Selling Premium Technical Support to Your Consumer Customers: A Best Practices Guide

AppHelp

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Our lifestyles today revolve around the digital world and connectivity. From our phones to our televisions, our thermostats to our cars, we're becoming increasingly reliant on technology as a core component of both the mundane, everyday things we use like lights in our house, to the more personal help we get from wearables that provide us with information about our health.

All our devices—and the software that we run on them—must work correctly, connect correctly, and protect us from cyberattack correctly. However, the more technology that we deploy, the more complex our environment becomes, as operating systems, APIs, modem firmware, applications and other software all must understand and communicate with each other across different manufacturers.

That's why technical support for consumers is a growing need, and one that service providers are ideally positioned to provide. Service providers can offer one-stop shopping for consumers for connectivity, mobile phones, content, security and smart home solutions, and the support to keep it all working. Research by Parks Associates reveals more than one-fifth of U.S. broadband households have a technical support subscription.[1]

Offering technical support to your consumer customers not only creates a new revenue stream for your business, but helps you improve customer satisfaction, which in turn drives loyalty and higher customer lifetime value. With the fierce competition facing service providers today, offering technical support that helps deepen customer engagement and improve stickiness is becoming imperative.

However, marketing and selling consumer technical support is different than going to market with products and services from your traditional lines of business. Read on for best practices gleaned from experience across many service providers that

[1] Over 20% of U.S. Broadband Households Have a Technical Support Subscription," Parks Associates, August 8, 2017.

can help you go to market more quickly and successfully with premium technical support for your consumer customers.

442 **million** connected devices will be sold in the U.S. by 2020.

Understanding the Growing Connected-Consumer Opportunity

It seems as if virtually everything is connected to the Internet and other devices today, from refrigerators to fitness trackers, baby monitors to media players, and much more. The sheer volume and size of the device market is enormous:

> 5 billion unique mobile subscribers in 2017[2]

> 3.8 billion people using Internet in 2017[3]

> 5.2 billion connected "things" in use by consumers worldwide in 2017[4]

> 121.7 million wearable devices are expected to ship in 2017, a 16.6 percent increase from 2016[5]

> $53.45 billion global smart home market by 2022[6]

Today, even the most technology-adept consumers sometimes need help getting the Internet of Things (IoT) in their lives to work, whether that's computer hardware and software, smart TVs, smart appliances, security sensors, gaming devices, mobile devices, peripherals, wearables, and more. And for consumers who are less adept at technology, it's a struggle to make anything and everything work as advertised.

For smart thermostats alone, Accenture estimates that once consumers have chosen a specific product, 54 percent experience challenges:[7]

> 14 percent find it too complex to use

> 13 percent cannot connect to the Internet

> 12 percent have problems with the set up

> 11 percent find that it does not work as advertised

The bottom line is that your customers need help that goes beyond understanding whether their broadband service is up or down. And they are seeking out bundled solutions that get them the convenience, ease of use, and assistance they need.

Taking Advantage of New Business Models and Revenue Streams

As consumers look to adopt IoT, smart home devices, and other connected technology, service providers are ideally positioned to help consumers interconnect their lives and deliver the support consumers need to keep it all working together.

2 GSMA Intelligence, October 2017.

3 Internet World States.com, June 30, 2017.

4 "Gartner Says 8.4 Billion Connected 'Things' Will Be in Use in 2017, Up 31 Percent from 2016," Gartner, February, 7, 2017.

5 "Growth in Wearables Shows No Signs of Wearing Out with Double-Digit Gains Forecast Through 2021, According to IDC," IDC, September 14, 2017.

6 "Smart Home Market Size & Share Will Hit $54.45 Billion by 2022," Zio Market Research, April 12, 2017.

7 "The Race to the Smart Home," Accenture, 2017

After all, service providers already have a substantial customer base and have invested in building relationships with their customers.

According to an Accenture survey, 80 percent of consumers want a single provider for all of their digital needs. And 71 percent would choose a communication service provider for their connected home. According to Accenture, "CSPs could offer convenient support across all digital needs and assure that users only access devices and services that are safe and easy to use."[8]

The competition for the consumer premium technical support market is already heating up, with Amazon entering into the fray with its Amazon Home Services offering. According to Parks Associates, while Best Buy is currently the leading provider of technical support for connected devices, the market is fragmented, with "no single player having more than one-third of support subscribers for any device."[9]

To capture a significant portion of this lucrative, growing market, service providers must be prepared to establish competitive advantage and convey the benefits of technical support subscriptions and services to their customer base with marketing and sales best practices. Read on for proven ways that your organization can use to successfully sell premium technical support services.

Go-to-Market Best Practice: Create Value-Added Bundles

Consumers frequently show a preference for one-stop shopping. At the same time, many consumers aren't aware of the value and need for technical support (until issues arise). That's why an important best practice for successfully selling premium technical support is to create value-added service (VAS) bundles that pair services with other solutions that you offer.

Combining premium technical support with other services and solutions lets your sales teams offer turnkey solutions to your customers. Turnkey solutions provide consumers with everything they need for their connected lifestyles and homes without the hassle or delay of trying to do it all themselves.

For example, consider bundling services such as device protection, security, and online backup with core services as part of a single premium support subscription. Your bundle could include malware and fraud protection, mobile security, and parental controls as well as backing up your customers' data with continuous file protection and file versioning, end-to-end data encryption, and complete system recovery.

WHAT ARE PREMIUM TECHNICAL SUPPORT SERVICES?

Premium technical support services provide remote help to consumers to install, manage, and resolve issues across devices, networks, and software, including those not sold by your company.

8 Ibid.

9 "Over 20% of U.S. Broadband Households Have a Technical Support Subscription," Parks Associates, August, 8, 2017
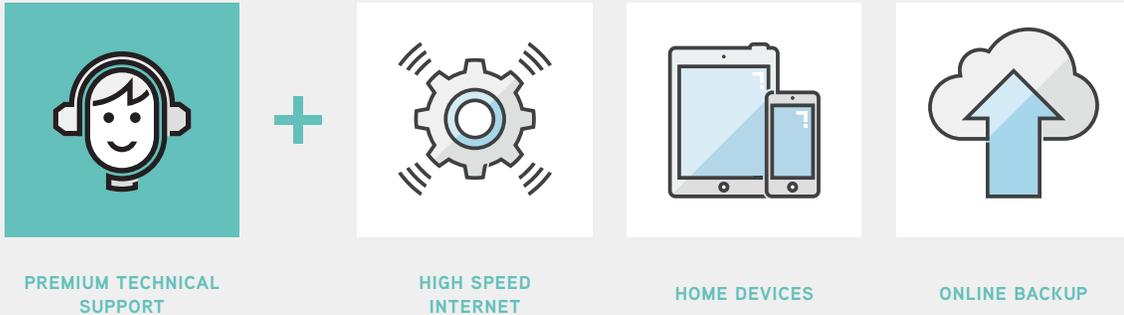
PREMIUM SUPPORT BUNDLE

PREMIUM TECHNICAL SUPPORT + **HIGH SPEED INTERNET**   **HOME DEVICES**   **ONLINE BACKUP**

FIGURE 1: **EXAMPLE OF A VALUE-ADDED SERVICE BUNDLE**

Here's another tip for creating bundles: It helps to have a cloud commerce platform in place that gives you the flexibility to create your own bundles, using various SKUs and add-ons that you determine your customers need. The right platform creates a centralized location for merchandising, selling, and provisioning your bundles.

Go-to-Market Best Practice: Engage all Channels

A key element to driving success in selling premium technical support services is to engage all of your company's channels that can identify the underserved technology support needs of your consumer customer base. Most service providers have a variety of customer-facing teams that can participate in uncovering these needs.

"Most consumers just want connectivity, gadgets and services to work, without having to think about purchasing or programming them. The company that provides the most desirable package of converged services, with the highest convenience, wins the customer."

SOURCE: ACCENTURE, "**THE RACE TO THE SMART HOME**," 2017

SALES:

Obviously, field sales and inside sales teams are prime channels for selling premium technical support services. However, the breadth of solutions available from most service providers can create challenges for sales teams when they are asked to begin selling new, non-core services such as technical support. In addition, most sales professionals will naturally focus on services they are most familiar with, as well as ones that can generate the highest commissions and greatest quota relief. It's critical that your company includes premium technical support services in your standard sales and incentive programs at

levels that are sufficient to incent team members to include these services in conversations with customers.

On what should that incentive be based? Premium technical support services can make a significant contribution to customer loyalty and retention for your core services. This contribution to core revenue should be reflected in the level of incentive and quota relief associated with selling premium technical support services. The bundling strategy outlined earlier can also increase the average revenue per user (ARPU) impact associated with selling these services.

FIELD SERVICES:

Field service teams represent a tremendous lead source for generating demand for premium technical support services. Customers often ask technicians about IT challenges they face, and your technicians can see first-hand which customers lack support for their connected devices. Creating lucrative referral programs for your field service staff can generate highly qualified leads that your sales teams can convert into premium technical support subscription sales.

MERCHANDISING:

Premium technical support services are a natural companion to many existing offerings available in your company's consumer marketplace. Position and promote premium technical support subscriptions with any of your services that include a device such as cable, Internet, mobile, smart home and home security offerings.

TIER I INTERNET BROADBAND SUPPORT:

Every day, service providers field calls from broadband subscribers who cannot access the Internet and assume that the fault lies with the internet service. AppHelp research shows that as many as 20 percent of these calls are out-of-scope issues originating in the customer's device or computer, which in many cases represents a malware or virus infection. With premium technical support, you can offer these customers the opportunity to speak to a specialized support team that can quickly and inexpensively solve their issue.

Go-to-Market Best Practice: Invest in Training

This best practice is concomitant with the previous one about engaging all channels. To activate and engage your channels effectively you need to invest in effective training. All stakeholders across your channels need to receive the appropriate level of training suited to their roles.

For instance, your sales teams need training on how best to position and sell premium technical support services. Your field services staff need training on how to speak with customers about their technical support needs. Likewise, you should provide training to your internet support staff about your technical support offering and when to suggest it to a customer calling with an internet issue.

If you're working with a partner to deliver white-label technical support, your partner can be an excellent resource for not only training content and curriculum, but help in training the "trainers" in your organization to get them up to speed quickly.

Go-to-Market Best Practice:
Work with an Experienced Partner

Unlike the types of services your company may offer for its own products, supporting your customers with a premium technical support service often requires a substantially different approach. Because you need to be prepared to support many different products and user ecosystems (devices, browsers, networks, and more), it can be time consuming and expensive to staff, train and manage delivery of premium technical support services.

Instead, you can look for a partner that offers end-to-end, white-label premium technical support. By partnering with an established, cloud-application customer care provider, you can focus on selling and marketing your value-added service bundles while your partner quickly and effectively delivers the support your customer base seeks.

Look for a provider that offers:

> White-label support for mobile, PC, and connected home technology

> Strong technical skills and broad expertise

> Multilingual and 24/7 support

> Custom tools and best-of-breed technology for solving technical support problems

Conclusion

Offering consumer premium technical support services represents a major opportunity for service providers to protect and grow their customer base. However, serving this market and growing your market share means taking a different approach than with business customers, one that delivers education on how a premium technical support service gives them a place to turn to when they need help.

Providing a premium technical support service can be a valuable tool for service providers to not only grow incremental income, but improve customer satisfaction and loyalty by solving their technology assistance needs. Using the best practices outlined in this guide, your company can bring a robust premium technical support service to market and maximize the penetration and benefit of this service across your residential subscriber base.

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ABOUT APPHELP FROM APPDIRECT

AppHelp delivers solutions that help businesses and consumers be successful with their adoption and use of the latest in technology and cloud services. By leveraging a unique combination of technology and human capital, AppHelp ensures customers have the support they need as they traverse the customer journey.

With millions of technical support incidents solved and decades of experience assisting people with technology, AppHelp is proud to power the technical support programs for premier brands across the globe, including: Comcast, Cincinnati Bell, Rogers, Bell, Telus, Windstream, Virgin Media, Panda Security, and more.

For more information contact **info@appdirect.com** or visit **www.appdirect.com/products/apphelp**.

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