



MAKE BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT EASY AND PLEASANT

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Research shows that people detest automated customer service. The *Austin American-Statesman* reported that "this category (of business practice) elicited one of the most negative reactions in the survey. Nearly every respondent - 94% - said it was 'very frustrating' to call a company and be greeted by a recording rather than a human being."

Despite such overwhelming thumbs-down, the call automation vendors keep pitching it and some otherwise smart companies keep buying it.

Why would companies do what they *know* their customers don't like? Three reasons: the economy, short horizons, and empathy deficit.

The economy. In tough times, the promise of cost savings via headcount reduction, supposedly offset by automation, can look very appealing. So when the vendor sings the song, struggling executives swoon, employees get pink slips, and customers suffer. Then things get worse ... because when the human factor leaves a business, so do customers. It is very hard and expensive to recover from this all-too-common engagement mistake.

Short horizons. Because business evolution is faster than it used to be, it has become fashionable ... perhaps too easy ... to automate as much as possible. The thinking is, "if we automate, we can change directions quickly." But when companies focus only on the short horizon, they lose sight of the long view. They try to change too quickly or too often and customers get left in the dust.

Empathy deficit. Some executives seldom if ever experience what it's like trying to do business with their own companies from the customers' perspectives. So they fail to recognize that automated transactions may be part of, but are not the same as, customer relationships.



Best Advice: People and automation are not mutually exclusive. Even in a tough economy, use the latter to augment the former, not necessarily to replace them. Keep your eyes and intellect on the long view even as you deal with the short horizon. Regarding empathy: get with your people, get with your customers, get real. Genuine engagement beats keystroking!

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