

Reconceiving customer relations via e-mail:

Reinforcing proximity between customer and brand for maximising revenues

With the rapid proliferation of new technologies - Internet, websites, blogs, e-mails, SMS, social networks, etc. - the physical remoteness of the customer from the brand poses problems. The difficulty now resides in how to reconceive new forms of customer proximity.

Brands need to reconceive their relations with their customers with the aim of maintaining a trusted relationship.

For consumers, the Internet, e-mail, websites, SMS and the like are tools that are both fun to use and personal, and are firmly anchored in their lifestyles. For companies, they represent vital channels for making savings, modernising their communication and being present where consumers spend such a large chunk of their time.

Social phenomenon? Undoubtedly. Economic imperative? Most certainly. One thing is for sure: companies have no choice but to encourage their customers to use virtual channels such as e-mails, websites and SMS's more and more regularly. However, they need to strive even harder in their efforts to achieve personalisation, transparency and the multiplication of contact points in order to maintain proximity between brand and client.

An all-round view of the consumer? No matter what the sector of activity, whether in BtoB or in BtoC, consumers expect more from their relations with a given brand: they expect the brand to recognise their individuality, to offer regular support through advice or services via a multiplicity of contact points. This relationship with the brand necessarily implies a new approach to marketing within companies. The challenge of e-CRM resides in combining the resources needed to increase corporate revenues and the relational resources for acquiring and retaining customers. Knowing consumers better enables better responses to be made to their specific needs, while respecting their personal diversity.

Although some companies will wager on coming up with something entirely original in order to increase their revenues, it is generally more pertinent to place the emphasis on interactivity between customer and brand in order to keep the lines of communication open without appearing intrusive. Companies need to be capable of proposing a personalised experience for each customer; orchestrating all the internal and external components - both online and offline - that make it possible to obtain information about individuals.

Corporate marketing departments need to focus on the customer and personalise the customer's consumer experience. The strength lies in the personalisation. We therefore need to know the consumer in order to be able to offer the service that he or she desires. Knowing your customer in order to deliver to them the message that they expect at just the right time implies analysing existing behavioural and statistical data or collecting missing data.

How is this done? To have an all-round view of each consumer and to broadcast personalised and automated messages, companies need to opt for implementing a marketing campaign management platform that is capable of managing multi-brand, multi-country and multi-channel databases; an authentically specialised decision-making tool that also facilitates analysis and reporting, the management of e-mail and SMS marketing campaigns, the scripting of multi-channel campaigns and the targeting of high value-added segments, as well as serving as a tool for evaluating behavioural criteria in order to improve campaign efficiency.

A new manner of conceiving marketing strategy is emerging, and with it the notion that even the hyper-targeted, hyper-segmented product offering is progressively losing ground in the face of the importance of customer relations. Print supporting the website, which itself supports the store, itself supporting the SMS and e-mail channels, and they in turn supporting customer loyalty.

It is about differentiating your communication in order to increase your chances of rising above the competition.