

THE **PROS** AND **CONS** OF USING THE SOCIAL MEDIA IN A CUSTOMER SERVICE

So you want to support your customers on Social Media? Really?

Nixxis, a software developer for contact centres active in more than 30 countries and growing by more than 20% per year, shakes the house when it comes to supporting customers over today's social media.

Every company wants to make it easy to be contacted by customers. And that's fair!

Still sharing your customer's personal data and conversation on any media out there is something you should be carefully thinking about.

Indeed, since the 80's the call centre world has witnessed several waves of technology trends and innovations. It all started with the ACD (Automatic Call Distribution) and IVR (Interactive Voice Response) platforms for the inbound call centre that improved already a lot the call distribution and handling time compared to the standard circular or "round robin" distribution of calls.

For the outbound call centre, the predictive dialer and the answering machine detection systems allowed to highly improve the productivity of call centre agents.

In the near future, "Chat Bots" (for chat robots) are very trendy and might one day replace humans in interacting with customers and providing customer services and support via social media like Facebook pages, Messenger, WhatsApp, WeChat or Twitter.

Today, social media is actually falling into the category of a "free media" after all and by all means is not really "free" for everyone; it is based on one main source of revenue: Advertising.

So, here is the way how a "free" social media is financed: it



gathers all possible information about you, your needs, your life and then offers this data to advertisers in an unprecedented way. Actually, they can target potential customers so precisely that the efficiency of the marketing money invested in social media advertising is almost never wasted and close to 100%. This is something that marketers have never experienced before.

But of course, every coin has two sides...



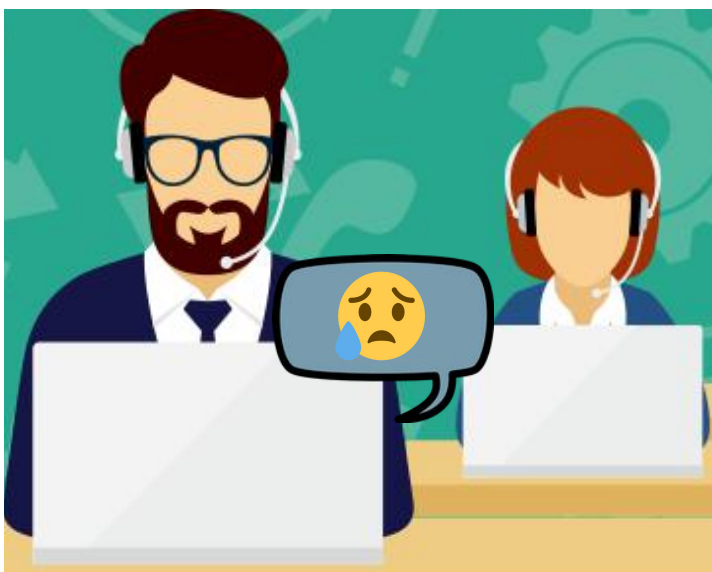
Actually, there are only a few companies like Facebook that control Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram or Google that controls Gmail, Google Search (65% of all searches worldwide), YouTube and Waze are gathering all those data about your private and public life. Only these two companies are representing 50% of all Digital Marketing spending worldwide. And why is it so? Simply because it works!

Globally, only 8 companies in the world (including China) are centralizing 80% of all the personal and company data ever published on the internet: Facebook, Google, Twitter, Apple, Amazon, Tencent, Alibaba and Microsoft. So, it's not really "Big Brother", but "Band of Brothers"!

Actually, the rest of the 20% are owned by States, your Bank, Insurance, Energy and Telecom companies. But even then, I am sure that by searching your Gmail account comprehensively, we could find your passport number or your bank account numbers!

So, when you talk about supporting your customers on social media, let me tell you a little story.

In the early days of 2016, a large European airline of which I will not reveal the name here, decided to add a "Messenger Us" button (the Facebook messaging platform) on their website. The idea was that you could not only get your flight confirmations in there but whenever you needed to talk to someone from the airline, you simply push this button and you were connected via your mobile or PC to somebody from that airline customer service. Great idea isn't it!?



Of course sooner rather than later, people started to have questions about their airline tickets, so they start to chat with them on Messenger and the conversation would go something like this:

"Hello, I am Mr. Smith from Amsterdam and I have a problem because I need to reschedule my flight to Toronto that was foreseen for next Tuesday to the Tuesday of the following week. My reservation number is XXXX"

And the customer service representative to respond:

"Hello Mr. Smith, of course we can reschedule these flights for you but since you booked Economy, there will be an extra charge of 58€. Do you want us to charge this on your registered credit card?"

Etcetera etcetera, the conversation continues verifying the customer identity and so on.

Now, everything would be good and in the best of world except for one thing:

A few days later, that specific customer, Mr. Smith, started to see advertising to win free flights to Toronto on his Facebook page (you know, the "sponsored" publications on mobile and Facebook advertising on the right of a PC page). The only problem was that these advertisements were not coming from the airline with which Mr. Smith had a reservation but they came from their main competitors on that destination, United Airlines. Basically, their US based competitor was trying to lure this customer away.

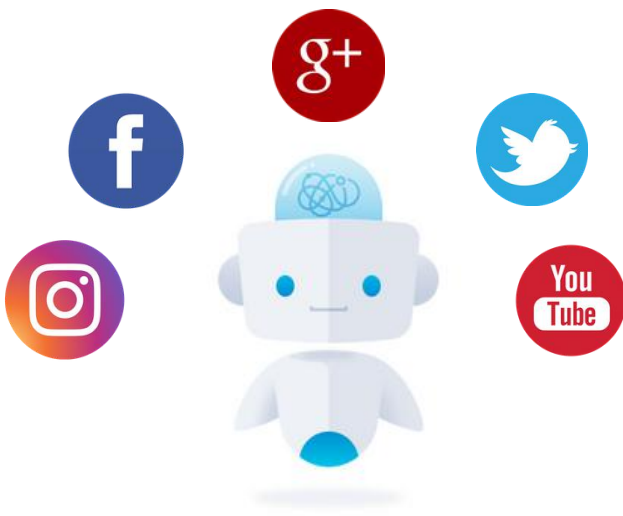
Shocked by the fact that somebody had listened into Mr. Smith's conversation with his airline, he reported this to the customer support of his beloved airline and it took only 15 minutes before the Vice-President Customer Relation of that European airline had the "Messenger Us" button removed!

I could give you similar examples with Gmail but also with Facebook publications where even the pictures published are scanned by Artificial Intelligence algorithms in order to define your interest and tastes. Yes, even the pictures (soon videos?). Try this for a while: create a brand new account on Facebook and start publishing pictures of cars without saying or commenting anything. And have a look a few days later on the advertisements that will be proposed to you...

My advice: use social media as a kind of a fish net or even better, a butterfly net, in order to catch your potential customers flying around the bushes of your competitors, maybe because they are unhappy with your service or theirs.

But then, as soon as you need to have a private conversation with them about something you do not want to be known on public places, do it on a media that YOU can control like telephone or online chat and this in a fully private way.

Finally, nothing different of what you would do with your friends or family!



Luc Francis Jacobs
Chief Executive Officer
Nixxis Corporation

All this for one and only objective: the ability to target you in the most precise way about your lifestyle, the places you go, the interests you have, etc... Big Brother is actually not only watching you, he is trying to sell to you!

Another example? Ask yourself why Apple's Facebook page is completely blank? (www.facebook.com/apple) They have more than 8 million fans and still except for a few pictures not one single post has been posted or commented by Apple! Does it mean that Apple does not make any advertising campaign on Facebook? Of course they do, but they do it in a way that is called "dark marketing"; trying to gather information about people using competitive phones, like the ones running on android for example.

So, do not get me wrong: I am not saying you should not be present on social media; it is a very efficient way today to get your brand known and to have your best customers, your fans, talk well about you to their friends, to the community and yes also to your competitors.