

Customer experience driving CRM's evolution

The urgent need for businesses to attract and retain customers in today's fiercely competitive market has revolutionised customer interaction and Customer Relationship Management (CRM). This is now a technology-driven business discipline underpinned by the advent of big data analytics, AI and the cloud.

What used to serve primarily as an application to manage a customer has now evolved to an all-encompassing business priority says Paul McIntyre, Chief Sales Officer at Johannesburg-based ICT and cloud solutions leader Elingo.

According to McIntyre CRM is now CX and this is now the preferred channel of communication, typified by a unified view of the customer, realtime information and a format of customer choice.

"It is really focused on the holistic customer experience. The customer is at the centre of this technology trend. When selecting solutions to take your customer experience strategy to a new level, look at your customer and their use of technologies and platforms, there are not many customers these days who don't know the power of a smart phone, that means multiple channels and means of engagement, social platform, phoning is almost the lesser of the options. Make sure you understand the relevance of AI, Bots and these technologies and how it can differentiate you are a player in the market," says McIntyre.

He agrees with the notion that it is effectively the customer that owns the brand. "Your customers are potentially your best brand ambassadors, and the contrary is also true, with social platforms today, a brand owner can quickly experience the wrath and damage of an unhappy customer. The era of 'customer is king' and 'empowered' has been here for a while now."

So while a great deal of power rests with the consumer in terms of building or destroying a brand, the customer experience has become all the more meaningful.

McIntyre says more businesses in key sectors with high customer engagement (including financial services, telecoms, medical aid and insurance) are adopting an omni-channel engagement model.

With customer experience still measured according to metrics like NPS, this model is a differentiator used to provide customers with market leading features that they have come to expect.

"The one way customers can identify a quick win, is to work with a technology company representing best of breed brand, look at use cases, look at practical reference cases, there are always priceless learnings that have come out of practical solution deployments. With over 21 years of experience in the contact centre world, Elingo who be a good bet, to start unpacking where you could differentiate your business quickly, define ROIs based on your statistics, and best practises allow for rapid deployments," adds McIntyre.

When it comes to selecting a potential partner consider best-of-breed products and reference customer base he adds.