

Remaining "in touch"

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In an increasingly mobile and virtual business environment, it has never been more important than now to be in close contact with all the functions of your business, individual employees and your customers.

2014 has seen several major technological mega-trends which include mobility, big data, bring your own device (BYOD), and Internet of Things (IoT). All these trends illustrate how technology has infiltrated every aspect of daily business. This has had, and will continue to have, a massive impact on your business in 2015. Overall, this is a good thing.

Mobility and BYOD means increased efficiency and simplification, big data means unprecedented access to useful information, IoT means smart devices across the board. However, there are some things that we need to take note of.

Communication is key

There tend to be several "gaps" in communication between different business functions. The developers/inventors create a product, marketing describes it, and sales present it to the customer. However, the message tends to get a little distorted as it gets passed from one department to the next.



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This never used to be a major problem in the past, as information was not readily available and it was perfectly acceptable to only devote your attention to your department. Everyone did it, so there was a certain degree of leniency before cognitive dissonance occurred when a customer discovered that the product does not exactly perform as described by sales and marketing. Not anymore.

Increasing connectedness and the glut of information online means that any user can become an unofficial "expert" on your product within seconds. This highlights the crucial need for all your business functions to be perfectly aligned; otherwise the consumer will spot the inconsistencies in an instant. All the technological progress in the world cannot substitute a holistic understanding and knowledge of your product/service offering.

Gone are the days where each person focuses on a single task without interference from the other business functions. Sales forces need to know exactly what marketing is promising, and what exactly developers are creating. Likewise, developers need to ensure the product specs are clearly communicated and also that they develop according to the needs of clients, as expressed to the sales force.

The simplest way to achieve this is to set apart a small amount of time for one-on-one contact with developers/sales forces/marketers so you know what is happening on a micro scale. Ensure everyone is crystal clear on what the new "feature" does, and how it is to be communicated. Go on ride-alongs with your sales force, drink a regular cup of coffee with your developers. Once this has been achieved and you are "in touch" with your own business, it becomes important to do the same for the consumer.

Authentic, infinite points of contact

Traditionally, it was said that there should be at least "seven points of contact" with a potential customer before they feel ready to do business with you. In today's environment with the proliferation of different forms of media (calls, ads, LinkedIn, blogs, articles, twitter, Facebook, newsletters etc.), this number has increased.

The consumer needs to be engaged through various media forms if you wish to remain at the "top of mind" awareness level. However, what social media engagement shows us is that more than anything, customers don't want to be seen as "prospects", but as individuals who wish to form a lasting relationship with your company as opposed to a quick sale.

Although finding your customers and communicating to them has become simpler with mobility and big data, the need for quality communications has increased. Selling has become far more reciprocal and your product does need to add real value. So remember in 2015 to use technology to enhance your product/service offering, but more importantly to stay in touch with your business, your employees, and your customers.

ABOUT DUAAN DEKKER

Using mobile, location and cloud technology, to provide real-time customer, stock and sales information, The Honeybee (now Skynarm) mobile CRM and sales app empowers sales teams with the information, analytics and freedom to perform, and out-perform company targets and industry norms.

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