



faxing simplified. anytime. anywhere.

Case Study - Customer Relationship Management

MiroMetrica

As late as the mid-20th century, businesses relied on personal relationships with their customers to guide their product development, their marketing efforts, and their overall thinking. Whether it was a shopkeeper stopping to chat with customers near the latest shipment of men's flannel shirts or a salesperson stopping by to wish his best customers "happy birthday," this personal connection to customers was viewed as essential to success.

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Pavla Selepova
President and CEO,
MiroMetrica

As technology allowed the scope of business to expand far beyond where it had been before, the personal connection began to shrink rapidly. Customer relationship management (CRM) strategies, including the development of online surveys to query customers on their thoughts and opinions, were created to try to reverse this trend. By its very nature, the online strategy assumed that the customers were as technology-centric as the organization. Particularly when you're talking about consumers, however, the reality is that a statistically significant segment of the customer base may not be. As a result, organizations need to seek out alternative means of allowing their customers to communicate with them lest their results be unfairly skewed by technology. The venerable fax provides a solution to this concern - but raises others of its own.

The Customer

Since 2003, MiroMetrica has been helping organizations of all sizes develop targeted CRM strategies aimed at specific outcomes and then implement the programs. They allow these organizations to gain a keener insight into customer demographics, needs, and preferences, providing the marketing analytics needed to impact the bottom line.

MiroMetrica's specialty is in helping organizations communicate with their customers, and more importantly allowing the customers to communicate back to them. They are then able to set up customer care processes that take the raw data embedded in these communications and extract information that helps drive decisions all the way up and down the value chain.



The Challenge

One of the core tenets of good CRM is remembering that the “customer base” is not a monolithic entity but rather is made up of unique individuals, all of whom have their own preferences and points of view. Many of these preferences become visible when behavioral data is analyzed. This information tells you what you need to know about your current offering. But it doesn’t necessarily take into account what customers wish you were offering.

For example, if you offer red, blue, and green widgets, behavioral data can tell you that red is the most popular. What it doesn’t tell you, though, is that you could be selling a lot more widgets overall if you’d offer them in yellow. The best way to uncover that type of information is to ask customers their opinions directly. Most are more than willing to share their opinions if asked. The key is making it easy for them to provide the answers.

Online surveys are the most popular method used for this type of information-gathering. They are immediate, they reach a targeted audience (visitors who already have enough interest to come to a particular Web site), and they are easy for prospects and customers to use. Like many CRM specialists, MiroMetrica often used this format to gather both qualitative and quantitative information.

One client, however, was worried about whether enough of its target demographic would go online. They asked MiroMetrica to supplement the online survey with a mailing that allowed users to fax their answers back. Always focused on customer service, Pavla Selepova, President and CEO of MiroMetrica was very willing to accommodate this special client request. Still, it raised two big concerns from an operational standpoint.

The first and most obvious was that a sudden onslaught of survey returns could tie up an office phone line for hours at a time, not only preventing clients from getting through on this line but also preventing it from being used for outbound calls to clients. In a business that prides itself on helping organizations improve customer service that’s simply unacceptable.

The second problem was with the inbound faxes themselves. Only one fax could come into the fax machine at a time, which meant anyone else attempting to fax their surveys at the same time would receive a busy signal and would have to try again later. The likelihood of customers making another attempt to send the fax dropped off severely with each missed connection, thereby reducing the breadth of the survey, which could lead to important feedback being lost.

Knowing that receiving a larger number of surveys would make the conclusions more statistically valid, Selepova began looking for an alternative to the fax machine that would remove the barrier to receiving returns that the fax machine represented while also solving her own internal logistics concerns.

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The Solution

Selepova already was familiar with Internet faxing, which allows users to send and receive faxes through their e-mail account or over a secure Internet server. She also knew the people at MyFax through their contact in various local business organizations to which they both belonged. She contacted MyFax to set up a trial account and included the phone number in the next survey. The difference was immediately apparent.

"The faxed surveys began arriving in groups rather than one at a time," Selepova says. "Because they came in as attachments to an e-mail rather than paper documents we were able to organize, analyze, and forward the aggregated results much faster than we had before. I was surprised at how quickly we received them too. I thought there would be more of a delay with the batch processing, but that wasn't the case. It made us much more efficient."

Another immediate advantage Selepova gained was being able to conduct other business over the telephone while the incoming faxes were arriving. There was no interruption to the work day, and once they had been processed they could quickly be stored electronically with password protection rather than under lock and key in a filing cabinet. In addition, if anyone needed to reference the original surveys they could do so from their desktop rather than having to rifle through paper files.

The ease of setting up her MyFax account pleased Selepova as well.

"We don't have an internal IT staff here," she says. "That's a function I outsource, so every time I want to make a change it can be costly. With MyFax I was able to do it all myself online. In just a few minutes I was up and running. That's huge."

Having a toll-free phone number for faxes that works anywhere in North America was another important benefit for Selepova. She says it helps encourage more participation from in the surveys since there's no cost to the person taking it, and that it improves customer service for her clients for the same reason. It also makes MiroMetrica more competitive in seeking business outside its local area by making its location transparent, removing any geographical concerns potential clients might have when selecting a supplier. And, of course, having a toll-free fax number gives the company the appearance of being a much larger organization.

The faxes themselves have a higher quality appearance than those that are put through machines on the sending and receiving ends, making them easier to read. In addition, the entire fax arrives instantly regardless of length, which can save a half hour or more when a client is faxing back a draft of a 50-page report with her handwritten notes. The electronic format of the faxes also means Selepova can easily choose which pages to keep, which ones to file (if needed), and which ones to delete. Faxes forwarded for processing or meant for sharing among team members can be sent to multiple offices at the same time, even if they're in different geographies, making the entire process far more efficient than using a fax machine.

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The Result

Selepova has seen both hard and soft operational improvements since she began using MyFax. She reports that her organization has achieved a 30 percent increase in efficiency to receive, sort, and catalog data, which correlates to a 30 percent decrease in costs for this portion of the project. She also points to a 20 percent decrease in project turnaround time compared to handling inbound and outbound faxes through a fax machine.

Then there are the practical considerations. She says the company no longer keeps the fax machine turned on as a matter of course. They only turn it on if they need to send an outbound fax with a signature or handwritten notes, and then it goes right off again, which will greatly extend its life. In addition, Selepova says they have reduced the costs for paper and toner to virtually zero dollars since inbound faxes all come in through the MyFax account.

For Selepova, MyFax has been a tremendous business tool and one that fits with her philosophy of customer service. She is happy to be able to practice what she preaches.

About MyFax

MyFax is the fastest growing Internet fax service used by individuals, small, medium, and large businesses to send and receive faxes using existing email accounts or the web. MyFax offers services in North America and Europe, including the United Kingdom, to industries recognized among the fastest growing adopters of internet fax including finance, insurance, real estate, healthcare, transportation and government. More than 20,000 new customers subscribe to MyFax each month. Additional information is available at www.myfax.com and www.myfax.uk.com.

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