

Customer relations via e-mail and SMS: what is the corporate communication strategy, what are the operational needs and what tools are needed to cater to all this?

We are all aware that the direct online marketing business has been in a state of flux for several months. We began by talking about the change in consumer behaviour, the multiplication of communication channels and the growth in online channels, and more particularly e-mail and SMS. This is not to lose sight, of course, of the effects of the global crisis on corporate objectives.

All these changes have generated the accelerated development of communication techniques. To stand out from the competition, companies have shifted in the space of just a few months from a One-to-Few communication strategy to One-to-One. *In what direction are corporate global communication strategies heading? What are the new operational needs of companies? What marketing tools are necessary for meeting these needs?*

What communication strategy? When faced with the multiplicity of channels and the volatility of consumers, marketing departments are looking to homogenise global corporate communications, raise the brand profile, develop consistent communication across all channels, underpin proximity between customer and brand, communicate frequently via online channels, transform leads into customers, increase online interactions, reduce offline costs, and significantly grow the ROI from marketing initiatives.

What operational needs? When these objectives are taken into account, the operational needs of companies become clear. The fundamental principles of Direct Marketing remain as true as ever.

"Place the customer at the heart of the marketing strategy." With regard to customer data, the objectives involve rationalising and centralising all customer information, precisely qualifying the data, extracting maximum intelligence about each individual client, identifying favoured channels for each and every contact and measuring the effect of multi-channel hard selling on each and every target. *"Sending the right message at the right time."* In terms of the mechanics of communication, brand-new needs have emerged. These involve defining and implementing multi-channel customer acquisition and retention scenarios.

What if the customer abandons her basket? She gets an e-mail encouraging her to conclude her purchase. She consults the same offer on-site more than three times in three days? She receives an SMS offering a 30% discount on this product that is valid for seven days. She has bought a pair of black trousers in-store? She gets an e-mail suggesting the matching jacket with a €10 gift voucher to be used within 30 days.

It is all about accompanying each contact in their experience as a client. This involves personalising the content of each e-mail, and automating and triggering messages in line with customer behaviour.

The tools required? Direct online marketing service providers, having anticipated this accelerated development, have been able to adapt their solutions in order to address the most sophisticated technical and marketing issues.

Marketing campaign management platforms must be capable of interconnecting with any type of customer information system and third-party tool, such as web analytics, CRM and datamining platforms.

Their solutions must enable each customer to be studied and their behaviour to be understood. For this, they need to possess the technical expertise to leverage the contacts repository specific to each company, a process that is called Datamart Marketing. This unique database makes it possible to log each web user action, to populate the base in real-time with qualitative and quantitative data and to extract useful data for each communication channel.

Since the Datamart is connected to the marketing campaigns management platform, companies will be able to trigger e-mails according to customer behaviour. The platform must be able to establish ultra-precise segments by means of a powerful request tool, capable of cross-matching online and offline data in order to leverage each click, visit and brand interaction.

Companies benefiting from these services experience tangible results and direct growth in terms of the efficiency of their marketing campaigns, their ROI, their customer knowledge, enhanced proximity between customer and brand, the consistency of their global marketing strategies, enhanced brand profile, homogeneity of communication and cohesion of in-house teams, accelerated decision-making and the actions arising from these decisions. The objectives are thus achieved with room to spare.

For further information: <http://www.cabestan.co.uk>