OBJECTIVES OF THIS ARTICLE
In this chapter, we want to look at
· CRM strategy and Customer strategy
· They have much to do with what the employees need to know before they can evolve into a customer-centric enterprise.
· We will also need to know some of the basic things that must be present in a good customer strategy.

When we talk about customer care in either a product-centric or customer-centric organization, we are talking about a specialized centre that is saddled with the responsibility of resolving customer issues. Many organisations are now realizing the need to put customer issues on the front burner with dedicated staff to handle customer issues.

The grave mistake that many organisations are making today is that the majority of them equate customer service with CRM. Some even assume that every Dick and Harry can be a Customer Care Representative. CSR. This is wrong.

CRM is broader than customer service. In CRM, you are not only concerned about the CSR that is asked to attend to customer issues or complaints, but you are looking holistically at the whole organizational structure. You want to know why the business is on. What is their perception of their customers?

Do they treat customers as one of those things? Are they doing business from the customers' perspective? All these come into play when we are considering CRM but they are not important for customer service.

In a customer-centric enterprise, the entire members of the organizations are trained to place the customer first and do business from their own perspective. In this kind of organisation, profit is not the main motive for establishing a business.

A CRM savvy organisation believes that profit will come, but not immediately. Their immediate concern is to exceed the customer's expectation and gain their confidence. Once this is done, profit will start coming in torrents.

Contact or Call Centre

The call centre is more or less similar in function to Customer Care. They are set up so that, customers can call in and lodge their complaints. The call centre agent is expected to work on the complaints and ensure that customer issues are resolved completely.

One thing is that is very paramount when setting up contact centres is that the agents dedicated to man contact centres must be empowered to resolve customer issues completely. They must have all the necessary data that they needed in order to resolve customer issues completely.

airtel Customer Care/Toll-Free Number

 That is why organisations must deliberately seek to know more about their customers, which will ultimately help them in their bid to serve their customers better.

This is one attribute that contributes to the success of call centres in organisations. The call centres personnel must be able to put themselves customers' shoes. They must not treat customers as "that thing". If they can put self in their customers' shoes, ft will heir them in being more proactive when customer's issues arise.

Professionalism is also important when it comes to the management of call centres. Many call centres are badly managed. The arc filled with people who have no iota of passion for the job that they are committed to. They also lack the pre-requisite knowledge of what call centres are meant to do. Ibis is outrightly bad for the growth of any organisation.

Customer Strategy vs CRM Strategy

CRM is the science of evolving a customer-centred organisation. It is aimed at making sure that customers' needs are met irrespective of the channel that they have chosen to relate with the organization. This will ensure that both customers and other stakeholders involved in their satisfaction are fulfilled at the end of the day.

Many organizations today have failed in their bid to evolve into a customer-centric enterprise. This is because they are putting the cat before the horse. Some of these organisations have put CRM tools on the ground before evolving a clear customer strategy. A good example of this is an organization that wished to be customer-centric but has not given proper orientation to their staff on how to relate with customers in a customer-centric enterprise.

As would be seen later, many organisations in this Nigeria treat their customers like very poorly They attend to customers as if they were doing them a big favour, All they are interested in is how to increase their sales and not customer satisfaction. This is very bad. An organisation must have a clear principle and blueprint that states how they will relate with their customers before bringing in technology to back it up.

One of the CRNI strategies that an organisation on this line must do, is to segment their customer base and evolve means of doing business from a customer perspective. Like was said in the previous chapter, an organisation, for example, a bank. must be

Able to analyse its customer base. They can be divided into various segments such as youths, adults, illiterates, learned, corporate bodies, and government customers among others. They must be able to decide on ways by which each of the customer segments wants to be served. The Bank also has to meet them at the right place with the right products and services.

We should state it here that before an organisation can clearly segment its customer base; they must be able to know the benefits that prospects and customers will derive from using their product. They must also be able to say without mincing word the exact number of customers that they have.

Above all, the starting point of a new CRM initiative is for an organisation to develop a

customer strategy. They must be able to know the calibre of customers that they want. They should also have a well laid down means of attracting the right calibre of customers/prospects that they want into their Life Cycle.

The only means of attaining this is for the organisation to embark on "Customer Segmentation and Profiling". We talk about Customer Segmentation now while we lets customer profiling comes next.

Customer Segmentation

Customer Segmentation is the process of dividing customers into mutually exclusive groups, presumably because customers within each group are more similar to each other than to others.

Customer Segmentation involves grouping customers together based on a certain parameter. At times, when organisations examine their customer's base, they might discover that some of their customers have certain things in common. This might make the organisation introduce products and services that will meet each customer's need.

A Typical *Example*

If you consider Etisalat Nigeria very critically you will see that the organisation adopted the principle of customer segmentation. They have discovered that they have different categories of customers. We have youths who would prefer to join the easy cliq network where there is free browsing, discount call rate among cliques among others. We also have an elite for the rich and easy starter for the working customers.

Customer Profiling

A serious customer-centric enterprise must be able to decide and reach a conclusion on the calibre of customers that they wished to attract into their customer base. If an organisation wants to embark on this, they must carry out need assessment in order to discover the needs of their customers. The organization must find out what consumers really want and decide on how to meet those needs.

The organisation must also formulate strategies on how to retain and grow their customer base. This involves profiling. In profiling, the organisation tries to gather as much information as possible flout their customer. This will enable them to meet the customer at the right place with the right products and services.

The customer strategy must also be able to come up with policies to be adopted in order to handle the customer that does not fall into the target profile, that is, customers special needs. The main reason why the organisation develop customer profiling is to reduce the cost involved in getting the right customers into their Life Cycle.

Once we have developed products and package that will appeal to different categories of people; we will not have to worry anytime we are having youths as prospects. If we have products and packaging for elites, it will definitely meet the needs of those in that category.

Customer profiling can be based on two parameters which are behaviour or demography. The one that seems to be generic is the one that is based on behaviour. Youths have their own behaviours when it comes to specific needs. As youths, we like the convenience and "free" things. Free browsing, free credit, "buy one and get two free" We also like products and services that enable us to socialize or show that we know what is happening around us.

Benefits of Customer Strategy

Customer strategy serves many purposes in a customer-centric enterprise as it allows the organisation to do a follow-up on the organization's policies. It also allows the organisation to

see its shortcomings from the organization's perspective.

If an organization also wants to have a successful customer strategy it must know all the products and services that compete with that of the organisations for the heart of the customer/prospect.

Note: *Without a proper customer strategy, a CRAM strategy cannot succeed,*

Above all, if an organisation is formulating a customer strategy, the main reason is to make sure that it gain customer loyalty and ensure that customers are satisfied irrespective of the channel that they have chosen to interact with the organisation. This forms the basic foundation of a CRM strategy.

Summary

So far in this chapter, we have talked about CRM strategy and customer strategy We have also said that one can work without the other. We said that before an organisation can formulate a CRM strategy it must have educated its employees on the need and ways of doing business from the customers perspective.

We also discussed customer segmentation which has much to do with dividing your customers into mutually exclusive groups in order to meet them at the right place with the right products. We also have customer profiling which has to do with equipping yourself with enough information about your customers. You might also need to know much about the products and services that are competing with your products for the heart of the customer.

Brainstorming Session

1. What is a call centre? Do you think that the establishment of a cell centre translates to the fact that an organisation is customer-centred?

2. Explain Segmentation and Profiling in relation to Etisalat products and services.

3. Why do you think that organization needs to segment and profile their customers?

3. "Without a proper customer strategy a CRM strategy cannot succeed" how true is this assertion?

Action Point.

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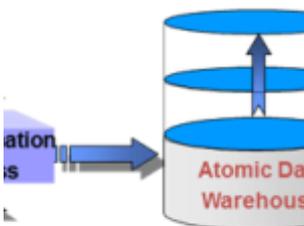A Closer Look At Customer Centricity In CRM

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