

Chapter 9

Development of a Customer Information Database System

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ABSTRACT

Organizations need to keep customer data safe and secure to run their everyday activities more credibly, promptly, and effectively. They need to use, and hence invest in customer database software to achieve these basic goals. Using well-designed software also allows them to increase operational efficiency of business. In this chapter, the authors discuss development of a customer inquiry database system for use by small businesses. The proposed database system is to help them store customer information, inquiries, and company product information too. The authors have used state-of-the-art software development technology to design and develop user interfaces (UI) for building business intelligence (BI) capability using this system. This chapter provides a holistic view of building a customer inquiry database system. The approach of an integrated view of customer inquiry system is different and offers more than the partial view of the existing literature or database system books on this issue.

INTRODUCTION

The 18th century Industrial Revolution is considered to be a major turning point in the history of mankind. Newly invented machines and technology contributed to many-fold increase in material production capability. Consequently, human life-style based on a manual-labor-based economy gradually shifted to an economy centered on a machine-based manufacturing. Many players appeared in manufacturing business to produce bulk of goods, resulting into escalated competition among businesses to sell their products to an expanding global marketplace. As part of proactive customer orientation, providing prompt

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customer services, and releasing quick resolutions to the customer inquiries are vital to do business in the 21st century (Akhter & Rahman, 2015). Skilled use of information technology (IT) by a business is obvious to become so proactive, and to augment its competitive capabilities to have an edge in the market.

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos said, “In the offline world 30% of a company’s resources are spent providing a good customer experience and 70% goes to marketing. But online 70% should be devoted to creating a great customer experience and 30% should be spent on “shouting” about it” (Zeithaml et al., 2002). This exemplifies the importance of speedy handling of and resolution to customer inquiries. These days, customers expect sellers to respond effectively to their expressed needs and be innovative enough to proactively address their latent and future needs. Farouk (1987) and Blocker et al. (2011) assert that proactive customer orientation is the most consistent driver of customer value in a business. They propose a proactive customer orientation construct in terms of “proactive customer orientation → value → satisfaction → loyalty chain” (Blocker et al., 2011). Szymanski and Henard (2001) observed that by sensing the importance of customer satisfaction many companies in the US have come up with slogans such as ‘Our focus is customer satisfaction’ –Gulfstream Aeronautics; ‘Our customers will be totally satisfied with the products services and technology we supply’ –Shell Chemical Company; and ‘Satisfaction Guaranteed’ –Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

A few quotes from successful business entrepreneurs (Morris, 2012, 2013; Murphy Jr., 2018):

Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning. – Bill Gates, Founder, Microsoft

If you work just for money, you’ll never make it, but if you love what you’re doing and you always put the customer first, success will be yours. – Ray Kroc, Founder, McDonalds

There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else. – Sam Walton, Founder, Wal-Mart

You’ve got to start with the customer experience and work back toward the technology – not the other way around. – Steve Jobs, Founder, Apple

If you do build a great experience, customers tell each other about that. Word of mouth is very powerful. – Jeff Bezos, CEO, Amazon.com

Quality in a service or product is not what you put into it. It is what the client or customer gets out of it. – Peter Drucker

An entrepreneur is someone who jumps off a cliff and builds a plane on the way down. – Reid Hoffman

An organization’s ability to continuously “generate intelligence about customers’ expressed and latent needs, and about how to satisfy those needs, is essential for it to continuously create superior customer value” (Slater & Narver, 2000). With the advent of computer hardware, software (Sommerville, 2004), the internet and other emerging technologies (Rahman et al., 2014) business organizations have been taking advantage of computer application-based customer service systems (Umar, 2005). Internet technology has opened the flood-gate of both global opportunities and competition for business organizations. Ever-growing competition in the early 21st century has compelled business organizations to pay

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