

Expert opinion

Customer-centric organization and the need for a CRM-centric information system

By Cédric Belmont, Business Solutions manager, Hardis Group

How many companies today define themselves as "customer-centric"? Just saying it, though, is not enough; it actually needs to be true... and for that there needs to be a customer-centric information system in which CRM plays a key role.

Digital and omni-channel: Welcome to "the era of the reigning customer"!

With the appearance of the internet, cell phones, social networks, connected objects, and so on, brands are making customers central to their strategy. Demanding, impatient, and ready to switch from one brand to another, customers are more and more aware of services (and of the service culture) around the product.

Going beyond words, these customer-centric strategies require knowledge of the preferences and shopping habits of each customer, and the ability to anticipate the customer's needs in order to provide him with a service that is as customized as possible. This involves collecting, centralizing, and analyzing big quantities of data coming from all channels of contact with the client: products purchased or returned through all sales channels, service requests before or after sales, visited pages on an e-commerce site, clicked links in a newsletter, data coming from the connected objects used, and so on.

Towards a customer-based IS, where CRM plays a key role

And very often that's where the problem lies! In reality, few companies have a 360° view of their customers. This is due to the simple reason that CRM has usually had, so far, only a secondary role, in contrast to support solutions for operations activities (production, logistics, purchases, etc.).

But to successfully become "customer-centric" it is essential to put CRM at the heart of the information system. To that effect, CRM must not be considered an additional software layer but rather a central element of transformation towards a model centered on the quality of services offered to customers, and, by extension, towards a customer-centric information system.

A 360° view of the customer

A customer-centric information system involves being able to globally manage the client, both before and after the sale. To that effect, in addition to its historic role as a customer information receptacle, CRM must today be capable of receiving, processing, and sending data coming from multiple systems. This can be attained not through a "simple CRM" but through a real 360° platform that, with its integrated analytics tools, makes it possible to handle the internal data related to the customer, and also external data (geolocation, weather conditions, etc.) in real time or after the event, in order to build an individualized

relationship with the customer and to continuously propose more services with high added value.

One example is an insurance agent who uses SMS to warn his clients living in a certain area likely to be hit by severe weather conditions, so that they can take the necessary action. Or a supplier of electrical equipment who is able to detect an anomaly in the equipment of an end-customer by means of a connected sensor, and to warn an installer so that he can work preventively

More in-depth knowledge of customers and their environment, the ability to get back to them in an intelligent manner with relevant offers or information, and to alert them in order to help them make decisions in real time or even to act proactively in the event of a risk of malfunction , and so on. CRM is dead! Long live CRM 360°!

CRM 360°: it's more than a tool, it's a business project

And given that there is an impact on the company's activities, businesses and how they are run, a CRM 360° project must be considered on a company level. All aspects of the relationship with the customer, from the value proposition to the direct relationship, must be incorporated into the project from the scoping phase, in order to make sure that we choose the tool that is most in sync with the needs of businesses, marketing/sales teams, and the IT department. Or make the right decisions to transform and complete the IS to make it customer-centric.

This necessarily involves supporting change throughout the project in order to develop a new dynamic and a customer culture shared by all. For the tools used to manage the relationship with the client are nothing but support for the strategy: implementing them must be an occasion to rethink work habits on a company level so as to achieve the set goals.

About Hardis Group

Hardis Group, a digital services company and software publisher, assists its customers in the transformation of their business model, their Supply Chain and their Information system. The company helps them become more competitive and increase their operational performance, creating and integrating business, technological and digital solutions tailored to their needs and issues.

With its dual positioning, Hardis Group has developed expertise in the areas of banking, insurance and e-health, distribution (CPG and luxury goods), industry and energy, logistics and transport services. This expertise now allows it to provide global responses, in an agile approach characterized by co-construction, innovation and continuous improvement.

Since its creation in 1984, the company has built its growth on a pragmatic approach and values of efficiency and firm commitment both to its 2,500 clients and its 730 employees (25% of whom are also shareholders). In 2015, Hardis Group achieved a turnover of € 68.8 million. The Group has five offices in France: Grenoble (head office), Lyon, Paris, Lille and Nantes.

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