

Customer Insight **Simone Barratt, e-Dialog UK Ltd**

If you want serious payback, get serious about relevance



Some of the best business truths are also the simplest: telling customers that you have a product they truly want to buy is an extremely effective way to close sales. While it seems at times that everyone can agree to that, e-marketers consistently and counterproductively overlook opportunities to learn from their customers. Instead of understanding the signals customers send every time they touch the organisation and learning how to put forward messages that customers want to hear, they continue to focus on bland, broadcast messages, or do a mail-merge and believe they have explored the last great e-marketing frontier.

It simply isn't so. Inboxes are full to overflowing with well-intentioned but ultimately ignored marketing messages that demonstrate minimal understanding of an individual customer's needs, interests and position in the relationship life cycle. Is it because marketers don't want to be relevant? Unlikely. Sometimes, they just don't understand how deeply they can look in their marketing arsenal for the customer insight that drives relevance.

What is relevance?

Relevance is making sense of everything you know about a customer (purchase and service history, expressed preferences, demographic

data, and so on), to answer the question, "Why is this customer considering doing business with me and what is the most relevant offer I can make?" And, as core customer insight shifts from being offline- to online-centric, understanding a customer's key motivators is more possible than ever before, especially with the availability of web behavioural data.

Speaking to the very soul of relevancy, the behavioural information customers beam at you every day in the form of site visits, phone calls, email responses and store visits, represents their true communication to the firm. This data is at the heart of the ever-growing promise of online-enabled commerce, and putting it to work is one of the surest ways to better connect with your customers, get out in front of competitors and stay there.

Unlocking relevance

Achieving relevancy comes from examining the ongoing activities of your customers, understanding where they are in the buying process and deciding which behaviours, or combinations of behaviours, are most telling and most important to your business. Each behaviour, including browsing activity, and every potential outcome of that behaviour can be influenced, encouraged, accelerated or averted by a proactive measure from your company.

For example, customers may visit your site multiple times or place items in and out of a cart repeatedly because they are carefully researching and weighing a purchase. Or they may be struggling with the technical ins and outs of the site. Knowing what behaviours tend to be associated with first-time buyers, window shoppers, high-value customers or

simply frustrated web novices will go a long way towards crafting the proper response.

Creating and maintaining relevancy requires a multidisciplinary commitment to understanding how customers signal their intentions and interests. Use this information to look deeper into your own sales cycle to better understand not just where customers fall out of the process, but why, and what they want you to do about it. All that remains is a plan of action and a firm dedication to tell customers not what you want them to hear, but what they've been telling you they wanted to hear all along.

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