

Move from reactive support to proactive growth.

You have outsourced your customer service — now how do you know if it is actually working? These eight KPIs give you a clear picture of your team's performance. The right tools — like Salesforce, Zendesk, or Freshdesk — make tracking them automatic. Without them, you are guessing.

01 First Response Time (FRT)

WHAT IT IS

How long it takes an agent to send the first real, human reply to a customer — not an auto-confirmation, but an actual response.

TARGET

- Live chat: under 60 seconds
- Email: under 2 hours
- Social media: under 1 hour
- Phone: under 2 minutes on hold

WHY IT MATTERS

Slow responses lose customers before the problem is even addressed. A customer waiting on a purchase decision will not wait long. Neither will an unhappy customer looking for a reason to leave.

WHAT TO DO

If your team is missing these targets during peak hours, the problem is usually understaffing or poor ticket routing — not agent performance. Check the schedule and your routing setup first.

■ **ACTION ITEM:** Confirm your partner reports FRT by channel and by time of day. An average that looks fine can hide serious gaps during busy periods.

02 First Contact Resolution (FCR)

WHAT IT IS

The percentage of issues fully resolved in a single interaction, with no follow-up needed.

TARGET

- World-class: 80% or above
- Industry average: 70–75%
- Below 65%: investigate immediately

WHY IT MATTERS

Every unresolved ticket creates another one. High FCR means lower costs, less workload, and happier customers — all at once. It is the most efficient metric on this list.

WHAT TO DO

Low FCR usually points to one of three things: agents do not have the right information, they lack the authority to offer solutions (like refunds), or the escalation process is unclear. Find out which one is the bottleneck before adding more training.

■ **ACTION ITEM:** Ask your partner to break FCR down by issue type. Billing complaints, technical issues, and shipping questions each have different resolution challenges — treat them separately.

03 Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT)

WHAT IT IS

A short survey — usually a 1–5 star rating — sent to the customer right after their support interaction closes.

TARGET

- Excellent: 90% positive or above
- Acceptable: 80–89%
- Needs urgent attention: below 75%

WHY IT MATTERS

CSAT tells you something your other metrics cannot — how the customer actually felt about the experience. A ticket can be resolved quickly and still leave the customer frustrated if the agent was unhelpful or the process felt complicated. CSAT catches that gap.

WHAT TO DO

Do not just track the score — read the comments. Patterns in customer language (words like 'confusing,' 'transferred,' or 'waited') will point you to the real problem faster than any number will.

■ **ACTION ITEM:** Make sure your partner shares verbatim customer feedback in weekly reports, not just scores. The words customers use will tell you exactly what to fix.

04 Average Handle Time (AHT)

WHAT IT IS

The average total time spent on one support interaction — including talk time, hold time, and any follow-up admin work after the call or chat ends. Formula: Talk Time + Hold Time + After-Contact Work = AHT.

TARGET

- General support call: 4–6 minutes is typical
- Complex technical support: 8–12 minutes is normal
- Set your own baseline and track changes over time

WHY IT MATTERS

Lower AHT reduces your cost per interaction. But AHT that drops too fast — without a matching improvement in FCR — usually means agents are rushing or closing tickets before they are truly resolved. Speed and quality need to move together.

WHAT TO DO

If AHT is climbing, check whether agents have access to an up-to-date knowledge base. Most AHT creep comes from agents searching for answers in the wrong places or improvising because documentation is outdated.

■ **ACTION ITEM:** Set separate AHT targets for each ticket category. One blanket target across all issue types will give you misleading data.

05 Net Promoter Score (NPS)

WHAT IT IS

A loyalty survey asking: 'On a scale of 0–10, how likely are you to recommend us to a friend?' Scores of 9–10 are Promoters, 7–8 are Passives, and 0–6 are Detractors. $NPS = \% \text{ Promoters} - \% \text{ Detractors}$.

TARGET

- Excellent: above 50
- Good: 30–49
- Needs improvement: below 20
- Negative NPS: treat as a crisis

WHY IT MATTERS

CSAT measures one interaction. NPS measures the bigger picture — whether customers trust your brand enough to recommend it. Your outsourced team handles a high volume of interactions every day, so they have a direct impact on this number.

WHAT TO DO

NPS is a lagging metric — it reflects what has already happened. Use it to spot trends quarter over quarter and cross-reference dips with periods of high ticket volume, product issues, or staffing changes at your partner.

■ **ACTION ITEM:** Segment your NPS results by customer type — new vs. long-term. If long-term customers are your detractors, that is a retention emergency.

06 Ticket Backlog and Volume

WHAT IT IS

Volume is the total number of incoming support requests in a given period. Backlog is the number of open, unresolved tickets at any point in time.

TARGET

- Backlog should reach zero or near zero by end of each business day
- A volume spike of 30%+ above baseline is a signal to act now

WHY IT MATTERS

Volume tells you how much pressure your team is under. Backlog tells you whether they are keeping up. A backlog that grows quietly for two weeks eventually explodes into missed response targets and a CSAT crash. Catching it early is far cheaper than recovering from it.

WHAT TO DO

Do not just respond to spikes — investigate what caused them. A product bug, a confusing onboarding process, or a gap in your FAQ page might be generating hundreds of tickets that a simple fix could prevent entirely.

■ **ACTION ITEM:** Require your partner to tag every ticket by root cause. Review the top three drivers each month and work to eliminate the avoidable ones.

07 Customer Effort Score (CES)

WHAT IT IS

A post-interaction survey that asks: 'How easy was it to get your issue resolved today?' Customers respond on a scale of 1–7, from 'Very Difficult' to 'Very Easy.'

TARGET

- Strong score: 5.5 or above (out of 7)
- Below 5: requires a process review

WHY IT MATTERS

Research from Gartner shows that reducing customer effort builds more loyalty than exceeding expectations. Customers do not need to be wowed — they just need their problem solved without jumping through hoops. Being transferred multiple times or repeating account details are effort killers that CES will surface.

WHAT TO DO

Low CES is usually a systems problem, not a people problem. Check whether agents have full access to customer history. If customers are constantly repeating themselves, your CRM integration is not working the way it should.

■ **ACTION ITEM:** Track your transfer rate alongside CES. If customers are frequently handed off between agents, that is your biggest friction point — and your fastest win.

08 Cost Per Resolution

WHAT IT IS

The total cost of your outsourcing contract divided by the number of tickets fully resolved in the same period.
Formula: Total Outsourcing Cost ÷ Tickets Resolved = Cost Per Resolution.

TARGET

- Your own trend line matters more than any industry benchmark
- Goal: resolve more tickets per dollar this quarter than last quarter

WHY IT MATTERS

This is your ROI metric. It turns 'we save money by outsourcing' from a gut feeling into a real number you can track and defend. If your Cost Per Resolution is rising — even if your contract cost stays flat — fewer issues are being resolved per dollar spent, and that is worth diagnosing before your next contract review.

WHAT TO DO

A rising Cost Per Resolution usually has one of three causes: tickets are getting more complex, the backlog is growing and creating inefficiency, or agent turnover at your partner is forcing constant re-training. Know which one you are dealing with before renegotiating.

■ **ACTION ITEM:** Compare your current Cost Per Resolution to what you were spending on in-house support before outsourcing. That comparison is the clearest proof — or warning sign — you have.

The Bottom Line

Tracking these eight KPIs is how you stay in control of a service you have handed to someone else. Review them monthly with your outsourcing partner, include them in your service-level agreement, and use them to make decisions based on data — not assumptions. Not sure which tools will make tracking easiest? Aristo Sourcing can help you build the right setup from the start.