DRIVING EFFICIENCY
IN CUSTOMER SUCCESS OPERATIONS

LATVIV

Keeping the Spark Alive ™

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Interacting and collaborating with customers and the organization's resources can take a significant toll on the CSM's (customer success managers) effectiveness and work-life balance. Arranging meetings, planning, collecting data, preparing, executing, and handling customer complaints and escalations can be challenging. Further, continually making a business case for one's solutions requires constant and tiring analysis of insufficient customer feedback and data. On top of that, senior management demands never seem to stop:

- Can you please train this new staff coming on board next week?
- How can we quickly get them to understand and follow our customer success philosophy?
- We need to add a few more tracking columns to our weekly spreadsheet.
- What can we do to revive the customer who stopped paying last year?

You get the idea. The above list is just a small sample! Effectiveness and efficiency in performing these tasks can minimize CSMs' time and improve the customer experience factor. Ideas shared in this publication will help managers do more with less.

MAKING A CASE FOR CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Historically, customer management has been handled through a combination of legacy technologies such as knowledge base repositories, disparate project management solutions–including Microsoft Office products–analytics platforms, survey tools, and CRM solutions. While these solutions serve their real purpose, CSMs struggle to look for consolidated information during CSM's meetings with their managers or prepare for business review meetings with customers.

It is essential to capture key data points from these various solutions into a singular platform that helps communicate cogent and persuasive stories during internal strategy meetings, external business review meetings with customers, and company progress meetings with investors. In addition to data consolidation, CSM platforms provide a regimented approach to managing customers by incorporating the latest industry practices built into various supporting features.

COMPONENTS OF CUSTOMER SUCCESS TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION

A technology platform underpins a significant part of the customer success efficiency and effectiveness playbook, drawing from American football terminology. It helps automate and drive a consistent customer experience and

customer success approach among all CSM professionals at a given vendor.

Vendors need a customer success platform to manage:

- performance and risk indicators
- customer satisfaction scores
- product goals
- action items
- assigned customer and vendor resource details
- notifications
- summary communication from emails, texts, company chat platforms, phone, and video calls
- collateral
- playbooks, outcomes, milestones
- events, tasks, project plans
- advocacy events
- customer feedback
- dashboards, reporting, analysis, and
- integration with third-party systems

USE CASES AND REPRESENTATIVE DATA FROM A CSM PLATFORM

Individual features and items in CSM platforms do not convey the full value proposition of a CS platform. The use cases outlined below give a better idea. These use cases help CSMs with ready-made talk tracks to communicate with and serve all stakeholders involved in customer management processes.

Periodic Business Case Articulation to Customer Sponsor

Vendors periodically, such as during quarterly business reviews, apprise customers of the value provided by the vendor's solutions through clearly articulated and mapped dashboards. Such streamlined conversations assisted through a technology-based solution make it easy for vendors to push for multi-year contract renewals and ask for testimonials, references, positive reviews, and other such advocacy requests during industry events. A proactive rendering of return on investment (ROI) analysis of customer's investments in vendors' solutions makes it easy for the sponsor to justify continued investments with their CFO (Chief Financial Officer).

In the CS platform, vendors document engagement objectives vividly— with supporting graphs and attached collateral— and assign to CSMs with a tie into each goal's sponsor and owner. Vendors capture in detail engagement's business context, customer's real problems, visualized value, and exceptional targeted memories. As the engagement progresses, specific metrics and outcomes ascertaining the original goals are tracked and appealingly visualized.

Customer Success Function ROI (Return on Investment)

CSM appraisals are primarily based on customer retention, upsell, and cross-sell numbers against company provided targets. CS platform integrates with billing systems to track

the latest status of open invoices, renewal dates, collected amounts, and other financial metrics to compute the customer success function's bottom-line value. Granted that not every CS action— such as support for new sales and marketing initiatives— translates into quantifiable gains, CS platforms manage clear bottom-line impact through renewals by CSMs

Handling Escalations

Escalations are part of CSM's lives. The CS platform maintains a detailed audit trail of essential emails, meeting notes, tasks, usage metrics, and other relevant project information. CSMs use this information when faced with questioning from senior management or other departments such as sales, support, and marketing. If a customer did not renew their contract, senior management could use this repository of information to root cause gaps in employee skills, bandwidth, product, or company processes.

Weekly Meetings with Senior Management

For medium to large organizations, spreadsheets cannot support weekly customer success reports for consistency and collaboration issues. Reviewing more than one CSMs' information that doesn't comply with a standard layout can cause friction. CS platform makes it easy to present data in a tabular effort, with dynamic addition and removal of columns, supported by zoom in and out of all relevant data. With convenient access to all built-in metrics, customer feedback, and other relevant content, CSM does not have to look for data when needed.

Customer Satisfaction, Customer Experience, and Health Monitoring

NPS (Net Promoter Score), CSAT (Customer Satisfaction Survey), phone calls, and in-person visits are typically the full range of impersonal to personal interactions commonly followed to gauge customers' experience with vendors' products, employees, and processes. CS platforms help deploy surveys and log this activity. Vendors integrate CS platforms with third party systems to pull billing activity, receivables, renewal dates, and cancellations.

Product Experience and Optimization

Following the core competency concept, vendors' systems are and should focus on the service they have designed to provide, such as web meetings, ERP (enterprise resource planning), and HRP (human resource planning) solutions. While vendors host their platform's usage metrics, their platforms do not visualize these metrics. The number of users active at a given time, by feature, or module are just a few of the many visualization requirements. Product managers will lose focus on their primary responsibility of growing their platform if they support these visualizations on the native platform of these vendor's platforms. Vendors can leverage a CS platform to visualize these metrics and act when the metrics do not support expected patterns.

Customer Journey

The customer journey is the full experience of each customer stakeholder, who has interacted with your brand. The journey starts right from when you have marketed your product or firm, to their current relationship with your organization. A typical customer journey map involves capturing details such as in the bullet list here during each stage of the journey – awareness of your brand (marketing), consideration of your products (sales), decision (contracting), onboarding (implementation and deployment), and beyond:

Complete Understanding of Involved Customer Personnel

Customer's motivation behind every vendor supported project is the sum of the individual customer stakeholder's— sponsors, champions, influencers, end-users, project managers— motivations. A CS platform captures every demographic, educational, personal, and professional detail, interests, preferences, dislikes, and goals for all customer stakeholders. During project reassignments and escalations, it becomes easy for new stakeholders and management to understand the customer side personalities.

Tracking Advocacy Events

Vendors track all positive and negative comments on the CS platform. Reference calls handled by customer contacts, testimonials, participation in joint case studies, anonymous comments, reviews, and speaking events are logged. With a well-documented and balanced view of these events, sales and marketing can ensure no customer or contact is over-utilized.

- What are the stakeholders' feelings?

- Why are they feeling a certain way?

- How do we communicate with them?

- What are they researching?

- How can we move them forward in the desired path?

- What is their action?

- How can we expedite?

- Who from our company is providing the information to them?

While vendors can document this information in PowerPoint and keep it in their document management systems, CS platforms should ideally act as a central repository to reference this information for any existing and prospective engagements.

New Hire and Ongoing CSM Training

New hires go through corporate HR training material such as time and expense, corporate policies, information security, and corporate systems. But for customer management processes–such as weekly reporting–and management best practices, historically CSMs shadowed senior colleagues. The modern way now is to deploy new hire orientation best practice questionnaires, risk assessment training, and checklists in a CS platform to ensure all new personnel is entirely familiar with the vendor's customer management philosophy. A CS platform can automate the deployment, track responses, and ensure everyone has completed the assigned items.

CSMs can use the same approach to train themselves and share with the CSM community on an ongoing basis as they learn new techniques. Questions and topics such as below should be answerable with the training content in the CS platform:

- "How are the vendor's products useful for customers' needs?"

- "How is the vendor product configured and implemented?"

- "What messaging should I use to engage with prospects?"

All CSMs will find this business and technical knowledge useful in interacting with customers.

Customer Onboarding and Project Consistency

Onboarding starts with the first kickoff call after a contract is signed and continues until all relevant end-users sign up and successfully use the vendor's solutions. CS platforms provide a disciplined path to execute and track all appropriate steps between these start and endpoints. CSM's launch onboarding project templates and assign tasks to relevant team members. Project templates could vary by paid / nonpaid customer launches, product feature/module implementations, size of the customer, or other industry-specific variations. Senior management gets visibility of the full process with documented variations that can be analyzed later.

Outcome, Milestones, and Playbooks

Streamlined project execution launching off a thought-through strategy is worth much more than multiple ad-hoc attempts to get things right. A CS platform built using newer UI / UX paradigms helps document and articulate playbooks documented from the vendor's experience.

Milestones leading up to desired overall outcomes collectively ascertain the achievement of the value generated for customer initiatives via the platform. Multiple documentation formats to document milestones, playbooks, and outcomes can be put in place and leveraged as needed.

Events and Alerts

While CRM platforms typically manage identified growth opportunities, such platforms generally are not configured to record project lifecycle — such as onboarding, training— or adverse— such as customer sponsor departure, funding constraints— events. Likewise, utilization, performance, and health alerts are too detailed to be tracked in CRM platforms. A CS platform is well suited to track and manage all customer-relevant events and alerts. The platform's native task management capability supports mitigation activity to take these to their logical conclusion.

Vendor resources can use the same feature to share guidance and collaborate directly from the CS platform. Vendor management should configure CS technology solution to insert meaningful updates to the vendor resources' daily communication platforms such as email and corporate chat interfaces. Besides project-specific updates, the platform can distribute daily or periodic tips and tricks techniques to vendor staff.

Project Risk Management

Practice and experience make CSMs perfect, well near perfect. Good CSMs can anticipate potential issues before they happen and can timely mitigate them. A CS platform can maintain an inventory of risks so that all CSMs— experienced and inexperienced— can be aware of these risks and document mitigation strategies that senior management can review and support periodically. For instance, imported support tickets or their summaries, and usage metrics act as leading indicators enabling prompt course corrections. This overall capability reduces the overall risk profile, increases the CS function's collective maturity, and automatically improves customer retention rates.

Project Testing, Quality and Audit

CSMs are expected to execute high level testing of customer deliverables before sending or showing them to customers. A CS platform with built-in testing and quality module makes it convenient to execute standardized quality test procedures. Through the templated approach every customer facing project should be setup to go through this testing and audit procedures.

Other than project specific, systemic issues require targeted attention to address them. Senior management and investors typically request an audit of company operations by internal or external auditors. While companies keep internal audit platforms, they do not have customer success specific templates or access to customer success metrics. A CS platform audit module makes it easy for auditors to root cause issues, causing customer churn or general operational inefficiencies. Senior CS resources can periodically audit the operations of their colleagues using the same module. Findings from the platform are shared and remediated with learnings disseminated across CS colleagues.

Success Story Writeups for Marketing and Sales

Lastly, but not the least, vendors can document successful outcomes from engagements using built-in success templates with supported charts, dashboards, and customer advocacy events, and send to marketing departments for professional editing. CS resources are known to generate innovative ideas and solutions as they interact with their customers. If managed well, a CS platform can become an engine for composing case studies and newer business growth ideas for sales and marketing departments.

Latviv can drive these efficiencies in your customer success organization with its best in class software, content and services.

Schedule a demo and get trial access for your team.

ABOUT LATVIV

Latviv is a provider of customer success management solutions and services, available as a cloud deployment option.

Latviv's solutions increase customer retention rates, boost upsell, cross-sell, and new license revenue, and help engage with prospects, with appealing customer success results.

Reliability and Better Security

The Latviv platform rides on the Google Cloud. Google provides cloud services reliably due to its experience operating its core services like Google Search. Security controls in the Google Cloud isolate and better protect data by various methods such as compartmentalization. The Google Cloud Platform meets the most stringent data security and data center reliability standards like SSAE16 and ISO27001, a level of protection that few corporate data centers can match.

The Latviv Difference

Latviv's SAAS platform passes the multi-tenant architecture cost savings to its clients, with an appealing pricing strategy. Latviv's scalable architecture and unique design make it easy to support its multiple client implementations on the same server instance. Each of Latviv's clients can, in turn, manage an unlimited number of their customers and engagements.

Latviv provides a rapid jump start through prebuilt content, relationships–of system elements outlined above–story tracks for working with all stakeholders, templates, and customer setup examples. System users can copy relevant content, update for their situation, and start using the system.

The platform uses an advanced decoupling framework to create a Lego block paradigm that Latviv users can use to create graphs, and capture disparate metrics, joined together in user-determined dashboard views. With this highly flexible approach, users can create and articulate stories the way they want and link references to them to any system element.

Ask for a demo or better still, ask for free access. See it to believe it!

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