



Three Steps to Success: Building Your Business with a Web-Hosted Predictive Dialer

Step 1 - Create a Customer-Centric Business Strategy

What is a Customer-Centric Business Strategy?

Today's business strategies almost always include some mention of customer-centricity. When entered into the Yahoo search engine, the term "customer centricity" produces approximately 715,000 hits. When entered into Google search, it returns a mind blowing 2,850,000 results. That is a lot of available information. And it's all made possible by an urgent need for companies to improve the way they do business.

So what does customer-centric really mean? Website *WikiAnswers.com* defines "customer-centric" as "an organization that is operated from its customer's point of view. For example, the organization makes certain it can be easily contacted by its customers." *Wikipedia* defines "customer-centricity" as "the orientation of a company to the needs and behaviors of its customers, rather than internal drivers (such as the quest for short term profit)." What is apparent from these two views is that, in a customer-centric enterprise, what customers want is of the utmost importance. What is less obvious is that every function within the company needs to take customer satisfaction and value into account.

The Value of a Customer-Centric Strategy

As the economy slows, many successful professionals are looking for ways to increase market share. They know that, through sustained market growth, they will be less affected by the overall decline in consumer spending, and be in a better position when the recovery begins.

However, countless companies are experiencing problems so severe that their confidence in traditional marketing is eroding. These companies are seeing a reduction in customer loyalty, a loss of brand value, and an inability to influence both existing and potential customers.

In many cases, the "a-ha" moment is the discovery of customer-centric thinking. Their current business formula is no longer right for their customer community, but they don't know why. Now, their goal is to collect, analyze, and act upon customer knowledge. In

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order to do that, companies need to continuously touch current and prospective clients in a way that not only facilitates complete customer satisfaction, but also solicits vital intelligence that can help it maintain that satisfaction level well into the future.

Customer, Brand, and Price Loyalty

Harvard Business Review found that a completely satisfied customer is six times more likely to re-buy a product than a customer who is simply satisfied. What's more, the cost of attracting a new customer has been found to be over six times higher than the cost of retaining a current one. This is why marketers have been working so hard to create customer and brand loyalty.

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In the recent article titled "Of Shopping Habits and Brand Loyalty," Radhika Chadha argues that a customer buys not so much because of a preference for a brand, but rather how that product is "positioned" within a set of considerations. More simply put, purchasing decisions are made based on how well a product meets the buyer's requirements.

If this is true, and brand loyalty is dropping, then it is highly likely that customer considerations or requirements are changing. This change is probably influenced by the weak economy, but that conclusion would be more about the market as a whole, than about a particular company's customers. The new buzzword among marketers is "price loyalty." But for the average business, this would be a guess. Until an organization actually begins to collect and analyze customer information, it has no way to truly understand new needs and requirements.

Consumer Influence and The Customer Experience

Customer-centric companies want to know what their customer is thinking, and why? Funny thing about that is that

customers are also interested in what other customers are thinking. So much so that they discuss their experiences on the Internet in what has come to be known as social networking. They chat about almost everything, including purchase decisions and experiences.

The implications of social networking are far-reaching for businesses. More and more brand equity is now built on the Internet, as customers share their experiences with other potential customers who seek out their opinions. The ability to buy influence with advertising and testimonials is quickly being displaced by the actual experiences of the customers who use the products.

Collecting New Types of Information

It takes all kinds of data to run an enterprise. And for the most part, many systems have been developed to gather, analyze, and act on that data. MRP, AP, AR, Payroll, CRM, SFA, and CEM and other systems have evolved in separate and independent ways. A Knowledge Management (KM) system is a means of organizing and managing all enterprise data in one centralized location. KM strategies are founded on the belief that the value of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The problem is that data is typically created within transactional systems that record information about business processes and customer transactions. At best, businesses are surveying the customer regarding their satisfaction level. But rarely do they collect information that would help them predict customer behavior or determine changing requirements.

The problem lies in the fact that there is no transaction-based computer system eagerly awaiting this type of data. This information is critical to decision support processes like analysis and planning. But most businesses perform these activities annually, begrudgingly and without the specific data required. They have become so conditioned to simply using what data is easily available, that vital functions like planning and analysis are myopic, and companies find themselves competing with other companies who use the same data sources. Is it any wonder why there is so little true innovation in business today?

Take the example of an R&D department for a company that makes software applications. Every time it develops a



new release or product, it purchases some market research, and uses the information contained in that report to decide what they should develop. But what if that same company was more proactive, and instead collected information during the regular course of customer interactions.

Questions like these could be asked:

1. What business strategies are you employing?
2. What is the biggest business problem you face?
3. What would make the application easier to use?
4. What functions of the application go unused?
5. What functions would you add to our application?

Another great example can be found in any credit and collections group. Many past due customers don't pay because something is wrong. If these organizations regularly collected data on customers that are 60, 90, or 120 days past due, they could understand and solve some ongoing service problems, get accounts up-to-date, and prevent non-payment in the future.

The Key Elements of a Customer-Centric Strategy

To build a truly effective customer-centric strategy, you must consider three important elements. First, recognize that the process of planning, execution, and analysis is cyclical and should be done regularly. Once a year is not enough, and will result in a notable disconnection between you and your customers. Second, include the whole company in this cyclical process. This is not just a marketing effort, it involves everyone who works or interacts with your clients. Finally, make sure you are proactive in your collection of customer information. Every time you are in communication with a customer, take the time to build your knowledge. Reach out and interact with the customer as often as you can.

Step 2 - Use a Predictive Dialer to Reach Your Customers

Which members of your staff speak to customers most often? The answer is simple – your contact center agents. In fact, that is why contact centers are created. All customer interaction is concentrated into one efficient group, whose specialty is client communication and service. Customer service representatives and telesales personnel are uniquely trained to expand your customer knowledge

base. And, outbound calling is an important facet of that process. When you are unable to get the right mix of information from customer-initiated contacts, an outbound calling campaign can help fill in the blanks.

Outbound dialing technology comes in many forms, but the ultimate goal is to increase "talk time". A predictive dialer does this by eliminating manual dialing, which often results in FAX numbers, disconnected numbers, busy numbers, and voice mail. Usually thought of as the most efficient dialing technology available, a predictive dialer can intelligently predict when your reps will be available to handle a live customer call, and then work to produce one. Typically this means that multiple calls are being placed simultaneously in order to keep reps talking. Because the system transfers only live customer calls, your staff will spend less time attempting to make connections, and more time collecting the information you need.

Step 3 – Create Technical and Cost Advantages with Web-Hosting and VoIP

Web-Hosted is SaaS

The Internet is evolving into a new participatory and social environment known as Web 2.0. As a result, many companies are seeking the benefits of Web-hosted software applications. In this new model, often called Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), the software application runs on a server that provides functionality to client computers located anywhere on the Internet.

The benefits of Web-hosted applications are significant. The application subscriber does not need to purchase expensive servers, operating software, security software, network software, application software, and does not need to assign IT staff to maintain it.

The remote server system is typically secured and protected in ways thought to be too comprehensive and expensive for an individual application. Off site replication, regular backups, virus protection, and firewalls are typically the norm for the server computing center.

Since all hardware and software is already up and running at a safe and secure facility, set-up can be completed quickly, sometimes in just a few hours or less.



Ongoing upgrades or functional improvements can be added to a SaaS application without the expense of individual implementations. The application user is always up-to-date and current.

VoIP Reduces Costs, Creates Flexibility and Improves Working Conditions

Many companies employ representatives and supervisors who work from branches, home offices, and other remote locations. A Web-hosted predictive dialer with Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) can be conveniently accessed – anytime, anywhere – from any Internet-enabled PC. This is possible because the analog voice is digitized and sent over the Internet, along with the data from the application. Just plug in a headset, download a soft phone, access the Web-based calling screen, and get to work.

Companies that use Web-hosted or SaaS applications don't have to worry about networking offices together or buying multiple systems. These applications utilize the existing network capabilities of the Internet, providing the ultimate in flexibility and scalability. One application can serve your entire business, regardless of where your employees reside.

Great advances have been made regarding the quality of VoIP on the public Internet. Because so many Internet providers have VoIP offerings of their own, they have implemented important advances in their networks to provide higher levels of voice quality. Although occasional issues still do occur, the advantages of cost and flexibility now outweigh the rare problems that can be encountered. Often, customers find that problems with voice quality can be traced to easily addressable issues such as bus speed, PC capacity, or the service level of the Internet connection.

Because VoIP and Web-hosted solutions untie the employee from the office, businesses have found that employees lost to personal issues in the past can often be retained. What's more, employees can be hired from almost anywhere with these types of applications. Jobs that may not be lucrative in an expensive urban setting can be a prime opportunity for workers in suburban or rural areas. Working from home eliminates the problems of a long commute, and improves the value of a part-time job.

The SafeSoft Promise

SafeSoft is committed to removing the investment barrier to technology adoption. When you implement a SafeSoft predictive dialing solution, you get a complete package - for one affordable monthly fee per seat. That includes domestic long distance and voice services like announcements and call recording. Customers can simply "pay as they go," using the service as long as they like, and stopping at anytime, with no cancellation fees or penalties of any kind. We are changing the industry by delivering the promise and power of the Internet in ways that free companies to innovate and adapt.

About SafeSoft Solutions

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Find Out More

To learn more about hosted predictive dialer systems and other on-demand call center software from SafeSoft Solutions – and how they can help you boost customer satisfaction and retention – visit our Web site at www.safesoftsolutions.com.

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