

A View from the Top: Providing a Unified View of Your Customers

In an age where companies are constantly campaigning for new customers and striving to sustain the loyalty of existing customers, every resource must be fully leveraged. After all, customers can always elect to go elsewhere, and sometimes it's as easy as the click of a mouse.

Sales and support, the two primary customer-facing departments, stand to reap the greatest benefits from utilizing a unified view of customer information. In the spirit of debate, we offer both sides of the customer interaction spectrum an opportunity to sound off on how utilizing a single-source for managing customer data is helping them get their jobs done.

Sales Strategy: Gaining the 360-degree Customer View

At any given time, a typical account executive must manage the activity of hundreds of active accounts and prospects. Organizing all the information that goes along with a sales campaign, such that you are calling the right clients or prospects, sending the right literature and scheduling the right events in order to win the business, is impossible without CRM. With the emergence of customer relationship management (CRM) technologies, the sales force has at its fingertips a comprehensive tool for managing the entire sales life cycle.

CRM solutions combine complete contact, lead, opportunity and account management in one comprehensive and more importantly, one shared resource. This collective, collaborative repository provides sales executives with valuable information that can help the sales force close new deals and grow business in the install base.

The sales manager stands to benefit from leveraging a single-source CRM solution as well. An integrated CRM solution helps facilitate shorter sales cycles and drives efficiency in the sales force by delivering management a real-time snapshot of the pipeline, so verifiable revenue projections are always on-hand. Predictability is key to the success of a sales organization. With accurate pipeline information supporting the forecast, a high level of predictability is more likely.

Facilitating a Graceful Sales Cycle

In sales, it all starts with the lead and expect ends with a closed deal. Understanding what happens between those two stages is key to improving overall effectiveness. The CRM application should serve as the primary tool throughout the entire sales cycle, through categorizing leads, pinpointing and engaging prospects and converting them into a winning conclusion. CRM will never capture the 'art' of selling. However, it does capture the science of it. And with a better understanding of the science of selling, sales organizations can improve upon their consistency in quota achievement.

By managing lead generation programs through the CRM system, the marketing department can leverage cost/benefits ROI analysis capabilities to help create more focus in marketing efforts, and determine which campaigns turn the best leads. This closed loop process does more than clearly identify the ROI on any particular campaign. It also aligns the sales and marketing teams in that everyone operates with the knowledge that accurate information is key to the decision-making ability of the marketing organization. If they make the right decisions on where to spend marketing dollars, then the sales team gets more leads. With the right exposure into the value proposition, a company truly can get to the closed loop process. And a full implementation of this will improve your overall marketing ROI and ultimately sales effectiveness.

About Epicor

Epicor is a global leader delivering business software solutions to the manufacturing, distribution, retail, hospitality, and services industries. Founded in 1984, Epicor serves 20,000 customers in more than 150 countries, providing solutions in over 30 languages.

EPICOR.

Depending on the sales structure, customers may work with multiple contacts in the organization: outside sales, inside sales, system engineers, consultants, management, and once the prospect is made a customer, the support organization. The transitioning of customers through the sales cycle can be cause for concern if it occurs at the expense of the customer's confidence in the sales team and your company. When working from a single information source, the entire team that reaches out to the customer or prospect can leverage the same data at the same time. Customers quickly realize the benefit of this when, no matter whom they call at your company, they know you have the complete picture of their status.

The Customer Comes First

Nordstrom department stores set a standard for all selling organizations for managing customer relationships – in both its sales techniques and supreme service mentality. By catering to each customer's needs, individually, Nordstrom's has created an environment where customers feel valued, and therefore their loyalty ratings are unsurpassed.

The comparison between a retail store and today's business-to-business enterprise may not be a direct parallel. Still, the "I love my customers" mentality in all customer-facing positions is a requirement for those companies looking to demonstrate a commitment to their customers. As the competition grows broader and more intense, companies must put a stronger emphasis on relationships to reduce churn and increase revenue per customer. As a result, they will look to improved processes reinforced by existing technologies and supplemented by training programs for customer-facing personnel.

Information Exchange: Sharing The Wealth

Every sale could be viewed as equally valuable, although research has shown that selling to a prospect is at least ten times more expensive than selling to an existing customer, making effective management of customer relationships essential for success. What's more, as customers continue their relationship with your organization, access to up-to-date concise

information is as good as gold.

This is particularly critical when selling into the installed-base, where it is absolutely essential that the salesperson have full knowledge of the customers experience with the product and with other customer touch-points in the organization such as customer support and marketing. By providing a unified view of the entire customer lifecycle, the sales force has a wealth of knowledge from which to build their sales strategy.

An integrated solution enables customer information to be shared across the enterprise. It enables employees to answer any question about any customer, at any time – from the status of their account to detailed order and delivery information. By creating a shared information resource, customers will no longer have to call back because they reached the wrong person, or because the person they reached did not have the information needed.

By uniting customer-facing processes through one comprehensive resource, an integrated CRM solution helps drive efficiency while reducing operational costs. This shared wealth of information ensures that everyone interacting with your customers has access to the same information, making for a smooth transition from sales to support, and resulting in more satisfied customers and more repeat buyers.

A Support Story: The Science of Maintaining Customer Loyalty

As with most operations in today's enterprise, customer support activity is often managed through a technology application and propelled by a winning strategy and dedicated staff. However, the customer support team is tasked with a sensitive and critical goal: maintaining customer loyalty through some of the most challenging points in the vendor-customer relationship. By providing immediate access to customer information - from the products they're using to complete details of each interaction - in one technology resource, a comprehensive CRM application can be a key driver in sustaining strong customer relationships.

While the sales force is generally considered the dominant revenue-driving source in a company, driving



Worldwide Headquarters
18200 Von Karman Avenue,
Suite 1000
Irvine, California 92612 USA
Toll Free: +1.800.999.1809
Phone: +1.949.585.4000
www.epicor.com

Latin America and Caribbean
Blvd. Antonio L. Rodriguez #1882
Int. 104
Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, CP 64650
Mexico
Phone: +52.81.1551.7100
Fax: +52.81.1551.7117

Europe, Middle East and Africa
No. 1 The Arena
Downshire Way
Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1PU
United Kingdom
Phone: +44.1344.468.468
Fax: +44.1344.468.010

Asia
238A Thomson Road #23-06
Novena Square Tower A
Singapore 307684
Singapore
Phone: +65.6333.8121
Fax: +65.6333.8131

Australia and New Zealand
Level 34
101 Miller Street
North Sydney NSW 2060
Australia
Phone: +61.2.9927.6200
Fax: +61.2.9956.8976

sales is not just the responsibility of the sales team. Customer loyalty has proven to be an essential source of sustainable revenue growth, making customer support a critical contributor to driving revenue.

Utilizing a single-source CRM solution drives the efficiency in the support department, resulting in improved customer service, and the reporting capabilities inherent in many CRM solutions allow support departments to identify and even forecast their contribution to the bottom line.

In Support of the Collective Customer Repository

The implementation of any new technology or strategy should ultimately make business processes easier and more streamlined, creating new efficiency opportunities across the enterprise. So who specifically in the organization benefits from utilizing a shared repository of customer information? Just about everyone.

In addition to serving as a comprehensive information resource, an integrated CRM solution serves as a tool for administering—even anticipating—the support needs of external customers. By providing immediate access to customer information, from the products they're using to complete details of each interaction, an integrated CRM solution helps maximize the efficiency of the support team, resulting in improved customer service.

For enterprises that perform on-site customer maintenance of their products, it is essential for field service personnel to have access to the same up-to-date information as on-site workers have. Many business application vendors offer integrated extensions to their CRM solutions that work with common Internet browsers to easily connect remote sites and users.

The nature, length and quality of a customer's interaction with the support team can be an important resource for other customer-facing departments in the enterprise such as sales and marketing. Knowledge of a customer's experiences with the product they're using helps marketing create targeted campaigns and sales build the pipeline. Furthermore, non-customer

facing departments such as product development stand to benefit from the information in a shared customer repository.

The Self-Service Factor

In the face of demands to cut costs, while maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction, Web self-service technologies are working their way into today's enterprises. The potential for cost savings and increased employee efficiency make Web self-service an attractive option to consider. As more customers turn to the Web to conduct business, Web self-service will become a critical component of a competitive customer service strategy.

As the corporate culture evolves, defining itself through changing business processes and customer demands, it is necessary to consistently evaluate customer-facing strategies. It has been concluded that Web self-service can reduce the costs of customer maintenance. Yet, the proper application of this conclusion requires strategic planning for success.

Integration with the core CRM application is essential. Without integration, if a customer searches an online knowledgebase and is not able to find a satisfactory answer, the issue is escalated to e-mail or phone creating multiple, separate incidents. Integration allows the customer to go from self-service to live service and provides the support team with an overall view of the customer's issue and the actions he has taken to resolve it.

Strengthening the Information Chain

Operating in today's difficult economic environment has more and more midmarket companies searching for ways to increase their efficiency and effectiveness in order to remain competitive. Winning customer loyalty in today's age requires a company to step up customer service levels. Everyone that touches the customer must be aware of the complete customer relationship – not just one aspect of it.

You've heard the idiom, "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link?" Such is the case in the information chain: knowledge is power, and for today's midmarket enterprise knowledge comes down to precise, reliable information.



Worldwide Headquarters
18200 Von Karman Avenue,
Suite 1000
Irvine, California 92612 USA
Toll Free: +1.800.999.1809
Phone: +1.949.585.4000
www.epicor.com

Latin America and Caribbean
Blvd. Antonio L. Rodriguez #1882
Int. 104
Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, CP 64650
Mexico
Phone: +52.81.1551.7100
Fax: +52.81.1551.7117

Europe, Middle East and Africa
No. 1 The Arena
Downshire Way
Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1PU
United Kingdom
Phone: +44.1344.468.468
Fax: +44.1344.468.010

Asia
238A Thomson Road #23-06
Novena Square Tower A
Singapore 307684
Singapore
Phone: +65.6333.8121
Fax: +65.6333.8131

Australia and New Zealand
Level 34
101 Miller Street
North Sydney NSW 2060
Australia
Phone: +61.2.9927.6200
Fax: +61.2.9956.8976

Think of the various customer-facing departments in your company as pieces of a puzzle - the marketing department is implementing campaigns and collecting leads; the sales team is filling out the pipeline and customer support is working to keep current customers satisfied. Utilizing a CRM solution helps put the pieces together, uniting disparate islands of information through one comprehensive tool to effectively manage and share information — from customer and product data, to service agreements and IT assets.

By putting the pieces together in a powerful technology resource that unites the disparate units of information in one comprehensive tool – each branch is able leverage the knowledge and experiences of its counterparts. The result is more streamlined operations that improve efficiency, saving time and money.

EPICOR®

Worldwide Headquarters

18200 Von Karman Avenue,
Suite 1000
Irvine, California 92612 USA
Toll Free: +1.800.999.1809
Phone: +1.949.585.4000
www.epicor.com

Latin America and Caribbean

Blvd. Antonio L. Rodriguez #1882
Int. 104
Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, CP 64650
Mexico
Phone: +52.81.1551.7100
Fax: +52.81.1551.7117

Europe, Middle East and Africa

No. 1 The Arena
Downshire Way
Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1PU
United Kingdom
Phone: +44.1344.468.468
Fax: +44.1344.468.010

Asia

238A Thomson Road #23-06
Novena Square Tower A
Singapore 307684
Singapore
Phone: +65.6333.8121
Fax: +65.6333.8131

Australia and New Zealand

Level 34
101 Miller Street
North Sydney NSW 2060
Australia
Phone: +61.2.9927.6200
Fax: +61.2.9956.8976