

## Full Spectrum Preference Management:

## **Engaging Customers Where They Are Instead Of Where It's Easy**

by Rob Tate, PossibleNOW

Like millions of Americans, I've had a long relationship with my cable provider. And like every relationship, we've had good times (HD with DVR!) and bad (an outage during a *Mad Men* season finale). Through it all, I've interacted with my cable company in many different ways depending on my needs at the time.

I've called them on the phone, paid bills over the web, received reminders via text message, exchanged a modem at a customer service center and even emailed them about upgrades and promotions.

There is nothing exceptional about my experience. Yet all too often, enterprise-level companies neglect the full spectrum of customer behavior like mine when implementing preference management strategies. Daunted by the complexity of multi-channel communications, they seek single-channel

solutions that are easy to implement and manage.



The reality is that very few enterprise-sized organizations live in simple, single channel worlds. In a subscription cable (or satellite TV) environment, there are dozens of absolutely necessary touchpoints where customer and company interact. There is simply no other way to install, support, upgrade, bill and eventually deactivate an account.

Every single one of those interactions represents an opportunity to learn and advance engagement. Moreover, we know that customers and prospects don't share every possible need or preference at the first opportunity. They simply can't predict all their needs. Nor are they interested in lengthy questionnaires designed to cover every possible outcome of the process. In reality, preference is reported through a gradual process of interaction, iteration and advancing trust.

Effective preference management — the active collection, maintenance and distribution of unique consumer characteristics, such as product interest, channel preference and frequency of communication — should be implemented at every meaningful point where company and customer intersect. For many companies, that means voice, web, live customer service, social media and more. Listening to the needs and choices of customers some of the time, or only through selected channels, derails the engagement process.

In fact, the danger of a limited spectrum approach is two-fold:

## 1. Failure to capture critical data

It obviously fails to capture critical data shared over channels outside its reach. As a result, sales and upgrades are lost while customers experience frustration when preferences aren't respected, such as communication channel of choice or bill timing.

## 2. Failure to see the big picture

It represents a false step forward, incentivizing a marketing or IT department to make do with what has already been invested in vs. reconsidering the bigger picture and getting it right.

Enterprise-level businesses engage in complex interactions that often feature an expanding set of personal and virtual interactions. It's essential to collect and react to information from all touchpoints such as call centers, social media and mobile devices, not just the easy or inexpensive ones such as email or websites. In order to do this, the preference management system should be a central repository connected to all departments, units, regions and appropriate applications.

Effective engagement is all about listening to and learning from your audience as a single entity — not a siloed and segmented bureaucracy.

I like to think I've gotten to know my cable provider pretty well over the years. But sometimes I wonder how well they know me. If nothing else, a modern marketing strategy must solve that nagging question.

And it begins with full-spectrum preference management that collects information at every touchpoint. Not just the easy ones.



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