

Chasing the dream of the single view of the customer

 By [Wynand Smit](#)

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In business, your company needs to get as deep into the minds and interaction habits of your customers as possible. Too often, however, the single view of the customer is viewed as unattainable, a marketing smokescreen that can obscure business strategy and confuse communication efforts. The question that must be asked, is whether the single view approach is correct, and, if so, how can this be attained?



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“A ‘single customer view’ is a readily accessible, consistent summary of a customer’s product relationships with an organisation, combined with essential customer data such as name, address, date of birth and credit information.” – Experian ”

The original concept of the single customer view was geared towards facilitating transactions in the financial services sector. In order to undertake transactions such as payments within a certain time frame so as to be compliant across industry, financial services companies needed to be able to provide the same data on each customer such as identification details, transaction histories, etc. Without the means of compiling this data, companies were left scrambling in order to remain compliant.

On average, 40 percent of businesses still store over 80 percent of their customers’ data spread across different systems in their organisations, representing the challenge faced – in other words, many partial faces are available, while one view is elusive. This can come down to the ways in which customers interact with your company.

Multi-channel integration

Data created by customers comes from interactions across any number of channels your company may have – email, voice calls to the contact centre, social media, chats, website activity and more. Your customer may have multiple credit cards and other account details and may use channels interchangeably, shifting from online chat to voice calls.

In terms of the single view of the customer, in recent years, the concept or goal of omnichannel communication has dominated in customer service; a seamless means by which customers can shift between channels while their data is centralised by channel integration. This remains the golden goose of communication, but channel integration can lead to a more seamless multi-channel environment that comes close to representing that single view.

More than the data produced by interactions, the single view also relies on reducing the “noise” created along the customer journey. By “noise,” this means that irrelevant information can obscure the view of the customer.

For example, if the customer is a long-term one, that customer may have opened accounts that are now closed, changed addresses or contact details and perhaps even surnames. This information is sometimes stored in different places that aren’t “talking” to each other. The inconsistencies in accuracy and accessibility must be removed by integrating channels and updating to only retain data that is necessary for seamless interactions to take place.

The data key

Even if you have integrated channels that can potentially provide a seamless interaction environment, unless you understand your customer – their preferences and the ways in which those evolve – you can’t effectively use the data to speak more directly to your customer.

In other words, the more you understand about how your customer wants to interact with you, what they are (and may be) interested in wanting from you, the more you are able to personalise your service to them, whether that means in sales campaigns, customer service interactions or any other reason you may have for interacting with your customer.



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That’s the goal of having a single view of the customer: personalised, authentic customer service. It’s possible to attain, provided that data across departments and channels are integrated, updated and relevant to your business requirements and your customers’ preferences.

Once the basics are in place, you can then work with insights gained from data analytics, developing the right metrics for the right results, so that you have a fleshed-out version of your customers’ data that can be fed back into the business to inform day-to-day customer interactions.

This is an ongoing process, and while the goal may seem unattainable at first, breaking it down into practical, measurable and achievable steps is a realistic target that all businesses can work towards.

ABOUT WYNAND SMIT

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