

Feature



ARE YOUR
CX INITIATIVES
OPERATING IN
A SILO?

Customer experience initiatives and everyday business activity need to be aligned. Unfortunately, in many cases, they are totally disconnected, writes David Allen.

For some time, analysts like Gartner, Forrester, and IDC have been reporting on the big hole that businesses fall into, when CX strategies are not aligned with the customer communications that happen as part of everyday business.

We all know that everyone supports the idea that customer experience is a critical business driver. Everyone signs up to the supporting KPIs.

Unfortunately, it is often the underlying business structure that gets in the way of CX strategies being delivered to their full potential.

The example I am referring to in this article is where digital and CX teams are not aligned with the operational-based

customer communication processes, within a business.

BILLS AND OTHER ADVICES PLAY VITAL ROLE

The most regular touchpoint that most customers have with their service providers is generally the process of receiving bills, statements, renewal notices and other advices.

Or it might be notifications relating to social welfare payments or allowances or ACC or EQC claims.

These everyday customer communications, especially the batch-based ones, were defined some time ago in a new segment called CCM, short for Customer Communication Management.

But there is a shift in definition, as those involved in the activity (from both the enterprise and vendor side) are now describing it as CXM or Customer Experience Management.

This is a far broader description that captures the idea that customer communications and customer experience go hand in hand.

From a customer perspective this has always been obvious.

Unfortunately, what often happens in larger organisations, is that new digital and CX tasked people arrive and set up new teams, who tend to operate independently of the operational side of the business.

They often set the direction and strategy and, importantly, have senior management backing and support. With that come the budgets.

But they often operate in isolation, working with external agencies, doing insight gathering and website development



and leaving the internal teams behind.

Operational areas of the business can become disconnected from the CX conversations, from the growth-based budget process and, importantly, a voice at the top table.

In some cases this is because the new CX arrivals see business process as boring, a necessary but highly complex area, where legacy issues result in 'why things cannot be done', rather than 'how the business can move forward'.

A MORE PERSONALISED COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE

InfoTrends, a leading research firm recently identified, after surveying more than 600 enterprises, that close to 50 percent intended to improve customer experience by creating a more personalised and targeted cross-channel experience.

Thirty two percent of those surveyed consider improving customer experience

as the most important business objective in their transactional communications strategy.

Research has shown that consumers, especially younger ones, will spend more time reviewing personalised content than generic content.

It not only attracts attention, but it increases overall engagement. Personalisation has been proven to drive action.

To put communication programmes in place that support the above, there needs to be integration and co-ordination within the enterprise.

The CCM vendors have recognised the need to move their offerings from pure customer communication generation and are now providing far more comprehensive offerings including customer journey mapping, online storage, and onboarding solutions.

They are also offering omni-channel document creation. That is the ability to ingest data once and then output the communications for any channel and in any format.

The resulting document processes themselves are becoming more bi-directional in nature.

The move from paper (enveloped mail) to a PDF will get replaced in time, by HTML5 where the recipient is able to interact with the document, by clicking on "tabs" or engaging with "sliders" or graphs. In addition, content is now able to be downloaded from HTML5-based document formats with ease.

TRANSPROMO

TransPromo was a term used to describe the placement of banners, graphics, or marketing messages on transactional documents and even though the term has all but disappeared, the idea gained traction, and promotion on bills and statements remains quite common today.

The opportunity to create marketing opportunities from transactional communications will be enhanced as new document formats are adopted. This will drive the need for more cross functionality in the roles associated with the actual

communication process.

Often the disconnect between the digital and CX teams and the rest of the business results in the ongoing ageing of operational infrastructure, like billing systems and other core applications.

In some cases, they just get "fenced-off" with the new applications being built around the core. But it eventually catches up with those organisations that do not reinvest in their core application layer.

Reinvestment in modern CCM platforms may seem obvious, but the reality is that operational teams who are currently the main owners of these platforms, struggle to justify budgets and to create the support business cases. Why? Because it is seen as a purely operational spend.

What we are now seeing is a slow shift of ownership to the marketing/digital or CX teams who are quietly taking control over the customer communication process.

They now recognise the significance of the opportunity to drive sales and CX through the everyday customer communication process.

The good news is that budgets for CCM platform upgrades have now got a far better chance of success. This is also because the reality around CX is slowly sinking in, as businesses start to appreciate the true influence that everyday customer communications play.

There is a sense that the digital team and CX silos are disappearing. The roles are being integrated into core business activity.

In part this reflects the maturity of those businesses that see CX as an organisational issue where every customer touch-point matters. ■

David Allen is the general manager at Cumulo9, a major transactional email service provider in New Zealand. He was one of the founders of Datamail to become Datam in the early 1990s. The business was a major player in business process outsourcing and over time has been merged into NZ Post. He is an active blogger and writer on all things related to customer communications.