

US Wireless Services & Social Customer Care:  
What Good Looks Like



- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Twitter customer care performance
- ▶ Analysis
- ▶ Closing thoughts

The U.S Wireless industry is one of intense competition and aggressive price wars. Although the larger, more established brands are under constant threat from disruptive newcomers looking to meet the expectations of the modern consumer, the market is still an oligopoly with huge barriers to entry.

Whilst benefitting hugely from the rapid development and proliferation of mobile devices, several big players are guilty of going stagnant in an area which will ultimately prove to be a key differentiator: customer service. We predict that over the next five years, brand success will be fought on the frontlines of customer care as companies adapt to the needs of a mobile, social generation that is well-informed and willing to switch provider with little provocation. This report takes a look at a selection of US wireless providers and measures their social customer service performance.

Table 1: No. of Subscribers (millions):

Verizon	134m
AT&T	122m
Sprint	57m
T-Mobile USA	57m
US Cellular	4.7m

Verizon is the most popular by subscriber number, but how does it rank in terms of the care it shows to subscribers? According to one review website, [www.tomsguide.com](http://www.tomsguide.com) ('Cell Carrier Tech Support Grades 2015') the order of the top four would change:

AT&T (93/100)  
Sprint (90/100)  
Verizon (87/100)  
T-Mobile USA (85/100)

\*US Cellular not included

# Introduction

At Conversocial, we champion customer service over social media and how it works as part of the contact center. We champion **Social First™**.

**#SocialFirst** is about adopting social customer service and adapting to its culture with confidence at scale to meet your customers where they are, on the first channel they own. With **#SocialFirst**, real service means real engagement that will disrupt markets and diminish competitors.

Using our custom built [Twitter Tracker](#) tool, we analysed the Twitter activity of some leading US wireless providers and also added some Social First indicators. We measured:

- ▶ What volume they see on a weekly basis
- ▶ How responsive the Twitter account is
- ▶ How long on average they take to respond
- ▶ Does the operation strive to achieve In-channel resolution
- ▶ Does the company show proactive support for service over social

*Handles measured: @sprintcare, @VZWSupport, @USCellularCares, @TMobileHelp, @ATTCares*

## The Five Pillars of Social First:

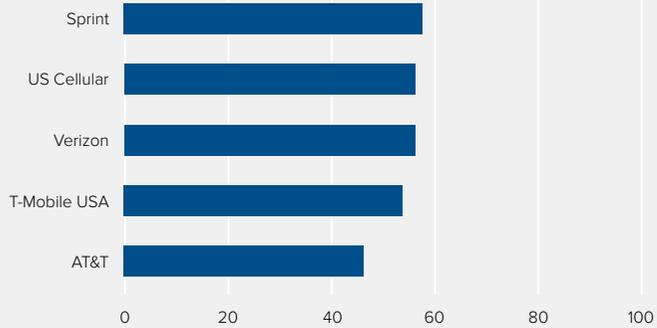
- 1 Proactive engagement on the preferred channel of the social, mobile customer
- 2 Going above and beyond customer expectations
- 3 Making service on social channels accessible and known
- 4 Connecting with your customers on a personal and emotional level
- 5 Leveraging social's public nature to maximize brand equity

We used the Twitter Search API to find mentions (up to 2001 max) of each Twitter handle in July 2015. We then gathered and matched the replies to those mentions and calculated the time taken in each case, excluding the slowest 5% of tweets (which can otherwise disproportionately affect the results). Please contact us if you would like more information on the Conversocial Twitter Tracker.



# Results

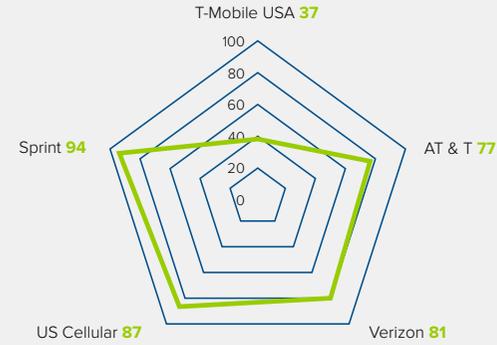
**Chart 1: Responsiveness (%)**



Most Responsive: **Sprint** 🏆

Least Responsive: **AT&T**

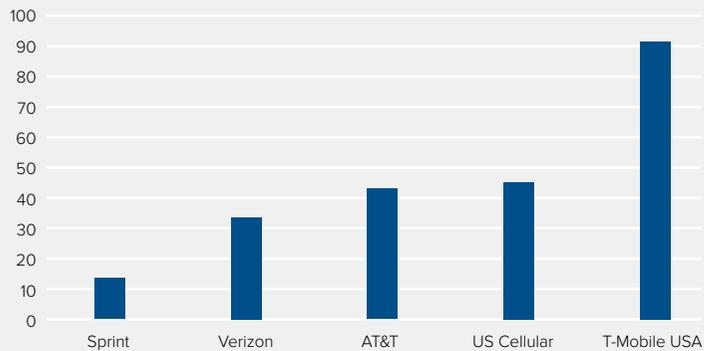
**Chart 3: Responses under 1 hour (%)**



Industry Leader: **Sprint** 🏆

Industry Lagger: **T-Mobile USA**

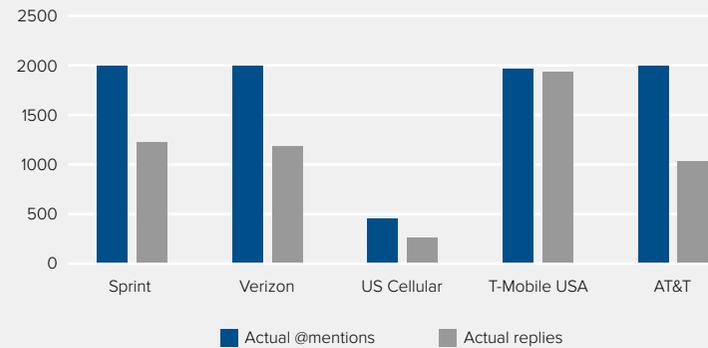
**Chart 2: Mean Response Time (mins)**



Quickest Responder: **Sprint** 🏆

Slowest Responder: **T-Mobile USA**

**Chart 4: Actual @mentions and replies measured**



# Closer analysis

## Responsiveness (chart 1)

**Making service on social channels accessible and known:** How responsive a brand is plays a huge part in this Social First tenet. If a customer glances over a business social account and sees regular responses, they will feel more confident in reaching out over that channel. Companies can increase that confidence by actively directing customers to its social channels. In a simple exercise, we visited the main 'Contact us' page on each of the brand websites in order to see how obvious it is that social can be used as a first point of contact. Sprint, T-Mobile, US Cellular and Verizon = very obvious, AT&T = obvious. AT&T force the visitor to go through an extra page in order to find the social service option, but all of the brands here have embraced this customer-owned channel.

## Speed of response (chart 2)

**Leveraging social's public nature to maximize brand equity:** Being responsive is just the first step; regardless of channel, response speed is a key driver of customer satisfaction. Even when an issue cannot be resolved immediately, it is important that a service representative show the customer — and everyone who might see the post — that the company has heard the message and is working on a solution. From these results, Sprint has clearly adopted a 'rapid response' strategy, while customers of the next fastest responder, Verizon, would be waiting double the time to hear back on their query.

## Industry leaders (chart 3)

**Going above and beyond customer expectations:** Consumers have increasingly high expectations around reply time on social media - a response within one hour is considered the mark of a leading brand. Teams that can achieve this on a regular basis open doors to increasing brand equity on social. For example, Dutch airline KLM increases the profile of its care team by posting the speed of its response on cover image of the Twitter account @KLM. For the brands in this report, Sprint (94% < 1 hour) would be most confident in adopting that tactic, while T-Mobile-USA (37% < 1 hour) would consider it risky.

*'Indeed, after learning that social media can become a vehicle for a fast response from businesses, many customers are turning to social first, as a way of self-optimizing their experience. Social is maturing from a channel of last resort to one that customers actively seek out.'*

Ovum 2015

## Volume management (chart 4)

Understanding your volume in terms of quantity and content allows you to understand the bigger picture. For example, calculating the percentage of customer service issues compared to the total number of social inbound messages. Count of messages by interaction type could include subcategories such as the number of issues related to deliveries, product and website. It's hard to understand what a change in handling or response time means unless you can match them up with changes in volume over social channels. It is crucial that you are able to measure metrics and performance against SLAs in real-time. If you have a sudden spike in volume, you need to be able to reallocate resources in order to bring the SLA down to baseline.

Volume measurement here also highlights the difference in scale when looking outside the top four brands - US Cellular sees a quarter of the weekly incoming volume that the others experience.

# Conclusion

When we look at the social media feeds of large brands, we see an aggregate of the best and worst case scenarios from that company. This report has focused on raw data, but there is certainly more that could be interpreted about the social customer service offerings these companies provide.

With the exception of US Cellular, all of the service teams work to enable in-channel resolution through use of Twitter DM. This will become even more commonplace in the near future, with Twitter's decision to remove the 140 character limit. The @USCellularCares account has misunderstood the purpose of a Twitter service channel, choosing instead to use it as a means to contact any individual who mentions that they may change their current provider.

Each brand assessed in this report show strong progress on the path to social customer service excellence. Delivering a best-in-class customer experience requires a fundamental shift in how companies serve their social customers. Our approach to helping businesses extend their customer engagement capability on social from Reach to Resolution is called Social First.



Do you meet the **#SocialFirst** standard?

**conversocial**  
Serving the Social Customer™

[@conversocial](#)

[conversocial.com](#)

[socialfirst@conversocial.com](mailto:socialfirst@conversocial.com)