Chapter 2

Towards a Framework for Integrating Social Media, Customer Relationship, and Knowledge Management

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ABSTRACT

Academic concepts such as customer relationship management (CRM) and knowledge management (KM) are well established concepts today. Integration between these two concepts has been established with the term customer knowledge management. Social media (SM) is now fast growing and has an intrinsic nature hence reducing barriers of varying concepts. It has been integrated with CRM through the term social CRM (SCRM). From the above it appears that there is interdependency between the concepts. It is on this basis that this work proposes a process model integrating SM, SCRM and KM. Through data collected from expert interview and extensive literature review, this study explored the possibility of interdependency between these concepts to make a case for the process framework for business organisations. The framework, leaning on the CKM model was able to identify strategy, mindset and engagement management, including knowledge context as crucial additions to the existing model towards integrating the three concepts.

INTRODUCTION

Social media (SM) has come to stay as an integral part of our social lives as well as a significant element of the business world. Organizations, be it academic, government and especially businesses are gradually incorporating it into their processes. This is more evidenced as these organizations dot their website as well as other information interfaces with links to their social media platforms. Achieving success in social media does not come by accident and this may involve re-engineering and redesigning organizational processes in order to benefit from its usage (Thames, 2011). Likewise, the concept of customer relationship management (CRM) is evolving and the former traditional CRM processes are no longer sufficient (Peppers 2011; Mosadegh & Behboudi 2011). With traditional CRM having a focus on managing customers and having a holistic view of the customer (Alexander & Turner, 2001), new channels of communication especially through social media make these goals more difficult to achieve (Greenberg 2009a; Anon, 2013). The new dynamics ushered in by the proliferation of the new media is that, as customers are now using social media platforms as a method of communication, this makes it important for organizations to also engage with customers on these platforms. Integration between the concepts of SM and CRM is inevitable as far as data and customers are involved (Lawson, 2011). It has also been identified that research is on-going to discover and address ways to manage customers who use social media (Buchanan 2010). Knowledge, a byproduct of organizational activities and on which organizations also thrive, becomes a natural party in this relationship, thereby necessitating the inclusion of knowledge management (KM) in the triad.

Knowledge management (KM) in general involves managing knowledge within the organization. Dealing with the creation, processing, storing, re-use and sharing of knowledge is the goal of knowledge management (Fanfan, 2012). Just like SM having an impact on CRM, data from social media can also have an impact on KM (Hendriks, 2011; Kotadia, 2012; Suleman, 2011). Some of these activities, will include providing data that, aid making informed decisions for organizational strategy and product development, amongst others.

The data from SM can be used to manage relationships with customers and it can also be a great contribution to knowledge as data is created, stored, shared and distributed within the organization in accordance with the organizational strategy. Therefore, with SM generating the data and engaging the customers, CRM manages the engagement through relationships and analyzing customer data while KM will store, share and distribute the information gathered. This shows an underlying connection through the flow of data with the customer at the center. This shows that all these concepts that exist in their own right can be integrated on the process level for the benefit of an organization.

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