

# Let customers app into your CRM

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While over the years the main objective of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) - customer retention - hasn't changed, it must be said that the strategic implementation and platforms certainly continue to evolve, as they should, and today mobility is driving this evolution.

Where CRM solutions have transgressed from being in- and out-bound call centre heavy, to online feedback forums and opt-in email and SMS based direct marketing campaigns, what we are now seeing is elements of all these campaigns merge in one solution - the mobile app.

In fact, in South Africa we are already witnessing fast-paced uptake of mobile apps by business-to-consumer centred companies (in particular) and with great success. Take for example how recently, Arthur Goldstuck, MD of World Wide Worx, noted that FNB, News24 and Ster-Kinekor's apps are some of the South African success stories that have been designed well and which customers have reacted positively to.

## Using social media

There is no doubt that mobile app solutions also enable better service to loyal customers - take for example using and issuing loyalty cards, coupons, or promotional material as payment options straight to a mobile device of customers choice - which results in an immediate improved brand experience for the customer.

According to a news report by Bloomberg, digital loyalty cards have become attractive to small businesses, especially those who are looking to conjure up repeat business and gather customer data.

Additionally, given the uptake of mobile applications and of course social media platforms, then surely customer engagement strategies needs to understand the power of these mediums to support their drive for real customer loyalty and feedback. Social media today is creating a benchmark case study for word of mouth purchasing decisions.

According to research recently conducted by VIPdesk and Banyan Branch3, more than half of customer loyalty programmes already include either a social media or mobile communication-enabled component, further highlighting that companies understand the importance of these mobile app solutions.

## Engaging with your customers

Consumers are increasingly using social networks and communities to share knowledge and shopping experiences, and

Forrester<sup>4</sup>, who surveyed more than 37,000 consumer's ages ranging from 18 to 34, stated that people are willing to share their personal data with brands - in exchange for exclusive discounts.

This makes the mobile phone one of the most relevant channels in the local market, by encouraging customers to engage with the brand and providing an opportunity to build on greater customer experiences - resulting in improved brand loyalty and overall return on investment.

Today, consumers don't need a compelling reason to leave a brand, but they certainly need one to stay with a brand. Even loyal customers are making tougher decisions on where and how much money they spend.

Consumers want to buy from and work with brands that listen to, identify, and engage with them more broadly and the mobile app is a way to simplify traditional customer loyalty practices, as well as being more green, cost effective and quicker to deploy to a mass market.

## Using apps to communicate

The mobile app generation of CRM solutions, is the first platform to truly enable companies to speak directly to their customers. Through their channel of choice and where messages can be tailored to precision time and location-based marketing campaigns, which can be personalised to the consumer through one-to-one non-intrusive communications.

In a world that is changing - fast - where customers now not only choose whether they want to communicate with you, but also how and when, there is no denying the clear advantages of having an app that allows customers to engage with you on the mobile and tablet devices they love to use.

## ABOUT YARON ASSABI

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