TOTO Energy CAB Customer service Star rating consultation response

Emails

Q1: Do you agree with our proposal to include email as a customer service metric?

We agreed that emails should be included in the rating.

Q2: Do you agree with our proposal to use percentage response time (within a certain number of days) as our measure of supplier performance?

We agree that percentage response time in the correct way to measure performance.

Q3: Do you agree with our proposal to measure response time to subsequent emails from consumers, following supplier responses, and to exclude response time to secondary messages?

We agree in principal with this proposal. However it might difficult to measure this as there is a risk of missing or double counting emails. Different email systems might treat secondary messages as new messages, or they might be treated as part of the original chain.

Customer behaviour might also impact things here, lots of customers will just reply to the most recent email they received from a company with a new question/complaint, regardless of the subject of the original email. The different ways this is dealt with might lead to miscounting.

For this to work we think you need to clearly define what counts as a subsequent message.

For example if a customer emails us with an issue and we respond asking them for more information, when they provide that additional information we currently do not count that as a new email interaction, even though there might have been several messages going back and forth.

Our system is set up to treat all email responses with the same subject line as the same matter for up to 7 days after resolution by the customer service agent. If a response from a customer comes more than 7 days after an email chain is marked as resolved it will open up an entirely new support ticket and it will be counted as a new email.

However, if a customer emails with a different subject line about the same matter we would count it as a new email – though it is possible to merge them in our systems.

Currently we am not sure which of the above situations would count as a "subsequent message" or not…

In addition to Cleary defining "subsequent message" you may also need to have separate data for response time to subsequent messages. Which could end up complicating the data somewhat and require some sort of weighting calculation for initial and subsequent response times.

Q4: Please share any relevant research you are aware of on customer expectations of email response time.

We are not aware of any research into customer expectations for emails.

Q5: Do you have any further comments on our proposal to include email as a customer service metric?

Nothing else.

Social media

Q6: Do you agree with our proposal to include social media as a customer service metric?

Yes we do agree with the proposal.

Q7: Do you agree with our proposal to measure Facebook and Twitter contacts, and to only measure direct messages?

We agree with using Facebook and Twitter but we also believe that you should also consider using Trustpilot in the social media categories. Lots of Energy consumers use Truspilot to make complaints – though leaving bad reviews/ questions in their comments.

We directly response to customer through Trustpilot and furthermore moany switching sites provide the Trustpilot score in the information provided to customers as additional information, meaning that Energy consumers are used to interacting through the site.

Q8: Do you agree with our not to make social media a mandatory contact channel, but to penalise suppliers who have a presence on social media but do not respond to customer queries via this channel?

We do not agree, we believe social media contact should be a mandatory contact channel. Many customers contact us through social media and the numbers are increasing each year. We have a dedicated social media team who are normally able to provide customer resolutions far faster than responding via email. This is a good service for customers and offers them an additional way of contacting us if they do not wish to use the phone/email.

The fact that we offer this additional and beneficial service should be recognised in the rankings. Many customers prefer using social media over traditional contact methods, and not including social media in the ranking would prevent those customers from being able to compare us with our competitors who do not offer social media contact channels.

If you are unwilling to make social media a mandatory contact channel for all suppliers, we do agree with the proposal to penalise suppliers who have a social media presence, but do not respond to customers on social media.

Q9: Do you agree with our proposal to change the wording around 'answered substantively' in our information request?

Yes we agree with the wording.

Q10: Please share any relevant research you are aware of on customer expectations of social media response time.

We are not aware of any research.

Q11: Do you have any further comments on our proposal to include social media as a customer service metric in the rating?

No further comment.

Webchat

Q12: Do you agree with our proposal not to include webchat as a customer service metric at this stage, but to keep it under review as part of future iterations of the rating?

We do not agree with the proposal, we believe web chat should be a mandatory feature of the rankings. As with social media mentioned above, many, many of our customer like the ability to get in contact with us very quickly using our webchat service. It is very popular with people who work during our office hours (so they can't call us) but they are able to use the webchat service from their desks.

The average resolution time from customer who use the webchat service is significantly better than email, and like social media the number of customers using the webchat service is increasing all of the time.

Similar to Social Media contact we are providing an additional customer service that many customer like, which our competitors are not providing. This additional service should be reflected in your rankings, so that customer who want the ability to interact via webchat are able to differentiate us from other suppliers not providing the service.

If suppliers are not currently offering webchat (or Social media contact) then mandatory inclusion in your rankings would be a very good incentive for them to start providing that service – this will in turn prompt other companies to do the same until it is a service provided by everyone – which will ultimately benefit the customer.

Q13: Do you have any further comments on webchat as a customer service metric?

Even companies are not able to provide accurate data about their interactions through webchat and social media perhaps you should include them in a similar way to the way

you include the Company Commitments – e.g. as yes/no answers – then when companies offer those service they get awarded a specific number of points in the ranking?

Q14: Do you agree with our proposal not to include telephone ringbacks and telephone abandonment rates as customer service metrics?

We agree with this.

Q15: Do you agree with our proposal for incorporating the new customer service metrics into the rating?

We broadly agree. We are happy with the removal of bill timeliness and the rebalancing of the billing weighting. However we believe that if you are to incorporate email, social media (and we would argue webchat) into the customer service category it then the weighting for Customer Service should increase from 25% of the total to 30% of the total.

In order for this to happen it would be necessary to reduce the weighting of the complaints category down to 30% to allow customers services to also be 30%. This way complaint and customer service have equal weighting, which I believe better reflects what customers expect – after all complaints generally only occur after there has already been poor customer service.

The 30% allocated to customer service could then be allocated with 15% towards calls – reflecting that they are still the most common communication channel and 15% for all other communications (social media, email, live chat etc, perhaps given 5% each)

Energy Industry Changes

Q16: Do you agree with our proposal to include the Energy UK Vulnerability Code of Practice in the rating?

We do not agree with this proposal. While we agree with the principals behind the Code of Practice, membership and adherence to industry codes of practice is often very time consuming and places an unnecessarily heavy burden on the limited resources of small energy companies. For example smaller suppliers might not have a mature enough MI department to provide all of the required data.

Therefore including an additional code of practise in the rankings unfairly benefits the larger suppliers who have the time and resources to demonstrate compliance with the code.

Q17: Do you have any comments on the broader role of the Company Commitments element of the star rating?

As stated above, we believe that the Company Commitments section of the rankings unfairly benefit the larger suppliers who have the capacity to comply with the administrative (and financial) obligations that voluntary codes come with.

Even a quick look at your current rankings will show you that it is possible to be a very good supplier without gaining any points in the "Customer guarantees" section (e.g. Igloo Energy). Therefore it is arguable that the stars associated with the Company Commitments sections are redundant.

Furthermore, it is actually slightly odd that you are willing to award ranking points for the Company Commitments – which customers do not understand and unfairly benefit larger suppliers, but you are reluctant to make livechat and social media contact mandatory - when they provide an obvious benefit directly to customers and there is no serious obstacles to any company (large or small) being able to provide those services.

Q18: Do you have any comments on the opportunity to dispute the reports from the Energy Ombudsman in the star rating processes?

No comments on this point

Q19: Do you have any comments on the proposal to align the star rating measure of switching timeliness with Ofgem's proposals?

No comments on this point