



Is Your Web Team as Good as Your Web Site?

| Using Technology and People Together to Deliver Unique and Useful Experiences |

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
A Culture of Service.....	3
Building in the Culture of Service.....	5
Strategies for Building a Customer-Centric Web Team.....	6
CMS: Using Content Management to Reach Out.....	6
Conclusion.....	7

Introduction

Doing business online is essentially a win-win situation for everybody involved. For organizations, a well-maintained Web site is an excellent resource since it is a far more economical point of sale than anything in the brick-and-mortar world. For the consumer, online self-service is faster, more convenient and generally cheaper. However, neither can get all they want out of online transactions unless businesses transform their worldview from an organization-centric perspective to a customer-centric one. In the past, business executives may have been able to get away with the misguided notion that business revolves around companies. The Internet has more than set the record straight. With the growth of the Web, customers have become more empowered and more in control. The essential truths of business in the Web 2.0 world are:

- The customer is the center of every business's universe.
- The primary difference between companies that succeed and those that don't is (and will be in future) the quality of customer experience.

Customer-centricity is not a management fad or a one-off implementation project. It is a complete business paradigm, a central strategic issue for any company. Without a clear laundry list of key points to cover, such a paradigm shift might seem like a tough ask. However, the benefits of customer-centricity, such as increased leads, stronger bonds of loyalty and always-important word-of-mouth advertising, more than make up for the effort involved.

Making your Web site, the most visible face of your company, customer-centric begins with making your Web team customer-centric. After all, any Web site is only as dynamic, interactive and accessible as the team that powers it. If a company can instill in their Web team the desire to relentlessly focus on customer needs and create engaging content that customers are most interested in, the battle is already almost won. Combined with an effective CMS solution that helps the Web team keep the Web site fresh and current without labor-intensive maintenance processes, a customer-centric Web team can create wonders for any business with an online presence.



"According to customers, what were once ecommerce nice-to-haves are now table stakes. The way customers research, shop and buy has evolved."

- Sam Decker, CEO, Bazaarvoice

A Culture of Service

The foundation of any great Web team is a culture of service. It is impossible for any organization to create a Web site with excellent service unless every member of its Web team is genuinely interested in the customer, are constantly thinking about the customer's needs and want and like to serve customer needs. Content management author and consultant Gerry McGovern explains:

▶ Is Your Web Team as Good as Your Web Site?

“Do you have what it takes to be a website manager?” If you answer the following questions in the affirmative, then you do:

- ▶ The first thing I think about in the morning is my customers and the last thing I think about in the evening is my customers
- ▶ I like being around customers. I love observing them as they use my Web site. I’m a good listener and observer.
- ▶ I believe that Web site management is a process of continuous improvement, and I’m wary of major redesigns.
- ▶ I am prepared to make a few enemies within the organization if it means serving customers better.
- ▶ There is one thing I know more than anything else: “I am not my customer.”
- ▶ Unfortunately, most Web teams do not follow these basic principles of customer service. Instead, they often refuse to even accept the fact that their primary job is serving their customers. The result is a number of flawed perspectives that all detract from delivering the best user experience possible:

▶ Technology before people

Most Web developers and designers are excited by technological innovations. They spend most of their time obsessing over new technologies rather than concentrating on delivering quality content as simply and effectively as possible. In the process, they forget that technology is the means and not the end.

▶ Failing to get into the customer’s shoes

It’s a classic occurrence with almost every Web team: customer feedback about difficulty with a part of a Web site results in jokes about “stupid users” rather than being treated as valuable input on usability. Most Web teams assume that their customers are exactly like them, understanding processes and technologies as well as they do and approaching the Web site with the same intentions and methods as themselves. However, customers’ tolerance of ill-conceived, disconnected and inefficient content and tools is fading, and it is time that Web teams woke up to their duty of making life simpler for users of their Web site.

▶ Outdated ideas of communication

The Internet has achieved a radical transformation of communication processes, empowering consumers to have much more of a say on what they’d like to hear from organizations. Many Web teams, however, still work on the principles of traditional communication, still attempting to hand down “knowledge” to the customer. This results in an outdated assumption that customers are just waiting to read chest-thumping press releases that don’t really offer any useful insights on customer benefits.

Common problems with web teams:

- ▶ Obsession with technology
- ▶ Failure to understand customers’ thinking
- ▶ Traditional one-way communication strategies
- ▶ Rating peer opinions over customer satisfaction

▶ Is Your Web Team as Good as Your Web Site?

▶ Aiming for the design awards

Often, Web teams tend to rate peer opinions of their Web site design and content over customer inputs on usability. Thus, you get Web sites loaded with all of the latest graphics and flash animation, but little useful information underneath the fluff. Many Web teams also tend to redesign and renovate Web sites on a regular basis simply because they feel certain templates or a particular look of the Web site have become dated. However, getting obsessed with the mechanics of Web site management is like missing the forest for the trees.

Building in the Culture of Service

Fortunately for organizations and Web teams, adopting a culture of service is really not a difficult task. While there is no easy checklist of tasks to be completed, there are numerous simple strategies that every member of a Web team must follow while creating any new content or tool:

▶ Give the customer the benefit of the doubt

In creating any new content, tool or design, Web teams should assume that their customers are nothing like them, that their personal experiences and preferences are exactly the opposite of those of their customers. Thus, any new design should assume that the user experiencing it has as little skill at navigating through the design as possible. This will ensure that every process or tool appeals to as wide a customer base as humanly possible.



▶ Key points to remember

- ▶ Think like the customer
- ▶ Interact with the customer
- ▶ Provide information customers want
- ▶ Integrate data and content efficiently

▶ Interact with the customer

One of the most important skills for any member of a Web team is the ability to interact with and learn from customers. Web teams should enjoy being around customers, obtaining customer feedback on a consistent basis rather than treating the experience like an annual visit to the dentist.

▶ Give the people what they want

The problem with most Web site content is that companies constantly dole out what they want the customer to hear rather than what they think the customer wants to hear. A typical example is that companies will talk about the features of the products they are selling. Spin that around to give the customer the benefits of these products or services, so that the latter don't simply hear what the product or service does, but what it can do for them. Moreover, companies often make the mistake of excluding everything but their own carefully sanitized marketing spiel. Users are more likely to attribute credibility to a company that is not afraid to give customers all the information on what other consumers have thought of their products. A survey by Bazaarvoice and iPerceptions, for instance, found that 81% of CompUSA shoppers consider customer ratings and reviews important when they are researching or planning a purchase.

▶ Is Your Web Team as Good as Your Web Site?

▶ Help connect the dots

One of the ways to delight consumers visiting your Web site is by taking a close look at content and data in your possession and making connections that lead to more efficient processes, tools and content. A Web team is ideally placed for such integration, since so much of an organization's knowledge passes through its computers. Thus, Web teams can help automate the least pleasant processes of the online experience and let consumers spend more time on the most pleasant ones.

Strategies for Building a Customer-Centric Web Team

One of the key points to remember in building the ideal Web team is to be inclusive, so as to properly integrate the needs and abilities of the various other departments of the organization. A couple of key points to note in building a good team are:

- ▶ Keep the team constantly focused on the most important customer-centric goals.
- ▶ Build your team intelligently and with customer experience always on your mind. Do not add on people to a team simply because their skill sets look attractive, or other teams are adding on similar personnel.
- ▶ Give your Web team the freedom to grow or shrink as necessary. Web technologies and processes change rapidly, and it is important to have the room to add on people most needed at the moment.
- ▶ Get team members interested in doing rather than talking. Particularly in the case of customer-centricity, there is a large gap between grandiloquent statements about customer focus, and actually making it a priority.
- ▶ Remember to include all kinds of people. Letting any one kind of job profile dominate the team might result in marketing, technology or architecture obsessions overshadow the customer focus.

CMS: Using Content Management to Reach Out

A key aspect of being customer centric is, of course, providing fresh, useful content that the customer is most interested in. In that sense, an effective CMS solution is an integral tool for a customer-centric Web team. Automating the less pleasant, labor-intensive aspects of Web site management allows Web teams to focus only on the customer's needs rather than worrying about their own resource difficulties.

The key advantage an effective CMS solution offers is the ability to integrate with a wide range of applications and platforms. This gives a Web team greater flexibility and the ability to quickly and easily reengineer content, redesign sites and deliver a better user experience. The leading CMS solutions also allow companies to incorporate mobile computing and Web 2.0 functionalities, which are now expected as a matter of course from premier Web content providers.

Of course, the range of CMS solutions on offer can make choosing the best option a bewildering task. Scoring the highest marks for cost-effectiveness and ease of implementation, however, are the hosted CMS or Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions.

The traditional option of installed software solutions, after all, comes with a hefty price tag in terms of both initial investments on software and hardware and continuing expenditure on resources needed for the maintenance and updating of these systems. While these costs are saved with an open source solution, this option still requires personnel dedicated to the implementation and maintenance of the CMS.

A hosted CMS solution, on the other hand, eases the burden of maintenance, thus freeing up IT personnel for the development tasks most important to the customer experience.

Choosing a SaaS solution, not only reduces the infrastructure and maintenance costs to the organization, but also ensures that mission-critical processes are never disrupted by unforeseen circumstances. Reaching out to customers with the help of an effective CMS even in the most challenging conditions, companies can serve their customers' needs with the immediacy that the Internet demands.

Conclusion

With almost every industry moving most of its customer interface online; it is impossible to ignore the new dynamics of company-customer interaction. The world doesn't revolve around the companies alone - not any more. Customer experience is top priority; organizations that realize this and are able use technology and people together to deliver unique and useful experiences will be the leaders of the new economy.

CrownPeak
5880 W Jefferson Blvd
Unit G
Los Angeles, CA 90016

sales@crowpeak.com
www.crowpeak.com
Toll Free: 800-887-1944
Tel: 310-841-5920

CrownPeak[™]
MANAGE CONTENT NOT TECHNOLOGY