



Demystifying CRM

Customer relationship management is about knowing your customer. It is not about complex hardware and tortuous software.

Customer relationship management is rather like having a good supplier that takes the pain out of transactions. They keep in touch when you want them to keep in touch, in the way you would like. They understand your business so they make suggestions about matters that might interest or benefit you. They are on-hand and personal when you need them to listen, so orders are fast and problems are resolved quickly. Difficult matters are dealt with by someone you trust.

If you know your customers, you can understand their needs and expectations - and significantly - meet them. Meeting customers' needs means you can keep them close, expand relationships and maximise their lifetime value to your organisation.

If you don't know your customers the business consequences can be disastrous - very quickly. At worst, customers simply defect and you have no way of knowing about or addressing the matter. Plus, disaffected customers talk about their experiences far more than satisfied customers, so word of mouth quickly damages confidence in your services or products.

How you keep in touch with your customer is - ultimately - irrelevant. It could be by carrier pigeon and tin cans on string. But, of course, it has to be effective and meet the needs of the day.

In 2002, customers have unprecedented choice not only in what they buy but also in how they buy (and communicate). They are also busier and less patient so what influences purchasing decisions has changed. Easy access and fast response are genuine points of differentiation between one supplier and another.

Broadsystem develops today's leading contact systems which enable total interactive communication via all the inbound and outbound communication means available - including web chat, automated voice, direct mail, SMS and, of course, people and conversation.

Needs can be prioritised by response medium, yet assisted, personal service is always to hand, which eliminates the neutrality of mere technology. Intelligent routing means it is possible to route customers to a familiar representative. Transaction histories are available to provide business continuity so the customer recognises that they are valued by your organisation.

Naturally, carrier pigeons can't cope with more than a handful of deliveries a day and today's organisations need large resources that remain flexible and sensitive. Broadsystem services are sophisticated and scalable enough to handle large volumes of traffic without compromising customer relations. That said, the CRM principle is an old and simple one: understand what the customer wants and give it to them when they want it and how they want it. Technology is merely the enabler.





You also need from your CRM partner the ability to make the most of the data gathered from all the ongoing communication. When the data is interpreted correctly, you gain actionable insight into market trends as well as the ability to understand individual or local requirements in detail. Your outbound marketing is therefore more effective as you no longer have to guess or play a numbers game, and you can respond to inbound customer contact with greater awareness.

An effective CRM process is cyclical and genuinely end-to-end, from customer, through contact, via database, back to customer. The information you have at your fingertips comprises up-to-the-minute intelligence.

And so with closer contact you gain greater insight, which is the foundation for sustainable business growth and profitability. Though often an intangible commodity, CRM is a priceless philosophy.

