

Chordiant and the Customer Experience Revolution



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Published: 27th June 2007

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The last decade has been dominated by investment in call centres. Extravagant claims were made for the impact of CRM on profitability but, in reality, customers quickly came to see that what was being offered as a commodity and all of that investment just became a cost of doing business.

In the last few years CRM has been revisited to address the fundamental issues surrounding how to manage customers to maximise share of wallet, encourage loyalty, and maximise lifetime value. This is what Customer Experience is all about. One of the first things that becomes obvious when talking about Customer Experience is that it is a far from trivial concept, and that its reach is extensive, its demands are exceptional and, accordingly, although many may talk about it, there are few who can really deliver. Chordiant would claim to be the Customer Experience champions, and I can see no reason to dispute their right to that crown.

Customer Experience is about using every opportunity with a customer to maximise their potential value in a way that is of benefit not only in the short term but, vitally, over the life of the customer as a partner, even if that means doing nothing at this point in time. Such decisions are complex and require careful optimisation. To make such decisions requires a decision engine based on a large pool of data—the 360-degree view of the customer that is so often talked about. From that pool of data a variety of seemingly equally valid options will arise but, if long-term value and not short-term goals are to be satisfied, then the best next action must be decided by optimisation. This is a far from trivial first step. It requires an ability to scale to hold the volume of data, it requires speed to obtain answers to complex questions fast enough to influence the next behaviour, and optimisation is something which is very difficult to do properly let alone on a large scale and at speed. Chordiant have such an engine that meets those criteria, which is why it is being used today by many of the leading Telecommunications and Financial Services organisations. This, on its own, would be impressive but it would not address the requirements of managing the Customer Experience.

Those optimised decisions have to be integrated in a structured, managed way across all customer-facing channels. Customer Experience does not occur just over the Internet; it is about the web, through the call centre and in store, or when a representative in whatever capacity is in face-to-face contact with the customer. A customer experience solution must therefore embrace the entire customer-facing channels and include a campaign management environment to unite them all in a co-ordinated fashion.

Having undertaken those actions it is then necessary to report on them, to close the loop. Because the scope and scale of customer experience is so large, historic reporting by tabular structured data is not going to convey information meaningfully to many people within the workflows that are now being managed as part of the customer experience solution. Chordiant includes highly sophisticated visualisation tools to help to transmit data to the various bodies who need to be able to understand not only what has happened in the past, but what is happening today, and what is likely to happen in the future.

Currently I can think of no other solution set that is as advanced at providing all of those components as Chordiant. Chordiant also has established an infrastructure of partnerships to assist in the delivery of the solution, which obviously is going to be far from trivial, being more profound than just a technical implementation. This is a leading edge solution, which will help customers avoid having to feel that they are at the bleeding edge.

I believe that Customer Experience is one of the most profound challenges facing companies today; it is about managing customers as a farmer would his cattle or land, not just quarter by quarter but as a sustainable asset. Chordiant have the most complete offering available, it has no obvious weaknesses and offers vast potential for realising the benefits promised.

About David Norris

David Norris
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David was born in 1954, and has worked in the IT industry for almost 30 years, having been a VAT Inspector when he first left University. He was educated at Windsor Grammar School, and Sheffield University. He was worked for HM Customs and Excise, Rank Xerox, Calor Gas, Coopers & Lybrand, Dun & Bradstreet, Hewlett Packard (through Tandem, Compaq and the merger with Digital), and himself.

His main interest in IT has been on Intelligence based applications such as Management Control, CRM, Marketing. As well as these analytic applications he has also been very active in work on delivery and management methods. His work has taken to many parts of the globe having worked in the USA, across Europe, many of the Gulf States and parts of the Far East including Malaysia and Taiwan. Although his predominant experience has been with Telcos he has also working in Banking, Pharmaceuticals, Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Retail and Insurance. He continues to work as an IT consultant (specialising in methods work, and analytics) when not actively engaged on projects for Bloor Research.

Outside of work his major interests include collecting model soldiers and wargaming, in particular the English Civil War, and sport, being an ardent fan of Wasps, West Ham and the now retired Lance Armstrong. He also collects CDs having an ever growing collection suffering from completism when it comes to artists such as , Elvis Costello, Tom Waits, Miles Davis, David Bowie, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Mahler and Shostavovich.

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