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Thought Leadership Business Process Outsourcing



Evolving a product line to address consumers' changing needs is imperative to remain competitive. We understand that anticipating, reacting and adopting to market changes is necessary to attract new customers and gain loyalty from existing ones. And in this highly connected, digital world we live in, the pace is accelerating. Buyers expect faster, more productive, easy-to-use products, with style.

The rapid demand for better, smarter products keeps companies hungry to produce the next best thing and outpace their competitors. We see this with smartphones, computers and other consumer electronic devices. But this trend is also having an impact on manufacturers of cars, power generating turbines, furnaces and even home dishwashers.

Reaching Customers

Market segmentation, pricing strategies, brand differentiation, advertising and sales models are all parts of the process that organizations use to position and sell their products and services. Companies that effectively target their prospects and customers using data analytics, multiple forms and channels of communication, and comprehensive customer service models gain advantages over firms who have yet to deploy these strategies.

My colleague, Susan Kelly, authored a number of articles about the strategies and tools organizations are using to attract new clients. What I find interesting is the creative business models that are now being utilized between organizations and third-party service providers. These models speed time-to-market activities, improve customer acquisition rates, drive new revenue and generate better business results, while saving time and money.

Keeping up with the pace

Today's progressive, digital world also has organizations shifting the way they deliver product documentation. Customers expect more than the "manual in the box." They require quick online access to the most recent version of user manuals, maintenance procedures, troubleshooting guides and upgrade information. And posting PDFs of these materials on a company website just starts to scratch the consumer's growing needs.

Product catalogs are being formatted for the iPad and other mobile devices. Companies are establishing their own YouTube channels and monitoring customer sentiment on social networking sites. And I'm also starting to see manufacturers send more digital promotions which even leverage the GPS positioning capabilities found on many mobile devices to provide relevant product information, including directing the customer to local retailers.



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Have you noticed more and more of the square, two-dimensional QR codes on product packaging, newspapers and advertisements? These “quick response” codes can provide a consumer with quick access to a URL or web page with additional company and product information.

Publishing marketing and product materials across multiple, cross-media communication platforms can be a challenge. Information technology systems that were built to keep company information internal, private and secure are now having to adapt to publish more and more information to the web. Many organizations are just not equipped or prepared to react quickly enough to consumer expectations. Fortunately, content management and publishing experts and cloud-based hosting, computing and publishing solutions are helping companies manage this transition.

These trends are also impacting downstream customer support services. A Gartner Research, Inc., report, focusing on the top uses and benefits for successful social CRM (*Top Use Cases & Benefits for Successful Social CRM*, Dec – 2010 by Adam Sarner, Ed Thompson, Michael Dunne & Jim Davis), concluded that customer service departments are successfully utilizing social media applications to generate measurable business benefits, particularly around call deflection. The paper also suggested that during the next five years, community peer-to-peer support is expected to replace some level of the current Tier 1 phone support in the top 1,000 companies.

Momentum will continue to build

I believe that these shifts will gain momentum over the next year. The explosion of smartphones, cellular technology, hot sites and other mobile devices provides consumers with instantaneous access to the web. In the first 9 months on the market, Apple sold over 14 million iPad tablets and that number is expected to more than double in 2011. RIM, Motorola and Dell have also launched tablet products which will further expand the market. As the tablet market grows, product strategists must nurture both the app ecosystem and the browser environment—both will be key channels for delivering content-rich experiences.

Today’s knowledge workers, virtual sales forces and consumers have companies approaching things differently. Quickly adapting and being progressive about what’s coming around the corner enables them to remain competitive.

I’ll be participating in an upcoming Customer Care Call Center advisory council. Next month I intend to share my insights from that session. Stay tuned.

Sincerely,



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