

CRM Tech Trends: Improving Retention, Engagement & ROI

Customer relationship management platforms have been a key part of sales and marketing arsenals for years, and new tech solutions are giving marketers a leg up on critically important areas such as acquisition, but also things that may have been neglected in the past—like customer engagement and creating relevant content.

At the end of the day, it's up to marketers to engage with customers and make sure they are happy—whether that means figuring out which digital channel they prefer to communicate over, creating content that speaks to them or combining big data, marketing automation and other tech solutions to paint the clearest picture of a customer possible. CRM solutions are the hub around which smart marketers are creating more personalized and relevant messaging and campaigns.

"CRM really spans across customer service, marketing and sales force automation. Marketers for years have really ignored the customer service part of the business—average handling time tended to be the primary metric for that. A good chunk of retention issues are directly related to customer service, and it's marketers who end up dealing with retention issues. You really need to look across those channels and treat service as part of your customer journey. We see sales, service and marketing as driving customer engagement, and that's what CRM is about. Those are not separate things," says Ed Burek, product director at Pegasystems.



NEW CAPABILITIES

What can be done now with CRM tech that couldn't be done before? Flexibility is the key word here. New unified CRM solutions like those from Pegasystems can bundle customer data solutions, as well as scale and connect those multiple systems in order to make predicted outcomes.

"I'm seeing more and more that marketers are becoming bastions of customer engagement, which means that sometimes the chief experience officer or VP of customer experience are tending to report directly to the CMO or CEO. There's more and more of a fixation on customer engagement because of the fickleness of customers. Organizations are looking at that lifetime customer value and knowing what they need to do against it. Before it may have

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been a group being product or channel-centric, as opposed to focusing on customers,” Burek says.

CRM is the key to bringing that to life—combining CRM technology and big data and traditional channels.

“When you start to connect those pieces together, you’re able to make those predictive decisions in a much smarter way. Until you do that, you do not have a 360-degree view of the customer. You’ve only got half of it if it’s just digital,” Burek says.

Connecting customers into a centralized CRM system allows marketers to make the right decisions in dealing with them at all times and across all channels.

“Some companies have several solutions that handle this, but no centralized view of what’s happening in the big picture. That’s the new CRM,” Burek says.

ACQUISITION

Integrating data from CRM platform, such as Salesforce, into acquisition campaigns is an important capability that new CRM solutions have to offer marketing teams.

“If you’re an ecommerce brand, it’s really straightforward to measure the success of a digital adver-

tising campaign based off of conversion data. But when you get into the situation that a lot of brands are in, even in the B2C space, they’re doing lead gen that ultimately is driving to conversions online, either through a retailer or an independent dealer or a salesperson. Tracking that whole process end to end and being able to attribute offline conversions to a campaign or a series of campaigns that drove that traffic initially online is a big trend,” says Red Door Interactive VP of cross channel marketing John Faris.

For example, for a kitchen appliance brand that sells online but does a majority of business in a brick-and-mortar showroom, to close the loop and optimize what’s driving sales and qualified leads and feed that data back into acquisition campaigns based on what’s really working is a big deal.

“We’re now extending that beyond ecommerce conversions into the offline world and trying to feed that data into CRM and acquisition campaigns,” Faris says.

CONTENT

Today, CRM channels can also include social (a CRM channel for encouraging loyalty and advoca-

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KEEPING CUSTOMERS HAPPY ON MOBILE

The always-on nature of mobile makes it a critical channel for maintaining relationships with customers, and an important key to providing exceptional customer service. Most people today want to be contacted on a mobile device versus being called on a landline number, and with all of the technology solutions available to consumers, marketers need to bring their customer service up to speed with that mobile device.

“Consumers can be contacted via mobile through traditional voice calling, email, SMS text, mobile apps and push notifications. The key is figuring out which mobile channel a consumer prefers to be contacted through,” says Mblox VP of global marketing Stacy Adams.

Mblox recently conducted a survey of 1,500 consumers and 500 businesspeople in customer service to determine the overall perception of customer care and how businesses feel they are doing in the area of customer care.

“We wanted to take these responses and figure out how mobile could initiate better customer experiences,” Adams says. According to the survey, 36% of consumers said businesses do a great job in caring for them, while 73% of responding businesses said they were doing a great job with customer care.

“There’s a big gap between how consumers really feel and what businesses think. One of the ways

businesses can close that gap is by figuring out how a consumer wanted to be communicated with. Brands tend to flock to the newest thing in mobile, and we were curious to find out what customers prefer,” Adams says.

Mblox found that consumers prefer to be contacted through email, text and voice, in that order. A total of 57% prefer email, 41% prefer email and 38% prefer phone calls. Social media came in with 11% and push notifications at 10%.

“The most traditional methods of mobile communication were the most preferred. A very small percentage of people prefer the newer methods of mobile communication,” Adams says.

The study showed that 86% of those who responded said they want to communicate with businesses via mobile in the customer care environment, but only 58% of companies are using mobile in that way, and 47% of businesses said it’s not the best way to contact customers.

“It’s important not to confuse channel with device—separating mobile from a messaging channel like email may not make sense,” Adams says.

If marketers turn their attention to how consumers want to be contacted, they can close that gap in consumer perception and deliver better customer service.

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cy), email (which can be used as a CRM channel to keep in touch with your customers and to drive additional sales and engagement) and even SEO, as a vast majority of searches that drive traffic to websites are brand searches, Faris says. Creating relevant and engaging content across all channel is critical for marketing teams.

“Those are some of the main vehicles for keeping in touch with customers, and in order to make that an engaging experience for customers, you have to have engaging content and not just ramming brand and product content down their throats. You need more informational and educational and entertaining content in order to scale those programs up. Content is really the anchor of a high-quality CRM program,” he says.

SOCIAL MEDIA & CRM

How can marketers bring CRM and these channels together? First, make sure that you’re cross-pollinating your social followers and your email list.

“It can be as simple as asking your social followers to sign up for emails and letting them know that they’re going to get something different on email than they’re going to get on the social channel and vice versa, letting the email list know about your social offering and the value there. The more touch points you have with the consumer, the better you’re going to be able to endear them to the brand’s influence down along the path of purchase,” Faris says.

Social sign-on technology such as Janrain allows website and mobile visitors to easily register and log in with their existing social network and email identities from Facebook, Google, Twitter and LinkedIn, and can improve registration rates by 50% while opening the door to collecting rich permission-based customer profile data.



“If you can get customers to sign in to their online accounts or to sign up for email using their social login, then you get exposure to a lot more information about the customer and can use that information to provide a more relevant experience on a one-to-one or one-to-few basis,” Faris says.

The easiest application of this ties to email—you get someone to sign up for email newsletter or email offer program using social sign-on technology and you can get exposure to things like marital status, where they live, what their interests are.

“That’s really rich data for you to be able to provide a more relevant email for that person and people that fit their profile. You can start to provide that shareable content that aligns with their interests,” Faris says.

Marketers can also use that data for broader content marketing programs. By aggregating the interests of a large group of customers and segmenting it out, you can better formulate a content strategy and the types of content topics to cover.

Another way to leverage social as a CRM channel is to take your email list and upload it into Facebook’s Power Editor advertising platform and actually start to reach your current customers with Facebook ads.

“We know that less than five percent of your actual followers will see any given post on Facebook, so you have to enhance that with Facebook advertising,” Faris says.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

The future is bright for marketers leveraging CRM tech solutions, and the trend of increased flexibility and integration with other tech solutions looks to continue.

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REAL-TIME CRM/CIM SOLUTIONS

Pittsburgh-based PNC Financial Services Group wanted to continue to strengthen its brand identity by building a compelling customer experience driven by marketing data, analytics and customer insight. The bank envisioned a relationship with their customers in which relevant, personalized actions and offers are delivered in the right channel, at the right time. This goal required a comprehensive solution capable of coordinating all of the interactions with a customer across all channels and in real time, so that each interaction optimizes the outcome for the individual and the bank.

PNC leveraged Pegasystem's business process management and real-time decisioning technology, and the bank's Customer Interaction Management system (CIM) is now a centralized hub for managing all customer treatments across all channels. The bank sees Pega as the "brain" that automatically analyzes customer data and the context of the inbound interaction, and then makes a decision on the Next-Best-Action based on this data.

"This [new initiative] enables us to deliver interactions the way customers want to see a message, when they want to see it. It's a big part of the future way that we're going to be interacting with customers," John DeMarchis, senior vp of customer management, PNC.

This allows each recommended customer treatment – whether it is a cross-sell, purchase of a new product, or a needed service – to be delivered in real time, with Pega automatically adjusting the process to match the situation. Pega ensures the customer models used to

drive the treatment strategies stay relevant with adaptive analytics that learn "on the fly" and adjust models automatically, relieving the bank from having to manually retool them whenever there are changes in customer behavior or market conditions, for example.

Because decisioning is managed centrally, the bank gains consistent customer treatments and automated workflow processes across channels. If a consumer accepts an offer in one channel, Pega immediately removes the treatment from any other channel so that there is no duplication. The bank can seamlessly transition offers across channels, such as offering a line of credit when the customer visits an ATM with an option to get more information sent to the customer's smart phone or email. Important messages, such as fraud alerts, can be proactively sent to multiple channels chosen by the customer.

CIM began to deliver positive revenue lift from day one and has driven exceptional levels of customer satisfaction. Temkin Ratings rates PNC as number one in customer experience among northeastern banks in the US and second nationally – only behind credit unions. In addition, PNC is the only US bank to receive an "A" in online marketing from Bank Monitor. The solution has been equally popular with customer service representatives, who no longer have to probe customers during interactions for potential cross-sell and up-sell opportunities as the system now prompts them with relevant offers and guides them through the process.

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"I think you're going to see more consolidation, more focus on the customer, but also the ability to handle complexity and multiple channels, multiple existing systems and to tie into big data. If you're only thinking about one channel, you will get killed. More organizations will look at customer lifetime value and being able to have that information at everyone's fingertips at the right time," Burek says.

Also look for CRM technology to leverage a greater degree of automation and personalization through data.

"I think we'll get to a point where the best marketers are doing a lot more one-to-one communi-

cation that is data-driven and automated than the bash and blast email and social strategies of the past. You'll see things a lot more segmented, and a lot more of reaching out to single people in an automated way with content and offers that are highly relevant to them," Faris says.



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The Authority on Measurable Marketing: Our mission is to seek out the best in measurable marketing intelligence—and then analyze, summarize and organize it for marketing and C-level executives.