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TOP 8 B2B CUSTOMER MARKETING TRENDS TO WATCH OUT FOR IN 2017

In a survey of 202 respondents, primarily composing of B2B and hybrid B2B companies, influitive and Koyne Marketing discovered that customer marketing has become an integral marketing strategy and that it is on the rise. Businesses are no longer solely focused on bringing new customers – they are trying to retain existing consumers of their business.

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and

Their research report "The State of Customer Marketing 2017" states that

93%

of these organizations expect that their customer marketing efforts will take on greater importance,

62%

will increase their staff or budgets in the area for 2017.

With only

61%

of them satisfied with the results of their current customer marketing efforts, there is a great chance of growth in the customer marketing arena.

Here are 8 customer marketing trends that are likely to transpire in 2017, and in the coming years.

1 Higher Importance Of Testimonials

62%

of companies use testimonials for their customer marketing activities

With this, it is ranked highest among the most-used customer marketing tactics.

53% of B2B buyers rely on peer recommendations as well before making any purchasing decision.

This is due to trust issues that resulted from being bombarded with a ton of marketing noise, ads, emails that aim to sell to them.

- This is creating a major shift in the purchase process as they trust their peers more than any sales or marketing personnel.

- This also contributes to the tendency of millennials – the next big generation that will dominate the purchasing market – to fact-check everything about a good or service they are considering due this same trust issue.
- With this prevalent attitude among the purchasing market, this reliance on customer reference to make decisions will only continue to grow with the coming years, as people see voluntary testimonials and references as more unbiased and transparent than sales pitches.

2

More Focus On Customer User Groups/events

42% of the companies hold customer user groups or other events as part of their customer marketing activities.

- These involve meeting a sample of users face-to-face to help the company learn more about the target market and what they need and expect from the company.
- It also gives them the opportunity to learn about the company as well.

- A good number of companies are starting to see the potential of holding customer user groups and other related events.
- It not only allows them to extract valuable information and opinion from their customers, but also allows them to establish a responsive image towards the wants and needs of their market.

3

Interactive Newsletters

With **41%** of companies still sending out newsletters, it appears that this will still be a mainstay among customer marketing activities that companies are doing.

- Companies are starting to break away from the traditional newsletter setup – they are optimizing and changing to entice more customers to keep with their subscriptions and interact with the newsletters' contents.

- While many believe that newsletters are not as effective compared to social media in terms of updating followers and customers of the company, there are still ways that businesses can derive customer relationship and retention through this method, as it is especially effective with markets whose members are dependent on their emails for different types of work or activities.

4 Advocate Marketing

- Big Commerce defines advocacy marketing as “a form of marketing that emphasized getting existing customers to talk about the company and its products”.
- It works alongside other customer marketing activities, such as customer response/testimonials and newsletters, and will allow for better development of the relationship between the customer and the company.

- Advocacy marketing has a preliminary effect on testimonials, as people who publicly advocate products or services they obtained from a company will talk about them without being prompted to do so.
- This can lead to new customers being more inclined to try out the same services or goods when recommended by their peers.

- Many companies did not realize that this has a lot of potential with increasing their customer retention until recent years, with..

37% of companies are already acknowledging the need for advocacy marketing, while more are expected to tap into this activity for their strategies.

5 Online Customer Community Interaction

According to Leader Networks, an online customer community is an “interactive, often gated website that a company sets up to collaborate on topics of mutual interest”.

They have existed for more than 15 years ago, but technological advancements that allowed people to become connected via social media and mobile devices have boosted online communities’ presence in recent years.

Online customer communities allow brands to have an ongoing dialogue with customers without customers having to attach themselves to their specific identity, especially when platforms where these communities are set up allow anonymity for the customers.

In that way, they can deliver honest opinions about customer service without having their opinions attached to their customer information.

This activity also supplemented the democratization of how information becomes distributed online. No longer is information coming from a few expert sources – as anyone who may have something new to share can do so in customer communities, and this makes for a trusted source.

More companies are gaining traction on setting up online customer communities.

37% **of the companies that Influitive surveyed mentioned that they have these kinds of communities set up as part of their customer marketing efforts.**

With more technologies making it easier to communicate, online customer communities are expected to become even more prevalent in the coming years.

6

Customer Satisfaction Systems

Customer satisfaction (CSat) is a measure of how products and services supplied by a company have met or surpassed expectations of the customer. It provides marketers and business owners with a metric that can be used to manage and improve their businesses.

Not only that, it is a leading indicator of consumer repurchase intentions and loyalty, which is a valuable aspect for customer marketing.

Asking customers to rate their satisfaction is a good way to see if they will be likely repeat customers or even advocates.

37% of companies consider customer satisfaction as an integral part of their strategy as they allow the business to adjust their services based on what their customers felt most satisfied and least satisfied about.

Customer satisfaction systems have been implemented in recent years in various services and companies, and even social media platforms such as Facebook allow customers to rate businesses directly.

More and more businesses are adopting this in the recent years, as it helps boost other customer marketing activities like testimonials and advocate marketing.

7

Cross Sell/upsell Campaigns

Cross-selling refers to the practice of suggesting related products or services to an existing customer, while upselling is encouraging customers to purchase a comparably higher-end product from the one they are considering.

When done properly, they are mutually beneficial and provides maximum value to customers and increase revenue without the recurring cost of a multitude of marketing channels.

Cross-selling and upselling are activities preferred by..

37% of companies, as it shows customers that they are more than capable of delivering solutions to various needs and that they know their customers enough to know what they need based on their purchasing choices.

While some companies underestimate cross-selling and upselling, Marketing Profs consider it to be an integral activity that many are missing out on.

According to them, the ROI is more tangible with cross-selling and upselling than taking the effort to acquire a new customer.

8 Referral programs

More commonly known as referral marketing, it is the method of promoting products or services to new customers through referrals, usually through word-of-mouth.

This can be accomplished by encouraging then rewarding customers and other contacts when vthey recommend products and services from consumer and B2B brands, whether online or offline.

The endpoint and effect of referral programs and testimonials are almost the same, the difference mainly lying in the fact that referral programs are deliberate efforts to have existing customers recommend products or services from the company, while testimonials are more voluntary.

36% of companies adopted this customer marketing activity in their strategy, and it continues to grow as...

92% of consumers trust referrals from people they know, and are 4 times more likely to buy when referred by a friend.

36% of consumers as well say that they either completely or somewhat trust recommendations from family members, colleagues, and friends about products – which makes this the information source ranked highest for trustworthiness, according to Nielsen's reports.

2017 is the perfect year for you and your business to ramp up on its customer marketing strategy, as these trends promise a whole new marketing landscape for everyone, even your existing consumers.

Customer marketing is looking to be a significant gamechanger, especially with the current markets' purchasing behaviors, and it's about time you grab the opportunity to play on its field as well.

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