WHY YOU NEED TO GET CREATIVE IN YOUR CUSTOMER RESEARCH

Traditional Research

CSR

Social Activity

Conversations Over Different Channels
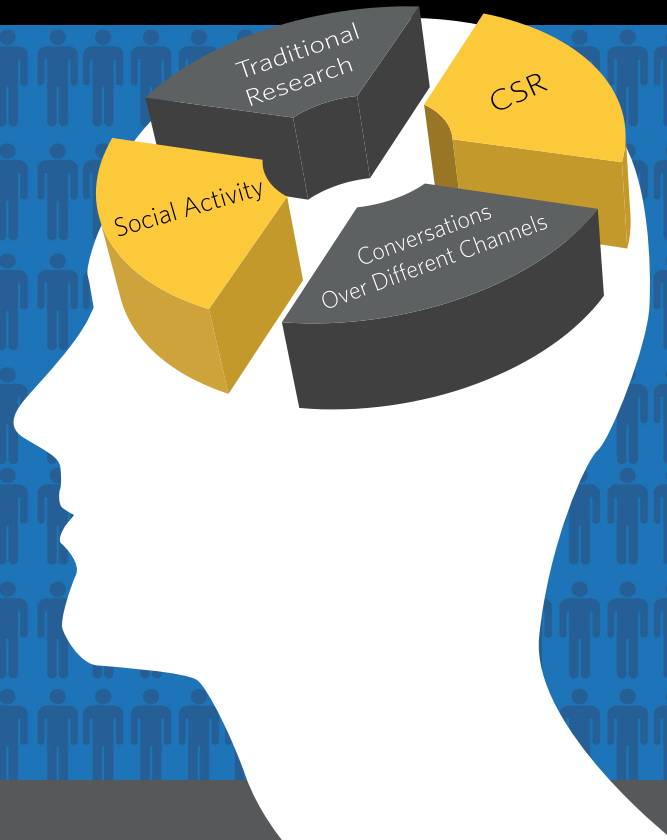
Customers have changed a lot and, with the growing reliance on the internet, this change is increasing exponentially. Therefore isn't it logical that our means of getting to know our customers should also change? Customer insight is fundamental to any marketing, sales or communications strategy, and all it takes is a new and fresh idea on how to analyze customer behavior.

Our customer research methods need to stay in touch with our target markets, and that means that we not only need to know their trends, but predict the ones that are yet to happen. As companies struggle to follow along with the latest digital opportunities they miss out on communication lines with their customers and they cease to interact in the most beneficial way. Companies need to start taking an outside-of-the-box approach, and strategizing a more comprehensive game plan. There are different stages of communication, and they each require different tactics. If you approach the incoming challenge of customer research from outside of the usual path, you'll be able to register a new understanding of what they need and want.

When it comes to learning about our customers, there are still a few tactics that have been around since the beginning. Whether they are surveys or feedback requests, they have often relied on the customers taking on a menial task to give us the information that we needed. Although these methods are not without merit, they lack the creativity and engagement that are apparent in the more modern customer research strategies. Here is a list of some of the ways that your customer research can be taken to the next level.

Social Activity

Since we've all heard the horror stories, most people avoid using social media to say controversial things, or behave immaturely. However, there's a lot that can be learned from just watching for references and shout outs over personal feeds. With the software systems currently available, companies are able to use social media for much more than just conversation. The amount of information that an individual reveals about themselves over their Facebook or Twitter feed can be limitless, and it provides a great insight into what your potential customers are currently keeping tabs on or relating to.

Blogs have also taken their place in the journalism industry, and they are an open invitation for comments and discussion.

Companies that are able to monitor relevant blogs and their comment sections will be able to keep up with trends that have yet to expand into the mass media.

Conversations Over Different Channels

It has never been easier to start a conversation with a customer. With the multitude of places that customers and brands can interact, it's no wonder that this method has started to gain much more traction. Companies can use social media, in-person interactions, phone calls, e-mail, you name it - there is no limit to the options for dialogue. The more humanized a conversation becomes, the more you are able to learn about the individuals that are connecting with your brand.

Sometimes what can really help a company is by indirectly creating authentic dialogue. An example of this would be bringing in an expert to start a discussion with the public. The conversation can bring up some of the problems that your company's product or service can help resolve, and this can help encourage customers that are on the fence or were otherwise unaware.

Another tactic is to open conversation within a company by bringing in different levels and departments in to create an internal think tank. The motto of "two heads is better than one" works wonders when trying to come up with new and creative strategies. By creating focus groups that have a variety of different professionals you can create a space that encourages innovation.

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This incoming generation of customers has ample opportunities to get information over the internet, and these include knowing about social and environmental issues, and health concerns. A tactic that is proving to be successful with companies, both publicly and financially,

is acknowledging a positive fight against these issues and concerns.

The Corporate Social Responsibility trend that has rocketed through every industry is not likely to disappear anytime soon, and having a means of letting customers know what actions you're taking towards a given problem can be a very successful way of connecting with them on a humanized level. Attaching yourself to a cause or issue is a great way of allowing your customers to get to know your company, and therefore encourage more of a social connection instead of just a financial one.

Traditional Research

Traditional research is still relevant, and they offer a much more straight forward approach to customer interactions. You want to know what someone wants, so you ask them. Although they are seen as borderline archaic, they are still able to present information about customers that is very valuable when making further improvements to a product, service, or company.

At the end of the day, companies need to be more comprehensive with their research methods. They can't stick to their old tricks and hope to understand this new generation of customers. The companies that expand outside of their usual practices will be able to take a heavy lead in communication with customers, and are likely to see the successful from it shortly after.

If companies can facilitate the conversations between their brand, their customers, experts, and the general public, than they're going to find that their customer insights become significantly more intricate. Communications strategies will be able to align more closely with data-driven analysis, and this will make your sales strategies more effective. The better you know your customers the easier it will be to give them what they want.

Closing the gap between marketing and information is a necessary step towards the new age of marketing. As executives start to take on new responsibilities and portfolios begin to adapt to the changing market trends, there is even more need for collaborations. These changes are best taken on at the foundational level so that cross-platform strategies and ventures become engrained into a company's culture.