

THE INTERNET INVOLVED IN CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

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Abstract - Web technologies allow companies to design a certain image and to attract and generate customers' loyalty. Software applications specialized in customer relationship management assure an improved relationship with the customers. This way, the customers will feel to be treated with more consideration, and that they are granted with more attention, they become more content about the company's products and services and also about the employees' professionalism.

Key words: web technology, software, customer, management

1. INTRODUCTION

Because the globalization of the world economy, companies have been constrained to find new market places for their products, in competition with other companies, in a wide area of cultures and economic media. Free market, the activities diversification, the globalization of the ways used to gratify the needs, have simulated an exacerbate raise of the competition. A lot of companies have oriented themselves toward the manufacture of their own products all over the world, and in the meantime they changed their structure in such a manner that their products should be sold all over the world.

Quick changes of the companies' environment bring pressure on them. As a fact fundamental changes were made in the structure and the activity of the companies. They were forced to move from an approach based on product to an approach centered on client.

Customer relationship management (CRM) became popular only at the middle of the 90's. And this is because the early 90's brought major changes of the way in which the companies approach the market.

Customer relationship management is based on the idea of situating the client in the center of the company's culture and activity. It assumes a long-term relationship with client, fated to assure high profits and competitive advantages to the company. From the classical 4P (price, product, promotion, place) a move toward 3C (customer value, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty) takes place.

Certain companies during time fought to create brands based on high quality and low prices for their products. What has changed was the impact of the decisional power of the client on company sales.

Apparition and spread of the Internet over the world increases the decisional power of the buyers. Through mouse clicks buyers chooses their products and implicitly the producer. In these conditions is more difficult for a company to attract new buyers and keep the elder ones. They must orient toward solutions that assures long relationships with customers to make them loyal. Thus, Customer Relationship Management offers a complex system of methodologies strategies and software applications in order to help the company in organizing and efficient administration of its relations with customers.

2. CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND INTERNET

Maintaining an old client is less expensive than to attract a new one. In these conditions more companies take into consideration the possibility of CRM software integration in their activity. The most frequent motivations were (figure 1):

- the increase of the number of the loyal clients;
- efficient feed-back regarding the competition and competitive advantage regarding concurrence;
- the increase of the quality of the services offered to their clients;

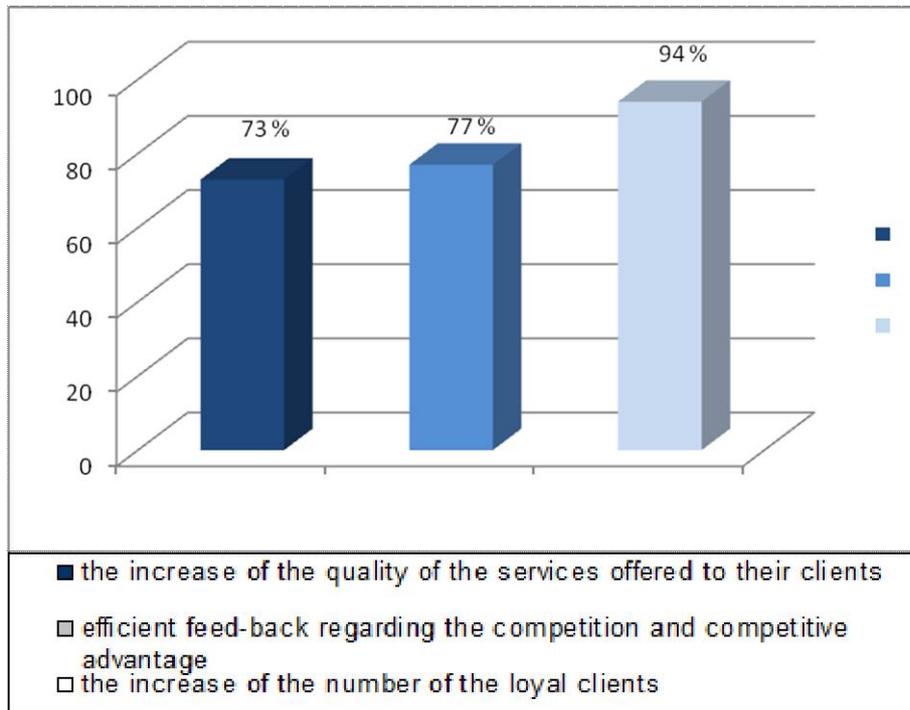


Figure 1 The top three strategic motives

CRM software solutions evolved from an older technology - Computer Integrated Telephony. According to this technology after a phone call, a computer monitor offers a personalized message. This way attention was accorded to the clients, making him to feel important.

CRM application market boomed in recent past time and has a wide variety. The common point of all application is the fact that the client remarks that he is individually treated, with consideration, and all wishes, expectations and dissatisfactions regarding offered products and services. “The most important thing is that the client remarks that he is treated with consideration, his problems are known and sometimes he is redirected to the same operator, thus creating an almost personal relationship”. This operator should be perceived as a close person if for example client’s birth date and zodiac,

details about family, children or photo are screened on the monitor during conversation. [Bal04]

In the meantime, any of the CRM applications assure:

- communication support;
- marketing opportunities identification
- correct sale strategy selection
- collected information analysis and correct tactical decisions regarding the customer relationship improvement
- clients needs, expectations and wishes gratification in post sale activities

global vision of the whole business.

CRM software uses the databases potential and is based on the Internet. Thus it facilitates the interaction with clients through the speediest and most efficient communication media – the Internet. (figure 2) [WEB06]

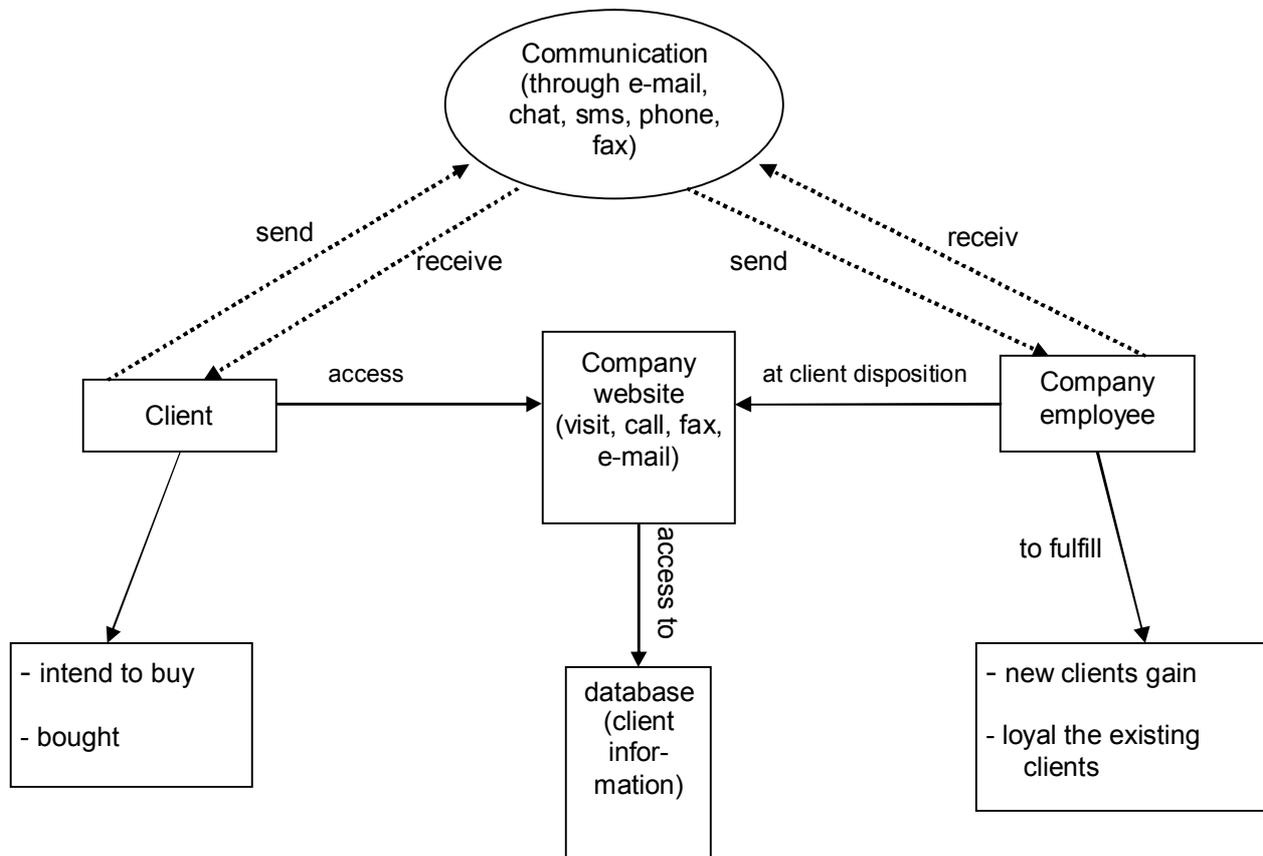


Fig. 2 Interaction between company and client through Internet

An increasing number of companies use websites, so that the internet begins to capture the managerial thoughts interest. A website is important for a company activity, because:

- It permits the clients and potential customers to achieve information about the company activity and to permanently interact with it;
- It permits data collection about the site visitors (name, e-mails, preferences, etc), in order to transform them in clients;
- It permits data collection about the company's clients in order to create a database. This database is useful to a better understanding of the client in order to make him loyal to the company;
- It permits the creation of client services specific problems database

The infrastructure provided by the Internet offers the companies the possibility to communicate with their clients in the same manner they communicate through phone or fax.

The technologies and applications specific to the Internet offer new communication methods and cooperation with clients.

The complexity of the interaction with clients through multiple channels (direct correspondence, phone receive center, fax, e-mail, chat, sms, etc) indicates the fact that

the modern technology can reduce the employees effort and saving of costs.

At the moment a lot of companies consider that the main advantage offered by the websites consists in the fact that its visitors can inform themselves, can find by themselves answers to their questions, thus minimizing the company efforts and increasing their efficiency.

Mainly, websites contains answer pages to the most frequent questions of the buyers. Through a simple mouse click anyone interested can obtain the desired information.

In the case of the companies that use systems, complex software solutions, clients questions are analyzed being than searched in "the information base" possible answers. The intelligent software solutions "learn" from the solved cases. They add in "the information base" the newly achieved information.

It has been noticed that a major part of the buyers prefers a direct communication with the company employees. Regarding this, software solutions of the CRM type, even they are based on the Internet, include facilities which permits a client to be contacted or to contact directly, through phone, company agents. In case of the integrated informatics systems the call center instantly identifies the client and accesses the history of his interaction with the company. The operator can use this information in the conversation with the client so that

the client can notice that is treated with consideration, that he is important to that company.

Multiple possibilities of communication take into account client wishes for the preferred communication channel.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

CRM software market is huge and permanently increases. Anyhow, in many situations the implementation of such software doesn't conduct toward the achievement of the wished objectives.

The main cause consists in the lack of the way in which the relationship client-company is seen. Inadequate use of high performance software doesn't assure the expected results.

When CRM software is implemented, the client-company relationship notion needs to be redefined in the context of that specific company, also taking into account cultural differences between different zones of the world. The company has to develop its own business strategy oriented toward clients. Only in such way the chances of success increases.

Some things need to be taken into account by the company:

- to construct its own personalized model of the client relationship management
- to take into account the CRM strategy, not only the CRM technology. A company needs to look after:
 - o the increasing of the client satisfaction in order to make them loyal;
 - o the client relationship expansion;
 - o the costs minimization;
 - o the income maximization;
 - o brand consolidation;
- to facilitate the communication with the clients through a variety of means:
 - o the use of the websites, thus reducing the costs needed to administrate the relationship with the clients;
 - o technical assistance, information regarding products and use instructions on websites, available 24 hours a day 7 days a week.
 - o the use of the internet cookies to find customers wishes, preferences, interests, in order to personalize the product offer
 - o friendly mechanism of client reclamation recording. An unknown client dissatisfaction cannot be solved thus transforming it into an important source of client dissatisfaction
 - o an efficient mechanism to permit the client's discontentment solving. A quickly solved discontentment conducts toward the increase of the client satisfaction.
 - o Identification of the way in which the clients perceive the quality notion, in order to assure personalized services, corresponding to their expectations and demands.
- to invest also in innovation not only in CRM technology infrastructure. Conducted studies reveals

that 30% of the funds allocated to IT development should be used for innovation

- to invest in dashboard development, as it is known that they a significant impact on company performances.

For satisfactory results of the CRM software implementation at the market level and to the economic demands a total involvement of the company is needed. At any moment a client can turn on to the products of another company if they satisfy his expectations, tastes and wishes. This is why the company needs to know exactly what to offer its clients, when and how should it offer its products.

A small or medium sized company can quickly adapt itself to the market changes. The CRM strategy and its sustaining technology need to be flexible adaptive to continuously changing conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

CRM uses strategic planning, personalized marketing technology and techniques to permanently optimize the company relationship with its clients.

CRM is a business strategy which puts the client in the center of company processes and practices.

In a competitive market a company success cannot be assured only by the diversity of its products, but also by the difference between the services they offer their clients.

To bring benefits, CRM implementation needs to take place only when the company product-centered market approach moves toward a client-centered market approach.

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