
Editorial

Alan D. Smith

Department of Management and Marketing,
Robert Morris University,
600th Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15219-3099, USA
Fax: (412) 262-8494 E-mail: smitha@rmu.edu

Many of the challenges in the business world today result from the innovations and advancements in the global economy and the management strategies that are directly tied to the evolution of technology. Technology is changing the way we consume products and services through the internet. All the different forms of business including business-to-business (B2B), business-to-customer (B2C) and customer-to-customer (C2C) are processed faster, easier and with more convenience through online transactions. These online transactions give the potential to attract customers easier, retain existing customers, produce higher profits and increase revenues faster. The benefits of the internet are many and evolve with the growth of technology designed to leverage that connective power to customers, especially for the average individual with routine needs and demands. Although businesses are reaping the benefits as well, with these opportunities come many challenges and an enormous amount of investment is required in order to deal with the increasing competition.

If a consumer makes a poor decision or ends up with a deficient product, it can be very costly as customers seek alternatives that are suboptimal. In terms of basic customer relationship management (CRM), one of the best ways to safeguard against making a poor decision in any purchasing process is to become an informed buyer; hence, avoiding the costly error of lack of customer retention and resultant loyalty. The difficulty of attaining a satisfied and empowered customer is largely dependent on the number of alternatives that are available for a given purchase. The situation does work both ways, as the larger the alternative set, the longer it will take to make a well-informed decision, as in the case for the automotive consumer.

Specifically, this special issue on the applications of CRM, innovation and its applications through information technology included:

- 1 What is innovation and why innovate the business to customer interface?
- 2 CRM in a service industry and the opportunities and challenges of improving the customer interface.
- 3 CRM product and service innovation, especially applications to emerging applications, such as fantasy sports, online dating, online financial services, automobile purchases online, retail online services and loyalty cards, to name a few.
- 4 Strategic bundling of CRM software products and services into other propositions that require technological support and using best business practices to innovate the customer interface in such industries as music, film, pharmaceuticals, banking and other service areas.

2 *A.D. Smith*

- 5 Research, both empirical and theoretical, into customer-led innovations that involve retail services companies and how they use customer-related information and customer-segment innovation.
- 6 Research, both empirical and theoretical, into technology-led innovation involving the customer interface, such as e-personalisation, services personally identified through mass channels of communication and commerce. It is assumed that descriptions of the channels that provide this interaction are sufficiently discussed.
- 7 As these technologies and applications of CRM-embedded innovations have transformed the overall client experience, case studies and actual applications with measures of success or failure are especially encouraged.

All the submissions were double-peer reviewed; these research items in mind. This special issue included efficient use of CRM systems, online banking systems through CRM systems, positive CRM applications of retail loyalty card programs and fantasy sports, mobile messaging considerations, which are all interesting and classic examples of CRM and IT interactions.