

Connections

MAGAZINE

Contents:

[Home](#)
[Vendors](#)
[Articles](#)
[Subscribe](#)
[Advertise](#)
[News](#)
[Resources](#)
[Search](#)
[About Us](#)

Services:

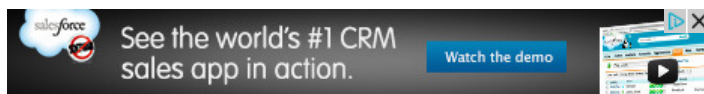
[News Feed and Info](#)
[Podcasts](#)
[Outsource Call Center Listing](#)
[Answering Service Listing](#)
[Call Center Locator Sites](#)
[Great Domain Name Sale](#)

Quick Links:

[Coming Events](#)
[Area Code Info](#)
[Call Center Glossary](#)
[Editorial Calendar](#)
[White Papers](#)
[Submit Content](#)
[Call Recording Info](#)

Ads by Google

[Customer Care](#)
[CRM Customer](#)
[More Customer](#)



Enhancing the Customer Experience

By Kevin Burkhart
 October 2012

For years Customer Relationship Management (CRM) practices have been defined by an inside-out perspective – from the organization to the customer; as a result, it is an underutilized discipline. But new technologies and social media channels have shifted the balance of power to buyers, and these are rapidly changing the way organizations think about their customer relationships. In today's buyer-driven world, it is crucial to recognize customers' needs and the methods in which they prefer to interact. Be it via email, a mobile device, or social media, all customer touch points must remain consistent and integrated from one channel to another.

CRM channels must interconnect to create a complete, seamless, consistent, high-quality, and personalized customer experience. Organizations must capture information from all of these channels and use this knowledge and CRM technologies to improve their delivery and the relevance of their offers and customer service. With the emergence of new social media-oriented channels, developing a quality customer experience and focusing on customer experience management (CXM) strategies has become recognized as a way to keep customers, win prospects, and achieve differentiation.

From Inside-Out to Outside-In: CRM functions were traditionally inward facing, viewed by an organization as a way to improve internal efficiencies rather than a means to improve interactions with the customer. Traditional CRM systems provided a broad view into transactions, delivered data to improve the efficiencies of sales and services personnel, and relied solely on internal staff for data collection. But the question was always, "How do I better manage my internal disciplines in order to create and utilize a better customer relationship?"

In all actuality, the entire concept of managing the customer relationship should really be viewed from the outside in: from the customer to the organization. Today, the advent of social media – and now social CRM – has caused the paradigm to shift to a more balanced relationship. Organizations must continue outbound and demographic-based marketing as well as demographic-based management of customer relations.

However, today customers control a significantly greater proportion of the buying cycle. They know exactly what they seek from a vendor and the method in which they wish to receive an organization's messages and offers. The shift to online channels has created a huge amount of unstructured data that needs to be captured, analyzed, and used to improve the experience. Companies are now responsible for making it as easy as possible to engage with the customer regardless of who initiates the outreach or the form of engagement.

Cross-Channel Integration and CXM: CXM enables organizations to create the optimal environment for engagement with the customer. Customers may initiate contact with an online search using a smartphone, tablet, or PC, but regardless of the technology being used, the vendor must embrace these new methods of engagement and be available through the customer's preferred channel or platform.

However, companies must not stop after creating a seamless customer experience or using online and mobile devices. Organizations must intelligently use the information they gather from all of their customer and social touch points and employ it to deliver a highly tailored offer to the individual customer. Today's customer wants the ability to complete applications, shop, and search online from their homes whenever it is convenient for them, or be able to interconnect an online and retail shopping experience.

That same customer expects the call center representative they contact to have complete visibility into their online order, pick up where they are, and provide immediate assistance. It is essential for

Customer Management

8th Annual
Call Center Summit

**Put People First.
 Where Strategy
 Meets Action**

January 22 - 25, 2013
 Renaissance Orlando
 at SeaWorld
 Orlando, FL

Featured Keynote Speakers:

Eric Galvin
 VP Call Operations
 & Strategy
**CIGNA
 CORPORATION**

Dennis Fitzgerald
 VP Customer
 Satisfaction
**YASKAWA
 AMERICA**

Brian Mullaney
 SVP Contact Center
 Operations
**THE SCOOTER
 STORE**

[Register for the Summit](#)

www.callcenterevent.com

companies to ensure that all channels are interconnected to provide the real-time assistance and information demanded by consumers.

By focusing on the entire customer experience, vendors are able to meet the customer where the customer is and appeal to their unique interests. Social media, the Web, mobile devices, and physical locations provide a multitude of opportunities for the customer and vendor to interact. This allows organizations to manage the entire customer experience not just from the inside looking out but also from the outside looking in.

For several years the industry has discussed the 360-degree view of the customer, but that was only the perspective vendors had from their interaction with the customer via call center contact. Essentially an entire segment of information regarding buyer habits, interests, preferences, and knowledge was missed. Rather than simply gathering a snapshot of data about a customer, vendors need the granular view of buying habits and trends to more effectively market and serve their customers.

Emerging CRM technologies enable vendors to examine, extract, and consolidate information, both structured and unstructured (such as captured from social media), in order to provide an entire view of the customer. This enables vendors to deliver consistent and personalized offers and cross-channel customer experiences across all customer touch points. With this new transaction level and unstructured data, not only can vendors pinpoint interests and offer promotions and deals in real-time, but customers can also receive information relevant to them and their lifestyles. Understanding customers, habits, and preferences as individuals – as opposed to a mass demographic – allows vendors to continually improve offers and interactions.

Improving the Overall Customer Experience and Relationship: To improve CXM and enhance overall CRM, vendors must expand their view of customer relationship needs to include all channels of interaction, including the unstructured data contained within social media. The social media paradigm calls for organizations to manage an additional aspect of customer engagement that was not prevalent before. With the emergence and rapid adoption of social media websites such as Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter, vendors must take advantage of the real-time avenues available to better engage customers. Keep in mind that one negative customer experience can result in a harmful online post that hundreds of thousands of people can see. Conversely, a great customer experience has the potential to reach thousands with a positive outcome.

With granular level data now available, there must be an evolution of the integration of *all* the disparate silos of customer information. Bringing together order and call history, invoices, and issues as well as buying habits helps further complete the 360-degree view of the customer. And now that vendors can obtain a buyer's history and preferences and make predictions based on this, it is essential to make offers to customers that are more meaningful and relevant.

Many customers still complain that online ads are irrelevant and an annoyance, with vendors failing to create the right offers in a timely fashion. In order to improve CRM and therefore the entire customer experience, it is necessary to take unstructured data and create structure to provide customers with significant information, higher levels of service, and multiple channels for engagement.

Kevin Burkhart is executive vice president of Eagle Creek Software Services, a United States based IT consulting and technical services company specializing in Oracle CRM, information management, and eCommerce.

Return to the [List of Articles](#) || Go to the Directory of [All Articles](#)

Considering SalesLogix?	
Compare SalesLogix CRM w/ 40 Other Top CRM Vendors. Get Free Report.	
Business-Software.com/CRMComparison	
	

[\[Home\]](#) [\[Vendors\]](#) [\[Articles\]](#) [\[Subscribe\]](#) [\[Advertise\]](#) [\[News\]](#) [\[Resources\]](#) [\[Search\]](#) [\[About Us\]](#)

Serving the Call Center / Contact Center Industry and Teleservice Companies Worldwide

616-284-1305, connect@ConnectionsMagazine.com; © 2001-2012 [Peter DeHaan Publishing, Inc.](#)