

Exemplary Customer Engagement Through Clienteling



In today's uber-connected world, consumers are thoroughly informed spenders with unique preferences, needs, dislikes and even moods. They have easy access to product and market information and are increasingly conducting research online before making a buying decision. What draws a customer towards the online marketplace is the high degree of personalisation that the experience offers. On e-commerce platforms, along with detailed information about products, a shopper can compare brands and prices, find related items and accessorise his or her purchases with add-ons with just the click of a button. Each user has a unique experience based on his purchase and browsing history. However, when a customer shops online, he is missing out on the look and feel of the product as well as the satisfaction of human interaction. Clienteling makes it possible for brick and mortar retailers to offer the best of both worlds - deliver personalised customer service, while leveraging the existing advantages of an in-store experience.

Clienteling enables retailers to engage, delight and retain existing customers while acquiring new ones as well. It elevates the traditional brick and mortar retailer to a provider of a personalised and memorable shopping experience by empowering sales associates with rich information about the customers they serve. It provides a 360 degree view of a customer – who they are, what their preferences are, how engaged are they with the brand and what kind of feedback they have offered in the past. This allows the salesperson to approach the customer with an experience exclusively tailored for him. Through positive interactions in-store, retailers can build loyalty and consequently increase ROI.

The clienteling process

Connecting with the customer

The first step is to invite customers to the store with outreach mechanisms like store offers, catalogues and targeted marketing activities – both for current and potential customers. The sales associate is an integral part of this process when they are allowed to connect one-to-one via emails, text messages or calls. The Clienteling process arms the brand, the store manager and the store associate with individual customer preferences, past purchase history, lifestyle choices, media and web interaction. It also gives managers in the store access to real-time Key Performance Indicators to better drive sales and decision making.



Delighting the customer

Since customers typically have considerable information at hand (either through online research at home or through their mobile devices) before he visits a store, the comparative advantage lies in memorable customer service which builds loyalty and repeat visits. This in turn drives increased point of sales transactions and overall sales.

Imagine walking into your wife's favourite store and struggling with the task of buying her a gift and the sales associate walks up to you with an iPad that pulls up all the information about your wife that has been collected and stored, involving her size, style and colour preferences as well as a wide-ranging comparative view of other purchases she made. Automatically and with the help of the knowledgeable associate, the dreary and risky task of choosing the right gift is simplified.

Similarly, if you enter a store looking to purchase an item you have already researched, the sales associate can add value to your experience by making relevant recommendations for complementary products or offers on similar items. For a frequent customer, it can be extremely satisfying to be recognised and personally attended to at the store.

Additionally, Clienteling can assist in saving lost sales due to inventory shortage by giving the sales associate relevant substitutes or even allowing him or her to book the out of stock item and have it shipped directly to the customer's location of choice.

There is a win-win solution here, which involves building an in-store experience that delights customers by acquiring willing information from the customers and then using it judiciously to generate greater returns.

Follow-up

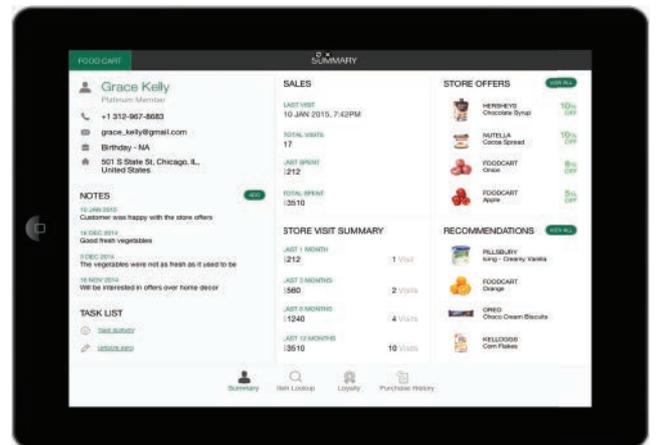
The process of Clienteling does not end when the customer walks out of the store. As any retailer knows, the key is to keep bringing the customer back for more. This can be done in a number of ways, starting from targeted marketing activities, loyalty programs and special offers. Once again, the sales associate can enter the equation by maintaining contact with the customer after the purchase. It could be to connect with the customer when alterations are completed or out of stock items that were of interest are shipped. It could be in the form of personalised messages coming directly from the associate inviting the customer back because items that relate to his past purchases are available. Follow up must also involve garnering feedback from the customer both in terms of the products he has purchased and in terms of the store experience. This is certainly valuable at a brand-level but it is additionally useful to the store associate when he establishes the next interaction with the customer. Clienteling thus enables constant learning and improvement from the side of the store and store associate and reduces churn by addressing service issues and keeping customers happy.

Results and analysis

With such detailed information being captured for each customer and his shopping pattern, it's extremely valuable to analyse and learn from this data at the store and brand level. Managers can assess the fastest moving items, most valuable customers, best performing sales people among other insights. Better marketing campaigns can be designed since customers can be targeted based not only on their recency, frequency and monetary indicators but also more detailed analytics on their buying behaviour.

Boosting sales and driving loyalty

Clienteling is in essence the return of the highly personalised corner-store experiences of yesteryear where customers had a personal connect with the establishments they shopped at. It appeals to the shopper's craving for a unique and memorable experience while addressing the new, technology-driven social interactions we have today. In a world of innumerable choice, the differentiating factor for any retailer is the personalisation they can provide to a customer. This has a ripple effect when the shopper shares his or her experience with personal contacts or on social media. The impact of implementing Clienteling is thus, enhanced customer loyalty. Buyers revisit the store thanks to targeted outreach done at a personal level adding perks and benefits to their experience.



There is a potential to increase basket size with every visit through relevant cross-selling and up-selling by the store associate. The clienteling solution gives the sales associate the luxury of mobile information. There is no longer a need to run to the point of sale system to find out details about a customer because it travels with you as you interact with the customer. Taking this a step further, we can integrate the system to a mobile point of sale device that will facilitate speedy check out without ever getting behind a desk.

Clienteling is the final puzzle piece in an omni-channel retailing world because it creates a seamless experience for the shopper whether he is online or in the store. It allows retailers to leverage inventory in their stores and warehouses across locations to make sure the customer always walks out with what he wanted, irrespective of whether the item was in that particular store or not.

Privacy and security

Privacy and data handling are sensitive and binding issues when it comes to dealing with customers discreetly. Firstly, all data must be collected with the customer's permission and the intended use must be clearly articulated to him or her. At any point where customer data is obtained, be it through questionnaires, feedback forms, social networks, open online forums and other online applications, there must be provisions for the customer to choose what data is provided and what it might be used for.

Moreover, since rich personal information is available to sales associates and managers, the disclosure of this data to third parties must take place only with the personal authorisation of the consumer.

Adequate precautions should be taken to manage and secure data to prevent data loss or unauthorised changes to information. Customers must be informed if any changes are made to any of the terms and conditions of the use of their data by the retailer.

Championing best practices

Successful clienteling requires positioning the sales associate as a brand ambassador and the enabler of a unique store experience. What is crucial in this ecosystem is proper training. Associates need to be trained on using technology effectively to enhance the service they offer. It is also important to devise a customer-focused incentive system that recognises and rewards best practices. Clienteling can help build a strong community of sales associates who share their own success stories and moreover, understand the brand and their customers exceptionally well.

Along with detailed customer information, sales associates and store managers can track their own performance through easily decipherable analytics available at the tap of a finger. They can schedule appointments, set reminders and alerts and manage their tasks when they have free time in between customer interactions.



Manthan's clienteling solution

Today Manthan serves as the chief analytics officer to over 80 leading retail and consumer group organisations across 18 countries. With a portfolio of analytics products and solutions architecture that cater exclusively for retail, Manthan delivers a sophisticated, yet intuitive analytical capability to retail brands worldwide. At Manthan the constant quest, is to derive what will be. And the only way to do that is to question what is.

By leveraging deep industry expertise, Manthan brings a clienteling solution that is finely tuned to the needs of the retailer. It will provide a complete view of every customer that has shopped at the store in the past and every product that is available for sale. Clienteling will allow retailers to build a seamless transition between the digital and in-store environment and offer a highly customized experience to each shopper.



About Manthan

Manthan is the Chief Analytics Officer for consumer industries worldwide. Manthan's portfolio of analytics-enabled business applications, advanced analytics platforms and solutions are architected to help users across industries walk the complete data-to-result path - analyze, take guided decisions and execute these decisions real-time. Sophisticated, yet intuitive analytical capability coupled with the power of big data, mobility and cloud computing, brings users business-ready applications that provide on-demand access and real-time execution - the only path to profit in a contemporary, on-demand and connected economy. Manthan is one of the most awarded analytics innovators among analysts and customers alike - with over 170 customers across 21 countries. To see how your business can gain from analytics, visit www.manthan.com.