



Managing a business

Client relationship management

<http://business.gov.in>

Business Portal of India, India

Client relationship management (CRM) means managing your client. It is a business strategy that is used to create and sustain long-term, profitable client relationships. It means understanding customers using quantitative and qualitative research, segmenting them and articulating positioning statements for each of the segments based on their expectations and contribution to profits. It is necessary for retaining old customers, acquiring new customers and improving profitability from the existing client base. The concept of CRM makes its origin from the changed approach to business management and profitability. In other words, the traditional approach of making one-time sales is being replaced with making long-term commitments to customers. The new approach puts forward the need to have a proper CRM strategy in the organization. It revolves around the customers. It is a set of processes of creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders. It is a comprehensive strategy of acquiring, retaining and partnering with carefully targeted customers to enhance long-term relationships with them. This management approach seeks to create superior value for the company and the customers.

Client relationship and satisfaction is a critical dimension of every business initiative. Foundation of a successful business lies in its successful client relationship management. Client's satisfaction with the company's performance depends on how well their professional and personal needs are addressed to by the company. Client's pay attention not only on what the company does but also on how well it does it. Hence, client's perception of service quality needs to be properly managed. An efficient and effective CRM strategy is beneficial to an organisation in several ways:

- Most importantly, it helps the company to build and maintain a loyal customer base.
- It can have more volume of sales by selling more to the group of those customers with whom it has maintained a good relationship and are satisfied with the firm and its quality of services.
- It overtime incurs lower costs in serving those customers because of their Increasing confidence and lesser doubts or questions about the product.
- It can resort to lesser promotional campaigns in order to attract those customers.
- It also enjoys the benefit of retaining its employees if it has a stable base of satisfied customers.

Besides, customers also want to remain loyal to a firm because they also enjoy benefits from such long-term association. It gives them a feeling of trust and confidence in

the firm's services along with a sense of a reduced anxiety about the product. Over time, in a long-term customer-firm relationship, a service provider may actually become a part of the customer's social support system. Such customers may even receive special treatment from the organization in the form of: getting the benefit of doubt; being given a special deal or price; getting preferential treatment, etc.

A successful CRM initiative starts with a business philosophy that aligns company activities around customer needs. The level of professionalism, listening skills, availability, responsiveness, reliability, etc. form an important part of the client relationship management. CRM covers all methods and technologies used by companies to manage their relationship with their clients. The process of CRM includes:

- Identifying the factors important to clients
- Promoting a client-oriented philosophy
- Adopting client based measures
- Developing end-to-end processes to serve the clients
- Providing successful client support
- Handling client complaints

Generally, CRM works at two levels:

Operational CRM – Also known as “front office” CRM, provides support to basic business processes such as sales, marketing, services, etc. It involves areas where the customer is in direct contact with the company. These contacts are classified into two: (1) Inbound contacts are the ones in which a customer accesses the company support centre or website, or meets the company employees; (2) Outbound contacts are the ones in which a sales representative of the firm makes direct sales to the customers, or makes a sales call, or e-mails a marketing message. These direct interactions are referred to as customer's ‘touch-points’. Each such interaction with a customer is generally added to a customer's history and company can retrieve such information from the database as and when needed.

Analytical CRM – Also known as “back-office” or “strategic” CRM, analytical CRM involves understanding the customer activities that occurred in the front office. It involves retaining existing customers and providing timely and regular information to them. It uses the technology to compile customer data to facilitate analysis and develop new business processes to refine business decisions.

Product-centricity, is the key challenge that an organization needs to overcome, in order to have a successful management of its client relationships. In other words, an organization needs to become client-centric, because it will allow for a consistent interaction with its most important constituency, “The Clients”. □

Enterprise patent strategy



China Intellectual Property Agency

<http://www.cipahk.com>

China Intellectual Property Agency (Hong Kong) Ltd., China

For many technology companies, developing a patent strategy is an important component of the business plan. However, for many the approach for developing a patent strategy is more happenstance than execution of a precisely defined plan. To help develop a patent strategy, China Intellectual Property Agency (Hong Kong) Ltd. provides a practical checklist for getting organized in preparation for developing a comprehensive patent strategy for a company.

A. Business goals and patent portfolio

Beginning in the development phase, the patent strategy identifies the key business goals of the company. Clear business goals provide a long-term blueprint to guide the development of a valuable patent portfolio.

B. Evaluation of company assets

The evaluation process begins by mining and analysing intellectual assets within the company. In this process, a company organizes and evaluates all of its intellectual assets, such as its products, services, technologies, processes and business practices. Organizing intellectual assets involves working with key executives to align the patent strategy with the business objectives.

C. Procurement phase

While the evaluation phase is in progress, the company can move into the procurement phase. In the procurement

phase of the patent strategy, a start-up company builds its patent portfolio to protect core technologies, processes and business practices uncovered during the evaluation phase. Typically, a patent portfolio is built up with a combination of crown-jewel patents, fence patents, design-around patents and portfolio-enhancing patents. Each patent may have a unique value proposition for the company.

D. Deployment phase

A company that values its intellectual assets may set aside time, money and resources to further enhance its patent portfolio. To do this a company may move to the deployment phase. The deployment phase may include licensing all or part of a patent portfolio to others in the industry or to alternative applications for the technology. Alternatively, it may include asserting rights established by its patents, such as through litigation. The deployment stage often includes high-level management involvement.

The outline above gives just one overview of a potential patent strategy. With any patent strategy, some key considerations will require commitment from all levels of management and execution of the strategy once it is assembled. Companies that take the time and effort to develop a patent strategy will be reap many rewards for the time, money and effort spend early on as their business continues to grow and prosper. □

New ISO standard for implementation of ISO 14000

A newly revised ISO standard will facilitate even further the application of the ISO 14000 series on environmental management. By establishing a common vocabulary, the standard will ensure the effectiveness of communication, key for the implementation and operation of environmental management systems (EMS). This third edition of 'ISO 14050:2009, Environmental management – Vocabulary' has been fully updated to include the latest developments in the field. The standard now provides clear and concise definitions of all concepts and terms used throughout the ISO 14000 series in the three official ISO languages, English, French and Russian, as well as in Arabic and Spanish. The standard also provides equivalent terms in Dutch, Finnish, German, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese and Swedish.

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