



Customer Engagement Strategy

10 thoughts for an executable strategy

Having a customer engagement strategy is probably the most important factor in succeeding with your customer service.

When analyzing the most successful organizations it seems like the most common denominator they share is their ability to engage and retain their customers through genuine customer loyalty. Key success factors seem to be the ability to execute a well-defined customer engagement strategy built on having management consensus as well as the correct tools for customer engagement.

The future of customer engagement holds, in many aspects, a relation to how you interact with your customers on a daily basis in the ever growing multitude of channels — from the web, to mobile, to social, to chat, to retail.

When Forrester looked into how organizations had aligned their contact center strategy and their customer experience strategy a shocking 7% said that their contact center is seen only as a cost. 45% claimed their customer experience strategy has yet to be defined and are in the process of aligning their contact center strategy to their customer experience strategy. This indicates that there is a huge amount of work ahead for many organizations.

We see this as a clear indication that organizations are being encouraged to amp up their digital customer service strategies in order to optimize sales and customer engagement.

This might sound like something obvious and most natural but when looking into it, there are surprisingly few organizations that are actually managed with a clear customer engagement plan. Even fewer are unanimously executing on this plan across the entire organization.

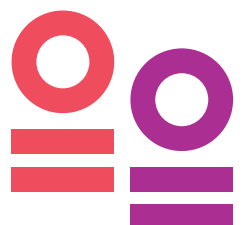
In the process of formulating and building a straight forward and encompassing customer engagement strategy it is recommendable to forget about technology at the start. Instead, sit down in front of a white board or with a piece of paper and gather your thoughts on three simple questions; WHO, WHAT & HOW.

Who: Who should be involved in creating your organizations customer engagement strategy? When considering this, try only to think of those resources who can actually contribute. When discussing customer related areas in large organizations it can easily turn into a “non-giving” discussion built purely on personal reflections and not thinking about the organizational value connected to your long-term strategy.

What: What is the output going to be? What is it that you would like to achieve with your customer engagement strategy? What is the end goal? Is it documentation, checklists, improved processes, live improvements or looking into strategic web-tools that will help achieve world class customer engagement?

How: How can you achieve the end goal, and what kind of tools/systems can help you in succeeding with your strategy on a daily basis. This is often the principle frequently discussed within the organization and many times, it is the principle that is getting finalized in various technical discussions.

Below you will find 10 tips and success criteria that we think would benefit your customer engagement strategy implementation within your organization.



Who

1. Establish cross-functional Customer Engagement teams.

It is of course optimal if you are able to have your different departments sitting together when executing the customer engagement strategy. They will then be able to celebrate mutual success as well as feeling like one team when trying to accomplish their goals.

The shorter the communications paths are between your different departments and the greater amount of shared responsibility they have – the better. It is important to distance your thoughts of just looking into functions and roles. All departments need to understand how the customer engagement strategy affects their day-to-day routines and that all actions should focus on creating customer value.

2. Support your customer analytics.

Vast amounts of organizations are often misjudging the people working with customer analysis. This is especially true when they are assessing data from various sources, or exporting data from the internal data layer. It is important that the organization understands and values the people working with customer analysis as they are there for a reason. Therefore we recommend you to share your data, do not treat data as some kind of personal property.

3. Act Glocal.

Some of the customer facing functions are centrally managed and some are decentralized. It's all about finding a balance in expert roles and general knowledge in order to serve the customer as well as the internal organization with consistent and up to date information. How the roles should be split in to centralized/de-centralized teams is often a tough decision to make, but bear in mind that it is always easier to evaluate it from a customer perspective and address the gains they will get when you are evaluating your organization and the build up.

What

4. Create your own metric system with key performance indicators (KPI's) that involve the entire organization.

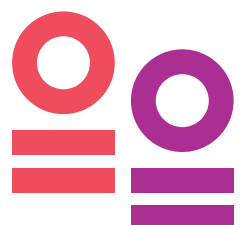
The management team responsible for more than just budget and resources should be involved in the creation of your KPI's in order for them to be mirrored out in the overall customer engagement strategy. The customer service organization is responsible for carrying out and securing that your daily customer engagements are matching the overall strategy KPI's in all their daily operations. The customer analytics are responsible for visualizing the KPI's within the organizations so that it is easy to keep an eye on and that the organization actually delivers as promised.

5. Customer data.

Most projects today are formed from measurement and classification systems. Try to focus on the real customer data across the entire customer life cycle.

6. Make your customer engagement strategy online focused.

Start focusing on the customer lifecycle from a digital perspective and see how the customer engages with you across the multiple digital channels that are out there. Try to see how the strategy can be utilized in the entire delivery chain. The customer is digital – your strategy should be too!



How

7. Look outside your organization

...and use external sources with customer interactions such as Twitter, Facebook etc. Integrate solutions to be sure you are up to date when engaging your customer. The big data trend is only starting and the statement 'The one that holds the most and valuable data is the one who will win,' while cliché, has never been more true.

8. Improve your technical output with cloud-based solutions.

The time has come to exclude in-house installations and building inflexible solutions internally. Enjoy freedom with a flexible and scalable solution that is built for expanding organizations. The advantages are many: cost effective, backup and recovery, automatic software integrations, easy access to information and quick deployments are some of the more popular ones.

9. Make your customer engagement easy to digest.

Customer engagement and customer responsibility has to reach a wider layer of persons within the organization. The cloud-based solutions of today are far better in visualizing customer engagement, making this more apparent to the organization.

10. Avoid the trap of one-stop shopping.

Believing that one vendor can solve everything from CRM to Web analytics to sales tools to customer engagements can be dangerous. There are no vendors who are the best at absolutely everything. By choosing multiple vendors it's a good idea to incorporate a portfolio mindset starting from the suppliers that satisfy the needs in the best possible way for the various parts of your system-portfolio.

When implementing your customer engagement strategy, when it becomes time to turn strategy in to action, "rules of engagement & interaction" we will once again reuse the simple principle of WHO, WHAT and HOW.

More on that in a later blog post.



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