

# **CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT - A MAJOR ELEMENT OF THE COMPANY'S BUSINESS STRATEGY**

**Associate Professor Nicoleta Rossela Dumitru, Ph.D**

Romanian American University  
1B, Ezpoziției Avenue, Sector 1, Bucharest  
nicoletad01@yahoo.com

**Assistant Lecturer Ivona Stoica, Ph.D Candidate,**

Romanian American University  
1B, Ezpoziției Avenue, Sector 1, Bucharest  
Ivona.stoica@rau.ro

**Lecturer Costel Negricea Ph.D**

Romanian American University  
1B, Ezpoziției Avenue, Sector 1, Bucharest  
negricea@yahoo.com

## **Abstract:**

Customer oriented relationship marketing requires continuous and comprehensive identification and analysis of customer expectations, their translation into delivery of the products and services, and conduct of interaction with customers, in order to develop and maintain long term and economically advantageous relationships. Market orientation envisages not only the current business customers, but also all market participants getting into relationship with the enterprise; on the other hand, customer orientation is aimed primarily at meeting their needs and expectations, while the creation of a competitive advantage on the market moves in the background.

**Keywords:** relationship marketing, customer orientation, CRM, customer value, customer satisfaction, customer behavior.

**JEL Classification: M 31**

## **1. Introduction**

Relationship marketing is defined as a marketing strategy whose objectives are the establishment and maintenance of profitable and lasting customers relationships, relationships that extends long after the initial contact. Relationship marketing has evolved from the direct response marketing ; it focuses more on customer retention and satisfaction of their needs, and less on selling.

In recent years, the organizations, especially the financial institutions, increasingly focus on relationship marketing, which includes three key concepts:

- Attract new customers;

- Maintain existing customers;
- Regain lost customers.

The main problem that occurs is the extent to which the company should focus on each of these three concepts. The answer to this problem is not exact, but we can say that the organization must invest the necessary resources to attract new customers or retain the existing ones according to the situation of the market, the organization or the products / services promoted. Thus, during the life cycle of a product or company, customer attraction and / or retention, acquires a greater or lesser importance as compared one against the other; therefore, a different volume of resources will be invested, according to the stage of evolution of these elements. In order to monitor this phenomenon, we will take into consideration the product adoption curve:

- *innovators* are customers who adopt the new product / service the earliest ;
- *early buyers* are customers who, despite the slow start, decide to adopt the new product and are opinion makers through "word of mouth", ultimately helping to increase sales generated by the early majority who buy the product before the sale reach its peak;
- *late majority* is represented by skeptical customers who adopt the new technology after its market value has been confirmed and it has been adopted by the majority;
- *late buyers* are customers who purchase the product later, in the end of its lifecycle; meanwhile, the innovators or early buyers shift to more efficient technologies.

**Customer Relationship Management**, part of the relationship marketing, is a vital tool that cannot be ignored by modern companies. It involves a number of techniques, including:

- Proper design of customer contact;
- customer reward ;
- Customer excitement;
- Real-Time Marketing.

Customers are people or organizations that benefit from the services or products of other person or organization. Revenue of the latter is based almost exclusively on the existence of customers, therefore it is very important to focus on maintaining relationships with customers and ensuring their satisfaction, for the long term survival of the company. The focus on customer, his satisfaction and his evolving demands is the main component of customer relationship management, because companies can obtain significant advantages over the competitors, provided that the company succeeds in correctly identifying the customers needs, and implementing the necessary changes as efficiently as possible.

A key element in the customer relationship management process is an effective **marketing mix**, which involves a unitary combination of its components: product, price, promotion, placement in the distribution chain, staffing and physical records.

Due to the fact that the services are intangible, the customers look for "evidence" which can help them get familiar with the service. These features result in including additional variables for an effective communication with the customers, for example a bank's environment and the staff behavior.

The service providing staff, the set of activities or processes involving service provision and the physical records are decisive factors in meeting customer satisfaction.

Sale of a financial service is characterized by high customer involvement, and sales staff is forced to spend a significant part of time to reduce uncertainty felt by the consumer. The company must ensure that sales staff initiates and develops good relations with consumers. At the same time, the company must offer training and development programs to the employees, and it also has to provide the motivation necessary for them to perform excellently. Finally, the personnel involved in a sale transaction should behave so

that the consumer's purchase decision should seem a natural process and should require the minimum effort.

As a conclusion, the provider, and especially front line staff is important because:

- are associated with the services purchased, in most cases ;
- Represent the company in relationship with the consumer;
- are selling / promoting the services.

### **Advantages of relationship marketing for an efficient work of the organization**

Essentially, the ultimate objective of marketing is obtaining profit for the organization by optimizing its resources in order to satisfy the most demanding customer requirements.

Nowadays, Romanian companies have realized that the success recipe and one of the solutions to maintain the market share and the steady growth is knowing the customers, retention of existing customers, and business relationship with them, the customer relationship management and relationship marketing representing the relationship keywords arsenal. This approach (customer-centric) is increasingly used in conditions in which Romania is no longer in the transition period, after the accession to the European Union, and the customers are even more demanding, forcing companies to change their orientation from product to customer.

The "Customer-Centric" approach requires certain tools to be implemented; these are after-sales customer support tools that involve first of all a database where information is stocked concerning the customer, customer interactions, and also the necessary know-how to manage relationships and use information effectively.

In order to achieve customer loyalty and thus avoid the client to leave the competition, two basic rules have been stated: personalized approach and quick resolution of problems that can occur. Based on information recorded in the database, the company must be proactive, visionary, to ensure continuity in the relationship with the client. Customer segmentation is also necessary in order to obtain homogeneous groups of customers, based on which the company can apply certain marketing strategies (avoiding the utopian concept of "one to one", unenforceable even if the company has very few customers). Groups of customers can be made using several criteria such as type of products / services requested by the client, age, sex, customer profitability, behavioral data (regarding interaction history).

By using multiple channels, the risk of contact depersonalization may occur, therefore the company must pay due attention to personalization of customer contact (based on the data stored), the result will be that the customer will always feel listened to, respected and recognized and risk that he will be won by the competition to the detriment of the company will remain low.

### **General considerations concerning the importance of a Call Center for the relationship marketing of an organization - the transition from the 4P to the 3 C (customer value, customer satisfaction, customer behavior)**

Currently, many companies realize that the classical marketing approach, focused on the 4P's marketing mix - product, price, promotion and placement is not sufficient. It is indeed very important to have a clear product policy, but customer orientation has become a crucial element for the success of a medium to large sized companies. In order to bring

profit to the company, performance factors for gaining or retaining a customer must be capitalized. The performance factors are:

- **Customer Relationship Value** - the need to maximize customer profitability is the key to success because large number of customers must be profitable, compared to the non-profitable, and the company must know the precise methods to balance the scales in favor of profit; indices to be measured are profit per customer and customer value over the life;

- **Customer behavior** - customer value is largely determined by its behavior, as measured in income (in money or goods and services required in a specific period of time), the relationship life time representing the period when the client does business with the company, and market share / customer, which means the extent to which the customer needs are met by products and services of the company;

- **Customer satisfaction** - satisfied customers behave in a positive, profitable way for the company, buying more products for a long time; their satisfaction is the result of product quality and reliability, and also the fruitful relationship with the firm;

The key element to support all these three basic factors for a bank, in addition to quality products and services tailored to customer requirements, is maintaining a good customer relationship, and keeping a record of interactions with him; to this purpose, the best solution is the establishment of a Call Center. National Call Center market is growing (estimated at a value of over 110 million in 2011), which is currently the most popular tool for frequent flyer and maintaining contact between the firm and its clients. The companies operating in Romania who gave importance to this segment are functioning in finance and banking, telecommunications, healthcare, retail, IT and government. In Romania there are over 400 Call Centers providing outbound and inbound customer service to domestic and foreign firms; the main competitors are Accenture, CGS, Wipro, Teleperformance, XL World and Genpact.

A Call Center can be in-house (company implemented and managed by itself with the resources available to that company) or outsourced (outsourcing firm specializing in customer relations and efficient management of resources used to attain the objectives set by companies applicant).

If Call Center is coming from outsourcing, it is very important that all employees of service providing company should identify with the customer - company, know its objectives, its values and adhere to its values and get involved in their implementation because only by knowing the respective company one can offer the highest quality services to the customers. Outsourced Call Centers in Romania segment consist mainly of companies that provide services for companies based abroad, which prefer Romania due to the ability to communicate in several international languages and also better use of computer applications and information; human resource is the main factor in this area.

The long term potential of this market is very high, because most large companies realize that the best opportunity for customers interactions is to establish a specialized call center. Also, many companies adopt the concept of "Contact Center" because it encompasses all modes of customer communication (phone, e-mail and in some cases, web and image), and offers a complete experience, personalized and focused on the customer needs.

## 2. Case Study: Aspects of gaining customer loyalty through BCR Client Service

The activity of customer service department within BCR is divided into several projects, each of these projects having a specific well defined role, according to type of customer requests. Thus, BCR Contact Center deals with the following projects / services:

- **Cards Assistance-** service that provides emergency assistance for BCR cardholders, such as blocking or activation cards, take and record complaints about incidents of BCR ATMs, or provide information on transactions, or procedures in different cases;

- **InfoBCR** - basically the same service that was established in 2004 - internal BCR. The BCR Info calling customers have access to general business information about all BCR products and services, they can find out the exchange rate of the day, or may lodge a complaint;

- **Alo 24 Banking** - included in the Service of making transactions through BCR alternative channels - on the internet, CLICK 24 Banking, or by phoning to this department. Thus customers have easier access to their account without having to go to a BCR branch to make a BCR transfer or to request a statement of account; they can get all the statement information from the Internet or by telephone, all at reduced costs;

- **Technical Support (Helpdesk)** - This service provides customers with assistance in using CLICK 24 Banking service, if a customer wants to know how to use application CLICK 24 Banking, or has difficulty logging into the application, he will need to use this service;

- **Sales Department** - is an outbound service (call initiated) to inform customers or people who are BCR registered in the database about the latest offers or campaigns of the Romanian Commercial Bank. Aims to bringing new customers or retaining the existing customers;

### Conclusions

Relationship marketing refers to attracting, developing and maintaining customer relationships, attracting and keeping the customers; it includes activities that lead to certain profit. As they constantly expand their shopping, the customers enlarge their area and transmit favorable information about the company.

Thus, relational marketing leads to a stable partnership between organization and customers, with benefits on both sides, a customized approach between the parties and the positive results in terms of material and functional aspects.

### Bibliography:

- [1.] Căpățână Al., *Managementul relațiilor cu clienții*, Suport Curs IDD, Universitatea Dunărea de Jos, Galați
- [2.] Egan J., *Relationship marketing : exploring relational strategies in marketing*, Editura Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 2004;
- [3.] Grosseck H. – *Marketing și comunicare pe Internet*, Editura Lumen, Iasi 2006;
- [4.] Hawkins D., Best R., Coney K., *Consumer Behavior: building marketing strategy*, Editura McGraw-Hill, Boston 2010;
- [5.] Kotler Ph., *Managementul Marketingului*, Editura Teora, București, 2008;

- [6.] Kotler Ph., Armstrong G., Sanders J., Wong V., *Principiile Marketingului*, Editura Teora, București, 2008;
- [7.] Odobescu E., Poanta D., *Relațiile băncilor cu clienții : elemente de marketing*, Editura Sigma, București, 2003;
- [8.] M. Williams – *Interactive marketing : Building loyalty one to one*, Editura Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs 1997;
- \*\*\* <http://www.edumark.ase.ro/RePEc/rmko/4/5.pdf>;
- \*\*\* <http://www.bnro.ro/Buletinul-lunar-BCE---iulie-2009-4471.aspx>;
- \*\*\* <http://www.bnro.ro/Publicatii-periodice-204.aspx>