



## **Customer Experience is the next competitive battleground**

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### Confermit Opinion

In the blockbuster film, *When Harry Met Sally*, when Sally told Harry “I want it how I want it,” he just snickered. But that was 1989, and most consumers got it how the company delivered it. Twenty years later, the tables have turned. Not only do more customers want it how they want it, they increasingly expect it.

As consumers adopt a variety of technologies that allow them to browse, purchase and obtain service around the clock, companies have had to change the way they do business. Almost all business-to-consumer companies now sell their products and services in stores, online, or via call centres and catalogues.

With so many routes to market, you need to work hard to maintain your brand promise and create a coherent customer experience, irrespective of the channel that individual customers choose. Loyalty and repeat purchases increasingly depend on the quality of service provided and whether a customer feels that his/her opinions, desires and attitudes are taken seriously.

The 2008 Gartner CRM Summit provided some interesting food for thought for all businesses in the current economic downturn. Speakers cited customer retention as a key area of focus for the executive level. CEOs increasingly look to reduce attrition and compete effectively in a world where switching to a competitor’s products is increasingly commonplace and building an enduring relationship with customers is harder to achieve.

Research carried out by the Strativity Group corroborates this point, finding that 95% of executives think that customer experience is the next competitive battleground. Developing an effective Customer Strategy that allows an organization to build long-term customer relationships in order to counteract the ‘switch culture’ is essential.

The situation is even starker now that cash and credit are less readily accessible. Consumer defection is as likely to be to the sidelines as it is to be to the competition.

You can best enhance customer experience, loyalty and advocacy by first measuring it and then showing customers that their opinions count. Feedback Management initiatives enable you to create a two-way dialogue with customers to find out how they feel about a product or service and what factors impact their decision-making process. Such a dialogue serves as a vital component of any successful Customer

Experience strategy. Only by tracking individual ‘pain points’ can you change business processes to improve customer experience, enhance a product offering or provide a personalized service that differentiates you from your competitors.

As with sales channels, feedback technology has evolved to the point where you can communicate with your customers both ‘how they want it’ and ‘when they want it’, whether in-store, online, via IVR or the contact center. And you can leverage that feedback into an enterprise-wide program that directly impacts business results.

With Feedback Management software you can turn the multi-channel environment into a highly-effective communication and marketing mechanism. More than just market research, in which the company solicits the answer to a specific question at a particular time from a large population, feedback seeks data on each customer’s experience on an ongoing basis.

Driving action through the business upon receipt of the feedback, whether through automated system alerts triggered by very strong responses to specific questions, or through trending attitude over time, gives you the ability to integrate the voice of the customer into every facet of your business.

By combining real time understanding of customer attitude with key business performance metrics, you will be in a much better position to differentiate your business on the basis of customer experience and quality of service.

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