

# Customers Rule



## Evolving your marketing approach with Integrated Customer Marketing

**N**ot long ago, I worked with a client who had pieces of customer data spread across 20 different technology platforms. We affectionately named this environment “the spaghetti bowl.” A few of the right “noodles” conveniently crossed, but for the most part, the high degree of disorganization made it impossible to execute truly integrated, customer-centric programs.

Are most marketers in tune with the customer’s best interests and preferences to the extent that they guide their marketing actions? Probably not. Then what are these companies lacking? Three words: Integrated Customer Marketing.

Integrated Customer Marketing (ICM) is a measurement and optimization framework that maximizes customer portfolio value by managing the customer’s marketing, sales and service interactions throughout the customer life cycle.

Two principles guide ICM. First, the customer portfolio—the universe of prospects and engaged customers with the brand—is an organization’s most strategic asset. Second, an organization’s ability to optimally manage and grow the value of this customer portfolio is the key differentiator between market leaders and, well, everybody else.

ICM brings together:

- A robust customer portfolio, with behavioral and attitudinal data.
- Enterprise insight and measurement, which are rooted in a strong

data and analytics foundation.

- Technology infrastructure that provides automation, scalability and flexibility to support changing business dynamics.

The direct marketing space has gone from direct mail to e-mail to dynamic Web interactions and direct communications via mobile devices. ICM can help marketers address emerging and growing channels, which are further complicating and diversifying the customer engagement landscape. ICM opens the door to optimized marketing programs and campaigns. It also can provide insight into several key areas:

- Making customer profiles accurate and actionable.
- Easily identifying and accessing your best customers and prospects.
- Quantifying the effectiveness of your marketing efforts.
- Making communications consumer-centric (e.g., based on preferences, inquiries, feedback and lifecycle profiling).
- Using customer behavior and insight to inform media purchases and placement.

Here are five critical components that can lead to a new level of marketing success through ICM.

### **1. Integrate Your Customer Data**

An integrated customer data platform is a key element of ICM. It not only

requires that you bring together disparate customer data for executing customer-centric marketing programs, but it also embraces a more mature vision of data integration—one in which transactional, behavioral and even attitudinal data are represented in the ICM database. Whether it’s self-reported or inferred from third-party sources, attitudinal data is a key requirement. For example, I once lived in a major city airline hub and was a frequent traveler. Behaviorally, I appeared to like the dominant airline for the hub city. However, in reality I had grown to loathe the airline and the “service” it provided. If given an alternative, I would have taken it. But I had no other realistic choice.

Given my attitude, the airline’s traditional cross-sell and upsell marketing attempts only compounded my frustration. However, if the airline had my attitudinal information “baked” into my customer profile, the content and tone of communications could have been tailored for relevance.

### **2. Adopt a Customer-Centric Mind-set**

Adopting a customer-centric mind-set falls under the category of “easier said than done.” Most organizations still operate with a product- or brand-centric mentality. Their marketing efforts are company-centric vs. customer-centric.

To produce the best results possible, marketers must shift to a customer-

centric mind-set. Assess current marketing communications starting at a high level. Ask yourself: Are you pushing offers to customers in an attempt to drive results, or are you basing your contact on customer insights to create the most relevant offers?

### **Tackle Internal Challenges, and Drive Change**

ICM is difficult for multibrand organizations. Why? Because individual brands are often accustomed to marketing in an independent fashion with little regard to a customer's needs beyond their brands. Tough questions have to be addressed. For example, you need to determine who really "owns" the customer and how communications can be governed in a way that benefits the organization while optimizing the relationship with the customer.

Additionally, competencies across the marketing spectrum must unite to tackle internal challenges and truly drive change. Technology and creative resources need to collaborate around interactive execution. Analytics and technology resources need to work together to maximize business intelligence. Creative resources and analytics must collaborate on communications planning. Strategists need to align with operational resources to bridge the gap between brilliant strategy and tactical execution.

### **Change the Context of the Playing Field**

The collective DNA of the marketing community is not conducive to integration. But ICM execution changes the context of the playing field. With ICM, mass marketing, direct marketing and loyalty marketing serve as valuable inputs into the customer portfolio and enable integrated customer marketing execution. Organizations must change "siloe'd" behaviors and acknowledge the unique contributions of these fields. The ICM approach incorporates all three disciplines to create a clear vision.

### **Focus on Results**

While structure and alignment regarding results measurement are absolutely necessary when implementing strategic marketing plans, it is a common reason why organizations often struggle in their strategic marketing programs. Alignment should center on the following:

- A clear definition of what success looks like.
- An enterprisewide method for assessing and measuring customer value.
- An enterprise measurement strategy, to capitalize on potential value.

It goes without saying that analytics are the "secret sauce" to the measurement requirement. But analytics have to go beyond high-level insights on a PowerPoint slide to effectively drive results. The analytics discipline has to step out of academia and into the operational spotlight. Driving marketing programs from the core of

analytics is an essential ingredient for ICM execution.

Properly leveraging analytics means influencing every aspect of customer interaction, which can manifest itself in many different actionable and literal ways—from targeted direct communication with a customer to an improved call center interaction, to the ability to serve dynamic, personalized content while a customer visits your Web site.

Lastly, without comprehensive strategy and planning, the best-laid plans fall flat. ICM calls for strategic planning to serve as the guiding light. ■

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