TURNING OUTREACH INTO REVENUE
Customer metrics empower you to tap into—and profit from—the reasons why people do business with your company.

CONVERTING FIRST IMPRESSIONS INTO LASTING LOYALTY

A Gartner survey found that 89 percent of marketers “expect customer experience to be their primary differentiator” in 2017. That experience begins while the target customer is still a prospect. From the earliest touchpoints in your marketing—whether in person, by telephone, through website visits, or via social media—your company is creating expectations and establishing brand parameters. Managed properly, those factors can attract the right customers to your business and establish a platform for cultivating strong relationships and long-term loyalty.

To achieve those goals, begin by establishing your company’s brand voice and capturing it in a document that’s distributed throughout your organization. You need to ensure that “everyone knows
the voice, the tone, and the brand promise that you should be using across all touchpoints,” says digital strategy consultant Katherine Ong, CEO of Watier Ong Strategies.

That approach primes your company to use marketing (including social media and branding) to help engage customers and establish expectations from the outset. It transforms marketing into a relationship tool rather than a means of initiating transactions or announcing promotions. Remember that prospects are likely to visit the website and search for online reviews before they enter into the sales process, so it’s essential that they see consistency in messaging across all channels.

Equally important, the company must take steps to ensure that there’s no disconnect between the promises and commitments communicated in its outreach and the delivery experienced by existing customers. “Brand is really about everything that you stand for, everything that you support,” says Risa B. Hoag, president of GMG Public Relations. “What do you stand for?” She advises clients to communicate and practice honesty, which is a cornerstone of managing and meeting expectations.

THE RIGHT SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE RIGHT TARGETS

Once your message is on point and understood by everyone on your team, you can begin to develop a strategy for using social media for outreach. Plan your social media campaigns judiciously: rather than boil the ocean, use the right vehicle to reach your core audience. Metrics can provide the information you need to identify the social media opportunities best suited to connecting with your strongest prospects.

“It’s very possible, particularly by looking at your web analytics package, to see which channel supports which stage of the customer journey,” Ong says. “That will help you know how to position your messaging or what kind of messaging to give to your customers based on what stage they are in your services.”
At the same time, you need a clear picture of your best customers, because it's not realistic to expect that you can develop a product, service, or marketing message with universal appeal. By focusing on your sweet spot and targeting your outreach to prospects who fit that profile, you optimize both your immediate revenue potential and your likelihood of developing a sustainable and loyal customer base.

“That requires doing a little homework and a little bit of testing,” Hoag says. “How is this ad performing? How are our posts performing? And luckily, because these platforms want you to spend your money there, they offer great analytics now. You can go in the back end and find your data there in each one of these platforms. You can even create a lookalike audience.”

Remember, too, to analyze your conversion results via paid versus earned media.

When creating or reviewing your advertising budget, make sure you’re fully informed about the ad programs available through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. But don’t neglect opportunities for earned media, the free publicity that your company gets through news coverage, customer testimonials on review sites, and other unpaid promotion.

Earned media is often seen as more credible than paid advertising because the people promoting the company don’t gain anything by posting their comments. Monitoring the reviews that are voted most helpful can assist you in fine-tuning your paid advertising messages to ensure that they resonate with your best prospects. It’s also a means of identifying brand advocates, or “evangelists,” whose support can be invaluable in promoting your business.

Once you know your audience’s preferences and the social media on which they spend the most time, you can focus on those platforms to minimize the risk of spreading your resources too thin. Ong adds one more recommendation: don’t forget or neglect email as a communication tool. It can be “the cheapest and most effective way of making sure your message gets through,” she says.
What do customers need from your company? To answer that question accurately and profitably, you need to listen before you pitch specific products, services, or solutions.

“Throwing everything out there before you actually know what the client needs can end up working against you,” Hoag says. She points out that before your marketing team gets carried away by enthusiasm in pursuit of new business, the company needs to be sure it has the ability to deliver on its promises, either on its own or in collaboration with vendors, partners, or subcontractors. Make sure, too, that the customer’s expectations are realistic and not a risk factor in themselves.

This is essential because it ensures that you and the customer understand one another and are on the same page about what your company can and cannot
accomplish. Having that understanding in place sets the stage for your team to begin a relationship with a customer who is delighted rather than disappointed or dismayed by your service. Your products and solutions—and for that matter, your individual employees’ conduct—cannot fall short of the standard captured in your marketing message.

Managing expectations also means having contingency plans in place for when a promotion goes bad—or goes so much better than anticipated that the company is overwhelmed or inventory is exhausted. Be prepared with communications that keep customers informed, and let them know how the company is managing the issue. Make sure to get the word out across all communication channels: social media, email, text, the website or e-commerce site, and in any online paid advertising that can be updated. You may not think of this as on par with crisis
communications, but having a crisis plan in place allows you to respond quickly and offer customers amends or alternatives that reinforce their perception of a company that keeps its word.

**ENTERPRISE-WIDE MARKETING TECHNOLOGY**

Customer expectations aren’t limited to product or service performance. A strong customer experience—positive or negative—is reinforced by contact with people throughout the organization.

How knowledgeable and friendly are the members of your customer support team? How much authority does the team have to make decisions and act swiftly to resolve customer complaints or problems? What is the experience of a customer who has to contact a member of the staff about a billing error? Fulfillment status? The whereabouts of a package that your system says was delivered but never arrived?

And is your organization tracking sales to identify additional

**NAVIGATING MARKETING AND METRICS THROUGH CHANGE**

It’s one thing to establish and communicate a strong brand message—and another thing entirely to preserve the essentials of that message in times of change. But when your company is moving to a new operating model, expanding to new vertical or geographic markets, or undertaking a merger that signals major changes in its mission, communications play a critical role in preserving customer relationships.

Those communications can help customers understand what is changing and, ideally, how the changes will benefit them. It’s equally important for them to know what won’t change, especially with regard to fundamentals like the company’s honesty, integrity, and commitment to its promises. Metrics can play an important role here in identifying the substantive messages that will generate the most positive response to change and make customers more receptive to continuing to do business with the company.

“As much as people like to say that change is difficult or they don’t like change, people also like things to be freshened up and new,” Hoag says. “If something has a fresh look that is appealing, and the underlying values are the same because that has been clearly communicated, it gives people a new reason to look at you.”
opportunities to do business with each client, or are you keeping data in silos that prevent the company from taking action that could increase each customer’s revenue potential?

Customer relationship management (CRM) solutions can help your company answer those questions profitably. But many analytics packages (Google’s and Adobe’s among them) also support that goal with customizable features that are underutilized.

“Most businesses grab Google Analytics as is, which is not the best practice,” Ong says. “Pretty much every time you install Google Analytics, you need to adjust it in multiple ways to make sure you’re getting the most clean, accurate data. While you’re doing that, you might as well also link it with your CRM system. You will be able to map the entire journey straight from Google search or whatever marketing channel through the website straight into your marketing database. It’s very doable. A lot of businesses haven’t done that, but that’s not because the technology is not letting you do it.”

In the end, the customer experience depends on

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**CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE RESOURCES**

*These online references and tools can help you optimize the customer experience and your profit potential.*

To transform prospect and customer engagement into a long-term, revenue generating strategy, you need to understand how to connect with your targets, build relationships, and nurture loyalty.

**Astute Solutions**
- The CRM provider houses several customer experience resources on its site, including the three-minute video ‘Map the Customer Journey in 7 Steps;’ a free Forrester report titled ‘Mapping the Customer Journey;’ and a customer journey mapping template. Each of these resources can be accessed or downloaded from this page.

**Dummies.com**
- “10 Resources for More Information on Customer Experience” was prepared by Roy Barnes and Bob Kelleher, co-authors of Customer Experience for Dummies. They provide information about organizations and online groups that can support your customer experience strategy development.

**GMG Public Relations**
- The company makes several resources available for free download, including “Getting the Word Out: Organizing a Media Kit,” “Creative Marketing for Any Economy,” and a marketing worksheet.

**Harvard Business Review**
- “Most CX programs are broken in similar ways: They are not designed with change or innovation in mind. They have “soft” metrics rather than real business goals. They move slowly and without purpose.” In “The Most Common Reasons Customer Experience Programs Fail,” Ryan Smith and Luke Williams offer a critique that can help your company avoid these common pitfalls.
human connections that give the customer a sense of receiving value and being valued. But today, our capacity for personal service is augmented by access to data. By optimizing its use of analytics, targeting marketing effectively, and tracking the entire customer experience, your company can create the optimal conditions for achieving long-term profitability and growth.

- The digital customer experience “isn’t merely a subset of customer experience, and a good customer experience strategy doesn’t equate to a good digital customer experience strategy,” writes Craig Borowski. In this article, he advises readers on “What a Great Digital Customer Experience Actually Looks Like.”
- “Marketers continue to increase social media spending, yet many are still uncertain about management, strategies, and integration,” notes Keith A. Quesenberry. Here, he offers a prescription to help “Fix Your Social Media Strategy by Taking It Back to Basics.”

IBM
- In this overview of its Customer Experience Analytics, the company reviews tactics for uncovering opportunities and addressing challenges. This white paper recommends and reviews five best practices: simplify access to insights; improve results through collaboration; know the paths customers take; optimize engagement and offers; and get the most value from data.
- The company also offers a Watson Customer Experience Analytics Interactive Demo, which provides a crash course in using dashboards, visualizing customer journeys across devices, analyzing customer data, and more.

Walker Information
- Based on responses from nearly 300 customer experience professionals in a variety of industries, “Customers 2020: The Future of B-to-B Customer Experience,” discusses “how B-to-B companies must adapt and evolve their customer experience initiative to meet the changing expectations of customers.”

Wharton
- In this Knowledge@Wharton podcast, “How Data Skills Help Firms Create Social Media That Matters,” Wharton’s Lynn Wu discusses her research on how firms can derive ROI from social media.