The role and benefit of an end customer portal

Executive Summary

Over the last few years, and into the next few, our industry will have seen huge leaps in technology, behaviours and industry compliance. These factors have collectively resulted in one major behavioural change which is causing resellers to rethink how they service their end customers. Businesses now expect the same level of service and means of interaction in their work relationships, as they get in their personal lives.

This behavioural change is driving the need for self-service and a proactive, personalised customer experience. Resellers are relying on software to do the heavy lifting on these aspects. In this article we will explore the role and benefit of an end customer portal as an essential tool for you to delight your existing customers and attract new ones. Read on to find out more about why and how to:

- Enhance your product offering with an end customer portal.
- Use a portal that's tightly integrated to your billing system.
- Delight your customers and lower your cost of service.
- Empower your end customers to take control of their spending.
- Offer your customers convenient, autonomous self-service.

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Enhance your product offering with an end customer portal

An end customer portal can elevate your product offering. Using your branding and messaging, it can become an extension of your website. It can also be used as a tool to upsell and cross sell products across your portfolio to your existing customers.

Ofcom are making it easier than ever to change provider, and customers are looking at more than just price when they make their decision. It's therefore more important than ever that MSPs and resellers can provide positive experiences for their end customers using their software wherever possible. If you get the features and functions of a portal right, it can become an integral part of your product offering. A powerful way of enhancing customer experience and attracting new customers.

In a recent survey of our partners, 81% of respondents said that an end customer portal is extremely important when pitching for new business. This supports and proves the increasing need to find new ways of differentiating within the market and meeting new customer demands and ways of working.

Use a portal that's tightly integrated to the billing system

The billing system is often the only place a reseller can access a single view of an end customer and the various products and services they use. This is why the billing system is the perfect place to look at adding other functionality. The most logical place to start with an add on to a billing system is with an end customer portal.

Your customers should be able to access their bills online, removing the need for you to send them out via post, or even via email. Maybe more important than viewing their bills is the ability to interrogate the data. It's not only billed data that is important but also being able to access up to date unbilled data. With access to unbilled data your customers can keep track of their spending in real time.

Having an end customer portal that's tightly integrated to the billing system ensures that the information and data being provided within the portal is in line with the latest data available in the billing system. In a recent Comms Business article, Founder and Managing Director of Abillity partner Eclipse Wholesale, James Drake said, "Because Abillity automates the collection, import, and rating of supplier CDRs, our portal always provides up-to-date information on end customers' usage, 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

There is no doubt that giving end customers access to their bills and data is crucial, but as we'll explore in this article, a powerful end customer portal will go beyond accessing billing data.
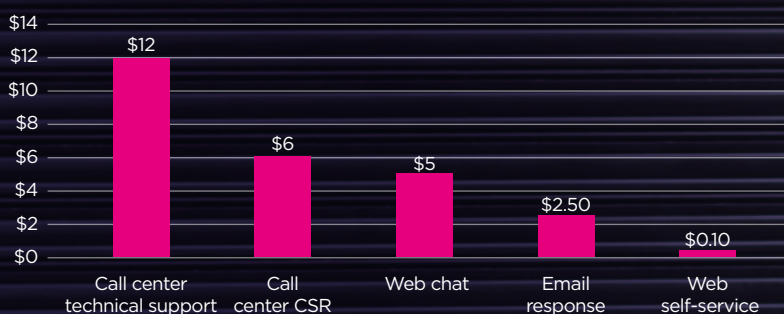
Delight your customers and lower your cost of service

The consumerisation of B2B customer service means that business customers are demanding to be able to do more for themselves. Super Office confirm that "Self-service is no longer a "nice to have". It's a necessity to providing a positive customer experience. In fact, it has become so important that 70% of customers now expect a company's website to include a self-service application."

Contact Babel reported in their UK Customer Experience Decision-Makers' Guide 2022/23, that "Web self-service is … seen as being of positive benefit to the customer experience, and … it has significant benefits to the business too."

Adding self service capabilities into your end customer portal will result in fewer inbound calls. Your customers will be able to help themselves with simple queries, resulting in an overall lower cost of service for you. Forrester Research and Oracle analysed business costs across multiple customer service channels and found that "web self-service can reduce costs by as much as $11 per call!"

Approx. Cost per contact ($ USD)

Channel	Cost
Call center technical support	$12
Call center CSR	$6
Web chat	$5
Email response	$2.50
Web self-service	$0.10

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Empower your end customers to take control of their spending

Affordability and fairness for customers has been a concern for Ofcom for several years. There is now an expectation for resellers to be proactive and to protect their customers from being hit with bill shock. The economic climate we've experienced in the last couple of years means that right now:

1. Your end customers are relying on you to be considerate with your charging.
2. Your priority is to make it as easy as possible for your customers to sign off each invoice, pay on time and in full.

Offering your customers a portal which includes self service capabilities in relation to their billing enables you to empower them to take control of their own spending. This takes some of the pressure off you, while also giving your customers what they want - to do more for themselves and feel more in control.

Giving end customers access to manage alerts and limits in relation to their billing ensures that they are always well informed, in control, and can amend the thresholds to suit their changing business needs.

Offer your customers convenient, autonomous self-service

With an 'always on' lifestyle and flexible working becoming an everyday norm in today's businesses, your customers may not be sticking to the 9-5 to ask for changes to be made. The majority of them would prefer to be able to serve themselves, whenever they need to.

Simple account information, cost centres and users can change often in some businesses. It may become a support burden for you to manage all these changes on your customer's behalf. Mobile estates can also be particularly time consuming to manage. Requests such as barring, and SIM swaps are likely to come in out of hours and at weekends if devices get lost or stolen.

Giving your customers access to make simple changes themselves allows them to perform the actions that are important to them, anytime and anywhere, resulting in a faster resolution time and a higher level of customer satisfaction.

Giacom's Cloud Market Tools

At Giacom, we offer a range of software tools that will tick all the boxes for you and your end customers. Use the link below for an overview of the features your customers can enjoy, and the benefits you can achieve from our Self-Serve product.

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