Customer Relations Management

A&A Computers faces 2007

From the media:

- Unfortunately a bad customer service experience is shared with around 10 other people who are most likely to tell another 10 people.
- Customer service entails sincerely doing something extra for the customer so that he or she can see by your actions that you are willing to help.
- Customers that are extremely impressed with your service are also likely to talk about your business to others.
- Word-of-mouth advertising is the most effective form of advertising. It costs nothing and is very valuable as it details personal experiences and thus has high credibility.
- 68 percent of the customers do not return because of the indifferent attitude of an employee
  14 percent because of product dissatisfaction
  9 percent because of competitive reasons
  5 percent shop at a friend's establishment
  3 percent move away
  1 percent dies.

There is only 1% we can't do a thing about…

What is CRM?

Customer relationship management (CRM) covers methods and technologies used by companies to manage their relationships with customers. Information stored on existing customers (and potential customers) is analyzed and used to this end. Automated CRM processes are often used to generate automatic personalized marketing based on the customer information stored in the system. However, CRM is not the technology itself, but rather a holistic approach to an organization's philosophy, placing the emphasis firmly on the customer.

Customer relations is that function of business management concerned with how customers feel about a place of business - its personnel, products and services.

CRM is the bridge that combines all interactions with customers: sales, customer service, support, accounts etc

Mission

CRM's mission is to increase sales by keeping a close relationship with both existing and potential business partners, and building a stronger commitment.

We use these instruments:

- Visits; take along:
    - Brochures
    - Presents; eg cups, A&A mouse mat, A&A calendars
    - Business cards
    - Newsletters
    - If relevant: proformas, specifications
    - PPM agreements
- Phone calls, SMS, Emails
- Intelligence: structure, friends, information
- Keep track

- Keep close contact: news updates, timing updates.
- Trust
- Positive language
- Respond to complaints
- Represent A&A values to the customer
- Maximize marketing opportunities

- **Visits**: CRM's agent should visit the customers on regular bases. A typical working week should include visits of a mixture of existing and potential customers.
- **Phone calls, SMS, Emails**: The agent should be reachable to customers on the phone. The agent should keep an open communications channel with the customers, for updates from both sides. SMS-es are sent when we cannot reach the client by phone, and Emails to send additional information.
- **Intelligence**: The agent should be aware of non verbal information:
    - The equipment's situation at the customer's office: do they have enough printers? Are the computers too slow? Old?
    - Customer's news: are they recruiting? Did they win a new contract?
    - Customer's decision making structure: Who decides what and where to buy: purchasing? IT manager? The director?
    - Create a friendly environment: talk about daily life; send E-cards on birthdays, send Seasons' Greetings. Make them forget you are "only a supplier", so they will share information with you and feel committed.
- **Keep track**: Every communication with the customer should be kept in a journal, including a short summery of every appointment or phone call. It is necessary to keep a notebook to record promises and dates when you are to follow through.
- **Keep close contact**: news updates, timing updates: Become the customer's connection with A&A and vice versa. Keep him updated about news he might be interested in, call him if there's an update in delivering.
- **Trust**: It's very important to have trust on both sides – the customer should trust the agent and confide in him if something isn't working for A&A and why.
- **Positive language**: Always keep positive language. It is recommended to focus on what "can" be done for the customer rather than what "cannot" be done for them. Never say: "we can't supply before Friday" say: "we can supply it on Friday". Never say "but

it's VERY expensive". Name the price, the customer should decide if its VERY expensive for him. Clients should always decide for themselves.

- **Respond to complaints**: welcome any customer complaints. Take care of these complaints immediately to give the feeling you care and don't ignore them. It would also help avoiding negative word-of-mouth; keep a list of customer complaints to identify any patterns and the cause of dissatisfaction. Complaints should be forwarded from all staff to the the agent.
- **Represent A&A values to the customer**: A&A keeps a "clean image": honest, no bargaining, not lying, etc... The agent should represent those values to the customers.
- **Maximize marketing opportunities:** Get new customers by visiting potential customers, getting updates from the surrounding, from the newspapers, etc…
- **Promises:** Only make promises if you are sure that they can be fullfilled..

CRM's Duties

- Obtain these results:
    - Improve the customer relations with A&A's customers.
    - Expand customer's base.
    - Increase sales.
- Function as a connection between customer and all memebers of the A&A team.
- Report to the team on a weekly basis and add to the CRM database:
    - about the last week's meetings
    - next week's plan
    - number of existing customers visited,
    - number of potential customers.
    - a short summary of each visit, news, highlights, or any other important news.

What is a CRM Agent personality?

- **Social & verbal skills**: CRM agent has to have good social skills in order to get to know a customer, his needs and expectations. The agent has to know how to talk to a customer, be confident and get the information needed for the organization s/he represents.

- **Sales**: let's not forget that CRM is meant not only to know the customer but also to increase A&A sales. The CRM agent has to keep in mind that A&A has the solution for the customer needs and to offer them to him.
- **Analyst**: in order to combine the two, the agent has to know how to analyze the customer's needs.
- **Knowledge of A&A, IT know-how**: in order to offer the best solutions, the agent has to know A&A – the products, services, price range, and of course the A&A spirit. The agent should use the knowledge of the A&A team effectively.
- **Creativity**: customers like to hear solutions to their problem. May the problem be objective – IT needs - or subjective – complaints about A&A services. The agent has to be confident and give the customer reliable and sometimes creative solutions, after having discussed these with the A&A team.
- **Numbers**: CRM agent has to be good with numbers, understand accounts, financing, etc

Tools

- Mobile phone – availability to the customers
- Database. The database should include:
    1. Customer details: Name, contact person, contact details: phone no, e-mail address, information: website address
    2. Sales history: by dates: the products, prices, total. (from: QuickBooks)
    3. Credit history: do they pay on time, current situation (from: QuickBooks)
    4. Communications update: each communication with the customers should be updated on the database: visit / phone call, date, whom did the agent talk to, detailed summary of the communication: update, request, complain, appointment and the results.
- Calendar: keep track of appointments and information from customers: "I'm going to recruit 3 people in 2 month" – a reminder to call him in 6 weeks for update.
- Reports: The agent should have access to sales reports: sales to customers, sales by products, sales by period of time.
- Driving license

- Transportation

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Education

- At least secondary school graduate
- Fluent in Swahili and English
- IT knowledge
- Finance background

Summary

CRM is a **very important function** for an organization in a competitive market. The CRM agent is the center of communications with the customer. S/he gets information from all sides: the customer, A&A sales and accounts, has to combine all the information, and keep the communication pleasant and friendly for future deals. The CRM agent should work with the best training, tools and reports supplied by A&A, with his/hers experience, knowledge and instincts and help A&A with improving the customer relations.

Customer relations works. By making a customer feel comfortable with you, he will feel comfortable to contact you for everything he needs; the sales would increase, as a result of good relations.

Don't ignore or hide problems, especially not those you can predict. If you see a delay happening – call the customer and inform them as soon as possible, don't wait till they will call you. If someone complains, take care immediately and solve the problem. Keep track of problems and analyze them – you might learn of some consistent problems that can be fixed. Keep customers informed.

CRM agent should **collaborate** with the A&A team in order to give the customers the best service possible.

How do we do it?

Customer information

To maintain a working relationship with the customers, we should have and use a database with all the information we have about the customers. Using this database would help sort out the information we have and the information we are missing and should have.

What would we like to know about our customers?

- Company's name and branches
- Business information
- Web site address
- Number of office employees
- Number of computers
- Future estimations
- Names and contact details of people in power: director, purchasing, IT, A&A contact person, other people in important positions
- Personal info: birthdays of those people
- All kind of information we know ("gossip", or "intelligence")
- **Company's name and branches**: the official registered company name. Do they have branches, if so – where?
- Web site address
- **Business area**: what kind of business are they in? Do they have multiple areas?
- **Number of office employees**: the office employees are those who use computers. We can have an office cleaning company – looks like a big company with lots of employees but – only 3 are using computers. The rest are the cleaning staff, they don't need computers…

- **Number of computers**: how many computers does this company have? Knowing the numbers of computers will help us figure the IT needs.
- **Future estimations**: what do they see in the future? Are they going to increase the no. of computers? Reduce? Are they opening another branch? Moving to a new site?
- **Names and contact details of people in power**: director, purchasing, IT, A&A contact person, other people in important positions: we should "know" the customer's management – who are the people in charge of decision making, accounts, purchasing.
- **Personal info**: birthdays of those people, we should become their friends – send e-cards for birthdays or even call, have an idea about their lives, kids. Works usually between women – women "bonding" leads to information... (A known fact, all over the world...)
- **Business info**, all kind of information we know ("gossip"): keep documentation of every piece of information, rumors, hearsay, about each customer. You don't know when you might make a use of the information.
- **IT level reached:** 1. Word processing only; 2. Spreadsheets; 3. Accounts; 4. LAN; 4. Special software

Visit procedures

The structures of Client visits for an existing customer are:

- Making an appointment; agree date, time and venue.
- Presenting yourself (leave your business card with him), your position at A&A – in case they have forgotten you.
- Tell the customer about A&A.
    - *About the services they don't know. You will get this information from the research you've done before the meeting. For example: "I know that you know us and we work well together for a long period now but you may not be familiar with all our services. I've noticed that you have printers here but you don't use our refilling ink cartridges services"…..*
    - A discussion about the current situation: looking for new products, didn't pay in time, information, etc. The agent will present news from A&A, and the closure would be setting a business plan.
- Set an action plan.

The structures of Client visits are for a new or a potential customer are:

- Making an appointment; agree date, time and venue.
- Presenting yourself (leave your business card with him), your position at A&A,
- Tell him/her about A&A
    - *Find out how much the customer knows about A&A and elaborate: "you'lly heard about A&A Computers (at this point, they usually will tell you) but I'm sure you don't know us enough or else you would use our work shop / buy computer screens from us"…*
- Invite them to the shop, exhibition
- Propose a surevey by a technician.

Set an action plan.

Action plans can include"

- Sending proformas
- Installation
- PPM
- others

Visiting a client:

When you set a meeting with a customer, <u>make sure you are always 100% prepared for the meeting</u>. Surprises are not that good, when you are facing a client. The worst thing would be to tell him how great is the work shop if he has a computer there that wasn't fixed for more then a week, trying to sell new computers without noticing that he owes money to A&A, etc…

- As a preparation the agent should study the client's history: talk to A&A staff, administration, Peter, Alex. Get all the info about the client, current situation: does he have something at the workshop? Did he pay properly? Is he waiting for some answers from A&A? Is he supposed to send a purchase request?
- Business cards: always carry Business cards, hand them over as contact details, a reminder of whom you are, reminder of A&A.

- Introduce the company: we think that everyone knows us. The customers think they know all about us. Always talk about the variety of A&A services. You will be surprised at how little knowledge people have. Talk about new services, about filling ink cartridges, the work shop, all the services the customer is not using.
- Find out what do they need – have a chat, find out what is missing in the services they get, in the office, in A&A as a supplier.
- Set up an action plan – as the summary of the meeting, name the action needed – what does the customer have to do and what you have to do. Keep an open communication channel. This should be an “excuse” to call the customer, have another appointment and get him used to the communication between the two of you.

Don’t forget to follow up the meeting action plan – and in time. If you have promised the customer u will call him/her in a week, do that. Don’t let things disappear, don’t delay the information, show the customer you can be trusted.

Report formats

Reports routine should be weekly and quarterly e-mails reports to A&A management:
Number of visits: customer, potential customers, new customers.
Customer’s name, short summary of the meeting, news, up dates, things to follow, Alex’s attention (or help)
Of course, if something is important – don’t wait for the weekly report, update the person involved immediately if you over hear that the customer is not paying other suppliers, inform Alex immediately, so A&A would prepare for it If, or – if you have good news that needs to be attended immediately…

Log sheet

Log sheet should be the calendar the CRM agent keeps track of his appointments with clients and the information involved.
The log sheet should be an output of the database, report cut out by dates, customer’s name or key word.

The log sheet should be able to add appointment to outlook, or have it's own calendar.
Can give information by

- dates – list of clients we had contact with: appointments summery, to do list, etc
- customer's name – what's our history with them
- key words – as decided by A&A

Staff training

Having a CRM agent is never enough. A company can not rely on one person who is customer oriented, the company should be as oriented. The CRM agent should train the staff to be client oriented – how to talk, be polite, explain, stick to time table, (updating the system, customer, etc)
The staff should also keep in mind the information (intelligence) we can all run into, accidentally, and share this information with CRM agent: if you are fixing a computer at a customer's and hear some information that might be important – update A&A about it.