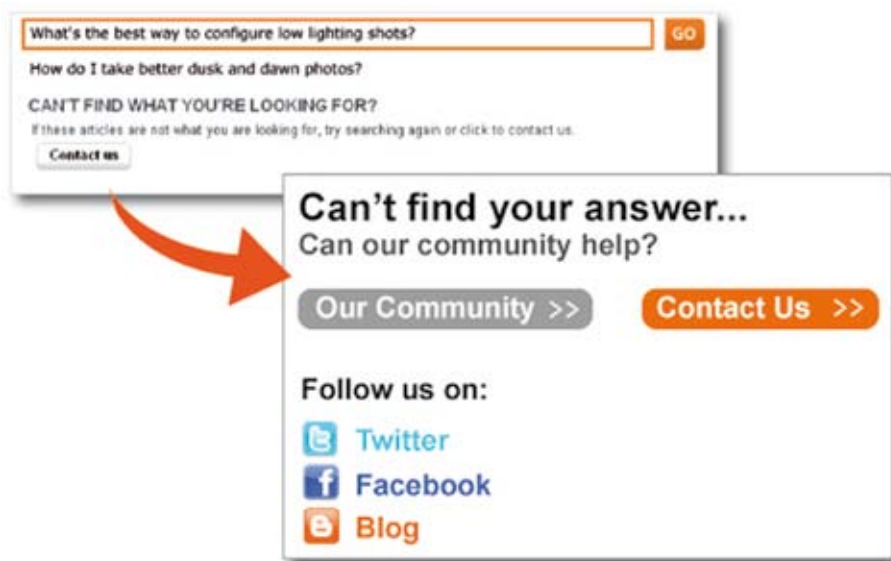
"First contact resolution for complex enquiries is increasing. Rather than telephoning or e-mailing an enquiry, customers are encouraged to get the support and information they need within a matter of minutes from our website,"
Patricia Hamed,
Manager of Customer Communications Centre, Panasonic UK.

Solution:
Eptica Self-service

7. Embrace social customer service within self-service

Social media is fast becoming a key channel for customer service, so make it part of your overall strategy.

1. Engage with your audiences on social media and make sure you're providing the same level of fast, accurate information as through online self-service and traditional channels.
2. Arm your staff operating in social media with the same information to make everything consistent.
3. Open your self-service system up and let customers use social bookmarking on your answers, making them your champions.
4. **Incorporate a direct link to your community from self-service** so that customers can also engage there for advice and information and use community knowledge to feed content back in to your self-service knowledge base.



As soon as you see an issue emerging within your community, such as an increasing number of complaints, you can be sure it's a problem that many more customers are having. Resolve the issue quickly, and ensure your community managers have a process for adding the same information quickly to your self-service knowledgebase for other customers to easily find.

This proactive approach will enable you to keep control of the customer relationship – whatever channel it is through and however social media evolves.



Integrate links to social networks within self-service

- Customers can seek answers from the community

Harvest social knowledge for insight and integrate with your self-service knowledge base.

Listen, Interact and respond to social media

- Scan social media to detect customer issues
- Use Eptica routing capabilities to route events to the right people in the company
- Use Eptica workflow to process and monitor these interactions

8. Speak your customers' language

Everyone is different, and the words and terms customers use aren't necessarily the ones you use corporately.

Make the effort to understand how consumers describe products, services and their needs and tailor self-service accordingly. Rather than rigidly forcing people to speak in a single way make sure that your self-service system understands different terms and multiple ways of saying the same thing, rather than sticking to rigid dictionary definitions.

- **Question:** Do you offer disabled facilities?
- **Suggested Answer:** Do you offer adapted holiday homes?

Advanced 'meaning based' search will answer questions that are beyond the understanding of keyword systems. Note how there is no keyword connection between this question and relevant answer.



This builds empathy with your customers and shows you really understand their needs and thought processes. **Haven Holiday's flexible self-service system understands the context of questions, returning fast answers whatever terms customers use.**



Haven holidays the leading provider of UK family holidays and short breaks.

www.haven.com

Success story: benefits of online customer service

- Holiday sales increased by 5%
- Inbound emails reduced by half
- Email handling time cut by 40%

Solution: Eptica Self-service and Email Management

9. Address the whole customer journey

People ask questions as they move through the customer journey, so make sure self-service is a central part of the process. Don't force people to detour to ask questions and then have to start again when they have the answer – adding extra twists and turns will cause customers to give up and leave your site. Understand where people are in the customer journey and make sure your answers are relevant, accurate and help them move onto the next stage. Keep momentum up by signposting ways of moving forward.

In the following example, Haven Holidays provides a complete answer to a customer enquiry about disabled facilities¹ as well as links through to the most suitable holiday camps², ensuring they can easily progress to the next step in the sales or information gathering process. Additionally, think about what other needs your customers might have.

The screenshot shows the Haven Holidays website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Need help?, How to book, Payments, and Contact Us. Below this is a search bar and a 'View Park' button. The main content area features a blue header with the text 'Ask a question' and 'Do you offer disabled facilities?'. A search button is visible to the right of the question. Below the question, there is a 'Haven Customer Support Menu' and a link to 'Our range of Holiday Homes'. The answer to the question is provided in a blue box, starting with 'Do you offer adapted Holiday Homes?'. The answer text states: 'We have a number of adapted Holiday Homes available for guests with varying disabilities. We understand how important it is that you receive an appropriate Holiday Home. So that we can meet your specific needs, bookings are handled by specialist advisors at our call centre and can not be booked on-line. They will be able to advise you on access to venues, Park layouts, car parking, local information etc. Registered Assistance dogs are allowed in all grades of accessible holiday homes at no extra charge. Please make your Holiday Advisor aware that you have an assistance dog at the time of making your booking.' Below the answer, there is a 'See also...' section with a link to 'Can I hire a wheelchair?'. At the bottom, there is a 'Did this answer your question?' section with 'Yes' and 'No' buttons, and a 'Contact Us' button.

Haven uses a See Also feature³ to deliver related information and pre-empt and address potential additional customer requirements – automatically.

10. Don't cut customers off from other contact channels

Web customer service answers the vast majority of routine queries, but more complex questions sometimes need different channels. Rather than forcing everyone to use online self-service do make other ways of communicating with you such as email or live chat easily accessible.

Offering customers who have spent some time on your self-service pages the opportunity to chat to a live agent provides added reassurance to customers and strengthens brand loyalty. It is also a cost-effective way of operating service related chat by engaging your agents with customers who have genuine product enquiries or problems.

Making other contact channels easily accessible doesn't mean they will be swamped – research shows that **approximately 5-10 per cent of customers will need to use other contact methods after asking a question through an effective Web self-service system.**

Cannot find what you were looking for?

Contact Us



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www.haven.com

Success story: benefits of online customer service

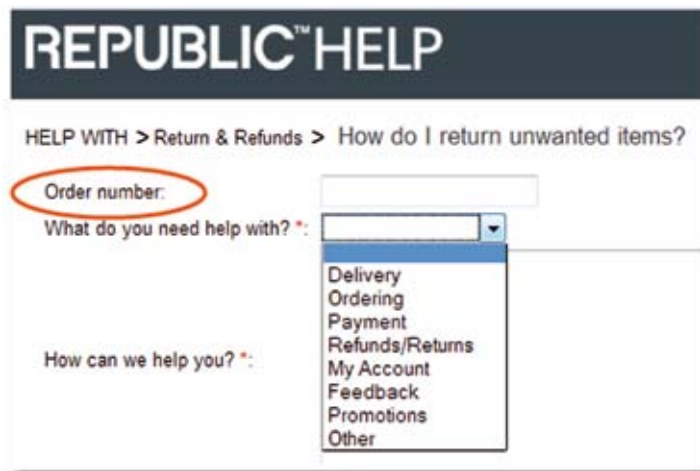
- Holiday sales increased by 5%
- Inbound emails reduced by half
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Solution: Eptica Self-service and Email Management

11. Capture key information in web forms

When customers do need to ask a question by email make sure you don't just give them a dumb email form to fill in. **Rather than a blank, unbranded white text box, use drop down menus and options to turn customer questions into intelligent communications.** At the very least this means you can automatically route queries to the best qualified agent, first time, improving response rates and customer satisfaction.

Taken further you can analyse questions asked, better understand customer needs and link information captured in your web forms to your CRM system to build a comprehensive picture of what people are looking for. The leading multi-brand fashion retailer uses this approach to speed up question answering, which is critical to the customer experience in its real-time, ultra competitive sector.



The screenshot shows the Republic HELP page. The breadcrumb trail is "HELP WITH > Return & Refunds > How do I return unwanted items?". The form contains the following fields:

- Order number:** A text input field, circled in red.
- What do you need help with? *:** A dropdown menu with the following options: Delivery, Ordering, Payment, Refunds/Returns, My Account, Feedback, Promotions, and Other.
- How can we help you? *:** A text input field.



Republic, the leading multi-brand fashion retailer and top 10 Hitwise ecommerce site.

www.republic.com

Success story: benefits of online customer service

- Only 6.7% of Republic self-service users escalate to email
- Email first contact resolution increased to 98%
- Email turnaround – 80% within 24 hours

Solution: Eptica Self-service and Email Management

12. Learn from your customers

Self-service gives unparalleled insight into what you customers are thinking and doing when it really counts – at the point of purchase, in real-time. Access this insight by monitoring the questions that your customers are asking and look for emerging trends and topics. Your SEO team can improve search engine rankings by using the terms and phrases that customers actually type in when they interact with you. Taking this feedback on board could mean changing content on your site, amending navigation or even provide the opportunity to launch new products or services and create new revenue streams.

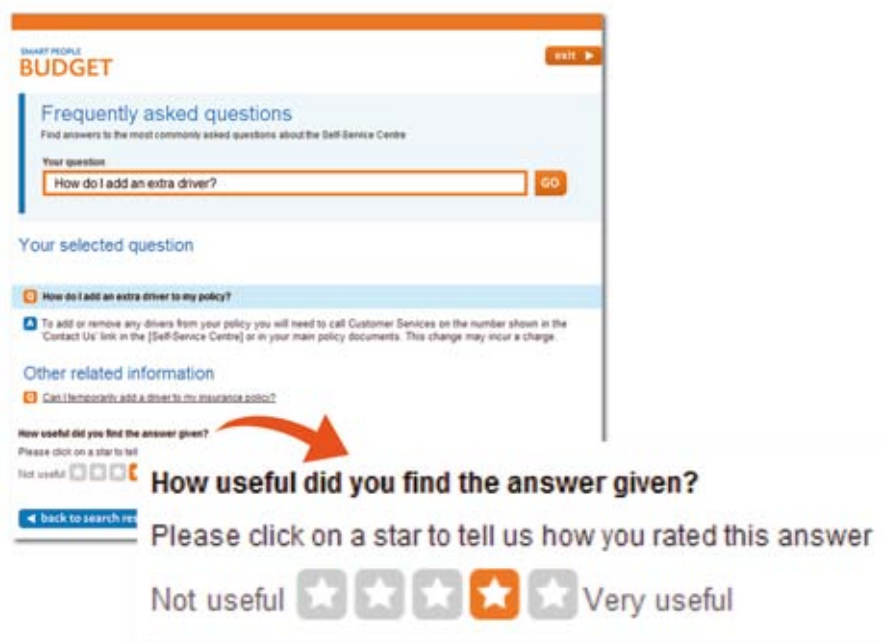
Understand the customer experience and gain feedback from monitoring ratings of your answers, your system's detailed reporting of searches and questions asked and by integrating self-service with your website analytics.



Budget Insurance one of the UK's leading insurance intermediaries, administering insurance for over two million customers.

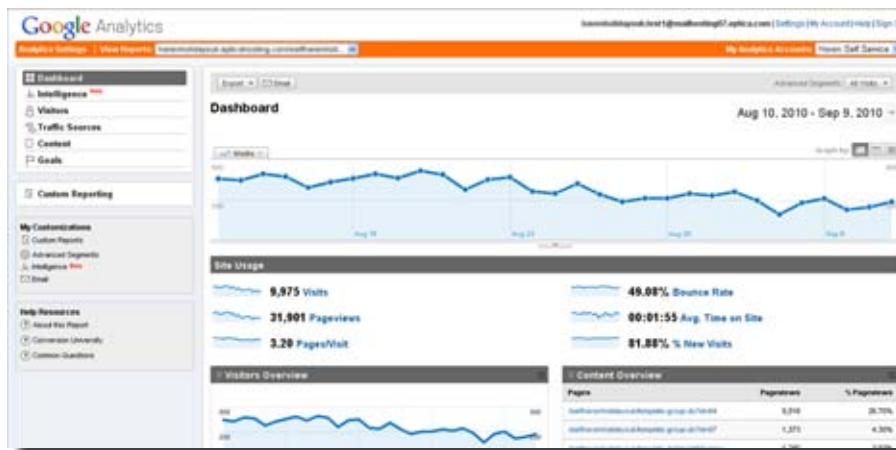
www.budgetinsurance.com

Solution:
Eptica Self-service



13. Use the power of analytics

Your website analytics software is already providing you with powerful and detailed tracking of customer behaviour including hotspots, dead zones and drop off points. But if there are usability issues with certain pages or content is missing or unclear your website analytics can't tell you what they actually are – but self-service can help. **Applying analytics to Web Self-service means you'll gain insight into customer behaviour that goes beyond statistics and page clicks by looking at the questions customers asked when they leave your web pages to seek help.** This wealth of insight is probably currently invisible to your overall analysis. However by making sure your self-service system applies analytics tracking codes to self-service content this will drive complete visibility of customer behaviour and make it an integral part of the site.



- **Ecommerce teams** can learn more about customer buying behaviour and optimise the company web presence to generate more revenue
- **SEO teams** will gain additional information to improve search engine ranking
- **Marketing teams** will gain insight into customer behaviour online and use it to create targeted web content and online campaigns
- And **customer service** can use the power of analytics to evolve online service, lower costs in the contact centre and ensure your service matches customer needs.

Web customer service provides the power to deliver the best possible customer experience across your business. Work with a technology partner that understands your needs and has the expertise to help you maximise the customer experience across your website.

Eptica provides web customer service systems for market leaders across the world, from Haven Holidays to Panasonic. To find out how we can help you visit www.eptica.com or contact us on: 01223 370 100.

Listen to the voice of
your customers:

They want good
service whichever
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www.eptica.com

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