



special report:

**TESTING THE IMPACT OF ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST
COMMUNICATION SKILL ON NET PROMOTER SCORES**

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testing the impact of...

ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST COMMUNICATION SKILL ON NET PROMOTER SCORES

In 2003, Fred Reichheld developed the Net Promoter Score (NPS) as a single-item measure of customer loyalty, asserting that NPS serves as a better predictor of brand performance than customer satisfaction.¹ Since the development of NPS, many companies across a wide spectrum of industries have adopted it as a key indicator of performance. NPS, as measured by the likelihood of recommending², is influenced by multiple aspects of the customer experience, including: marketing messages, advertising campaigns, and Internet presence (e.g. Payne et al. 2008; Voss et al. 2008).

However, STARTEK has discovered that one of the most influential impacts on NPS is the communication skill of engagement specialists. That's because customers often enter conversations with a perceptible degree of both stress and frustration, giving engagement specialists a pivotal opportunity to influence NPS.

the numbers tell the story

Recently, STARTEK conducted a study designed to assess the impact of engagement specialist behavior on willingness to recommend the brand. Customers of a large company in the healthcare industry were asked to respond to a post-call survey that measured multiple perceptions, including: (1) engagement specialist friendliness, (2) engagement specialist helpfulness, (3) engagement specialist effectiveness, (4) engagement specialist impact on brand, (5) issue resolution, (6) satisfaction with the product/service, and (7) willingness to recommend the brand.

Results (see Figure 1.1) showed that a customer's perception of the engagement specialist's communication skillset (friendliness, helpfulness, effectiveness, and impact) is directly related to the customer's willingness to recommend the brand.¹

Perception of an engagement specialist's communication skill also had a direct impact on satisfaction with products and services, which in turn, also strongly influences NPS. In other words, engagement specialists have the opportunity to frame a customer's situation in ways that impact the customer's perception of the brand. The study also showed that the engagement specialist's communication skill mitigates the relationship between issue resolution and willingness to recommend the brand.¹

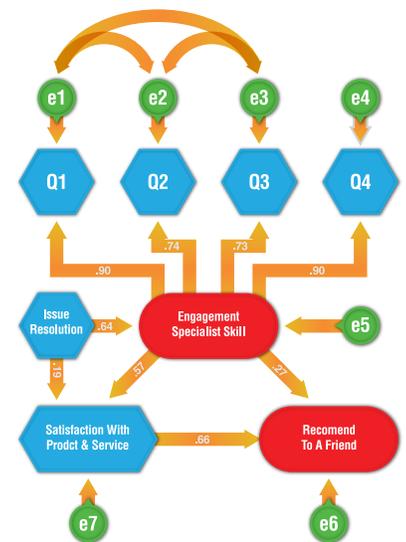


Figure 1.1: Structural equation model of recommend to friend (NPS) indicating the impact of engagement specialist skill on Net Promoter Scores.

the communication skills that impact NPS and satisfaction

As demonstrated in the survey, engagement specialists have an ideal opportunity to influence how customers view and talk about your brand. This is especially true in situations where complications arise and the opportunity to impact NPS and satisfaction is the highest. These situations include issues such as financial problems, product delays, or service failures.

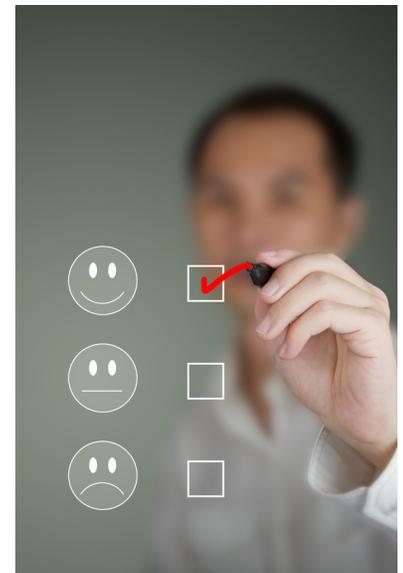
Because your engagement specialists impact NPS and satisfaction, improving their communication skills—particularly in situations where there are complications—can help you move the needle on performance metrics. For instance, engagement specialists skilled in dialogue³ take full advantage of this opportunity by reframing complications as temporary and fixable. They educate the customer so that uncertainty does not lead to anxiety. They also employ skills to defuse frustration, manage identity in confirming ways, and engage in rapport building. All of this produces a professional, spontaneous, and impactful conversation.

one company's experience with improving the conversation

By implementing a solution that promotes dialogue and uses the science of communication to connect emotionally with customers, solve issues, and improve brand perception, you can empower your engagement specialists to improve NPS and satisfaction.

A leading telecommunications company deployed a solution based on the principles of dialogue that helped its 5,000 engagement specialists build meaningful and individualized conversations with customers to achieve:

- 10% improvement in NPS
- 18% increase in unsolicited compliments
- 26% decrease in escalations
- No sustained increase in Average Handle Time
- Achieved the JD Power Customer Service Award for the first time



applying these findings to transform your business

The STARTEK study demonstrated the impact of the communication skill of engagement specialists on NPS and customer satisfaction. While understanding the impact is straightforward, turning the information into actionable steps to transform the conversation and customer care is the big challenge.

STARTEK can help your company achieve its customer-facing performance metrics using engagement-driven solutions that are based on proven communication research and neuroscience advances. We'll help you bridge the gap between science and practice to improve engagement specialist and customer conversations.

About STARTEK

World class customer engagement starts with world class conversations – and that's where we come in. We're STARTEK, and we specialize in orchestrating the ideal customer experience at the point of conversation between you and your customers. Powered by the science of dialogue, our customer engagement specialists and communication scientists understand the human component of the contact center better than anyone. In fact, our omni-channel engagement solutions have helped countless brands, including JD Power award-winning companies, connect emotionally, solve issues, and improve net promoter scores. Whether engaging on the phone, online, in person, in your contact center or in ours, STARTEK can help you turn your strong customer relationships into unbreakable ones. Because the outcome of every conversation matters.

To learn more visit www.startek.com.

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¹ Reichheld (2003) asserted that the NPS serves as a better predictor of brand performance than the American Customer Satisfaction Index. Empirical studies of this claim, however, have not provided support to the superiority of the NPS over traditional measures of customer satisfaction.

² Although the NPS originally defined promoters as 9-10 and detractors as 0-6, alternative strategies have been used to reflect differences in national cultures. For example, Doom, Leeftant, and Tijs (2013) classified the rating of 8 as a promoter with Dutch customers because customer evaluation scores are typically lower in the Netherlands (c.f., United States).

³ See *Designing Engagement Specialist-Customer Conversations* for more information about Dialogue.

