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CRM IN THE TRACTOR AND AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY – A PHILOSOPHY AND AN ESSENTIAL TOOL

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Abstract

It all started with a concern for the customer, having empathy towards his feelings, when he reported a grievance. Finally, CRM has evolved into a fully developed system which includes Behavior Training, Response Management, formation of a fully-fledged department called Customer Care Department and a software-supported structured system as a tool for Customer Connect through Data Capture, Reminders, Updates, Seasons' Greetings, manage Service Requests and adopt a data driven strategy for Customer Adoption and Retention. Live Example: Here is an amusing incidence to narrate! One of my known tractor customers owns two tractors of two different brands. As a customer he shared his experience with the two different companies. He confided that the two experiences were qualitatively poles apart. In one case he could feel the care, concern and connection while in the other case he could sense it as a routine obligatory activity. For our convenience let us name the two dealerships as Super Care Tractors and Easygo Tractors. Periodic services of both the tractors were due on the same date.

Keywords: CRM, Brand Loyalty, Customer Delight, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Retention, Customer Centric Approach, Strategic tool for Customer Care

INTRODUCTION

CRM (Customer Relationship Management) is a buzz word widely used in the Service Industry. In current times, business growth, especially in the Banking Sector, the Hospitality Sector as also in the Tractor and Automobile Industry, largely depends upon four main contributing factors: Marketing Strategy, Brand Image, Quality of Services and CRM. Here we intend to focus on CRM practices in the Tractor and Automobile Industry. The scenario in view is the Indian Market.

CRM is an emotion, a philosophy and a way of doing business. When a Seller keeps the Customers' interest in the forefront, he is doing CRM. When a manufacturer designs a product keeping the Customers' Delight in mind, he is practicing CRM. When a Company puts Customers' Trust before its' own monetary benefits, it is implementing CRM. The core values of CRM are Customer Delight, Quality Service, Ethical practices, efforts to maintain Trust and Relationship.

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The Super Care Tractors sent a computer scheduled SMS reminder to the customer, fifteen days in advance of the service due date. Then, one week before the due date, their Customer Care Manager contacted the customer on phone suggesting him to book a preferred time slot. She also informed the customer of their newly added facility: The customer need not bring the tractor to their workshop; rather the dealership now has a Mobile Service Van which can visit the customer's premises and provide the service there. With an advance payment, he can pre-book this service. The customer readily agreed and paid. On the due date, at the appointed hour, a Service Engineer with his tools and equipments in the Mobile Van reported at the customer's farm. He finished his activity within the scheduled time. In the Feedback-form the customer expressed his deep appreciation. The customer offered tea to the service engineer. Together they had small talk for a while over a cup of tea and then the van was off to another assignment! This is an excellent example of use of technology for enhanced customer care.

The Easygo Tractors sent a computer scheduled SMS reminder to the customer only on the day the service was due. The customer was busy, so he overlooked it. Fifteen days later another auto generated SMS was sent. It reminded him that the Periodic Service was overdue and needs to be done urgently. Next day the customer took his tractor to the dealership, got the service done and brought the tractor back to his farm. It was like a mundane routine activity both for the customer and the dealer staff.

Direct Impact on business: In the case of Easygo Tractors the customer could have further delayed the service or could have got it done from some other party. The eagerness to provide quality serve on time, earn profits for the dealership and to maintain a strong bond of care with the customer was missing.

How to define CRM? After studying different definitions of CRM given by different organizations and scholars, we have come up with the following which to our understanding describes it the best to our satisfaction.

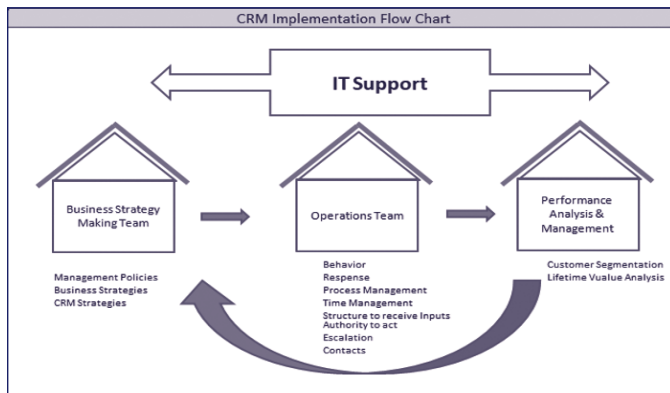
Definition of CRM
Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a policy and a structured methodology which includes a multitude of systematic efforts, mechanisms and SOPs adopted by the company to engage its Managers, Sale and Service Engineers, Dealers and their staff to provide excellent buying and maintenance experience, maintain regular contact and take prompt and effective steps to redress grievances and bring customer delight

Importance of CRM: In Modern times Industries have to adopt clearly defined Roles and Responsibilities for each and every employee, SOPs, Policies and Procedures, Accepted levels of Quality of products, accepted socio-cultural norms, behavior training, fast response mechanism and timely deliveries. To achieve this it is imperative for companies and dealer network to adopt software based CRM systems.

CRM Technology and its Structure: CRM begins with the explicit policy defined in clear wording and conveyed to everyone from top to bottom in the company. When all minds in a team are aligned to a common philosophy, results appear in the desired way. The second stage is adopting software tools and defining Roles and Responsibilities as well as SOPs for every activity. The main involvement is of three teams viz:

- The Business Strategy Making Team
 - The Operations Team
 - The Performance Analysis and Monitoring Team
- This has been schematically depicted in the sketch below: (Figure 1)

Figure. 1



An ideal CRM Process has been modeled in the next page (please see Figure 2). Here the way the policy is implemented has been shown in distinct steps.

Figure. 2

CRM Process Model				
Approach	Interface	Inputs	Medium	Outcome
Emotional Philosophical Company Policy	Front end Team Interacting with the Customers	Structured Behavior Training Structured Response Training		Customer Delight Customer Loyalty
Offering Quality Product	Operational Team Managing Routine work	Time Management Process Management Follow Established SOPs		Value for money to the Customer Defect Free Product
Keeping Customer Happy	Complaint and Grievance Redressal Team and Service Providers	Structured and Robust System for receiving inputs 1) Authority to take decisions 2) System to escalate unresolved/delayed issues	Through Portal or Email, Toll Free Number SMS, Fax Service at Customer Point/ Dealer Point/ Company Workshop	Value for money to the Customer Customer Retention
Regular Customer Contact	Automated Systems, Electronic Media and Allocated Manpower	Birthday and Season Greetings, Service Reminders, Feedback Collection Follow Established SOPs	WhatsApp Emails SMS Phone Calls, Feedback Forms, Google Surveys	Keeping a pulse on Customer Satisfaction Levels Timely Remedial Actions
Sales & Marketing	Marketing Team, Dealer Network, Influencers	Data Collection through advanced CRM Tools Data Analysis and Inferences	Tools like DMS (Dealer Management Systems)	Customer Segmentation Data Driven Marketing Strategy and Approach

Practices in different Organizations: In order to provide a 'World Class Customer Care Experience', and to remain seamlessly connected with their Customers and Dealers; Swaraj Tractors have developed a 24x7 On-line System, integrated on Cloud and accessible through Android/ iPhone/ Web. This software has been named CDMS (Customer Dealer Management System). Even initial customer enquiries are captured and followed up with the help of this software. Their mobile App is named 'Mera Swaraj' app. They have a toll free number and an escalation system called 'Swaraj Samadhan'. International Tractors (Sonalika) have DMS (Dealer Management System). It is majorly operated as a Web Application. It has separate modules for Sales, Service, and Spares. The Pre-Sales System in Sonalika is also called ITL-TMS (Territory Management System). John Deere (JD) has adopted world class software which they call CCMS (Case and Contact Management System). Their mobile app is named 'Anubhuti' meaning 'Experience' in Hindi. Another tool is SPM (Service & Parts Management System which displays availability of various stock numbers. Maruti Udyog Limited (MUL) uses the software named 'Customer Connect'. All other companies also have a compatible system to provide quality service and superior experience to customers so that they remain updated and continue their patronage.

Benefits: CRM today is playing a pivotal part in crafting customer perceptions and steering business growth. With CRM the customer is in regular connect with the Seller and feels assured of quality service as and when required. CRM has emerged as a key differentiator in the competitive marketing arena. Integrated CRM practices take customer-centric strategies to the next level and positively impact the bottom line of the company. CRM tools are helpful in Lead Management, and they also streamline internal processes like scheduling appointments and organizing Periodic Services at Dealer Points.

Some Notable Results: NASSCOM reported in a case study that Maruti Suzuki registered a 35% boost in customer retention in the very first year of CRM Implementation. Through its CRM system, Maruti tracks customer interactions, conducts post-sales follow-ups, and provides personalized service recommendations. Source: NASSCOM – 'CRM Success Stories: Maruti Suzuki.'

CONCLUSIONS

The role of CRM in the Tractor and Automobile Industry cannot be underestimated, especially in companies which keep Customer Delight at the forefront of their policy. The quality of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) can significantly impact a business. It optimizes operational processes that lead to enhanced business performance. With the latest evolutionary trends in Customer Care, companies and dealerships that adopt CRM shall be better equipped to provide quality services and flourish. In conclusion, effective CRM enhances customer satisfaction, fosters loyalty, and increases profitability. To ensure high-quality CRM, companies should focus on data accuracy, personalized communication, efficient automation, and continuous improvement. By prioritizing these elements, organizations can build strong customer relationships and drive long-term success.

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All Professional Members,
Reader, Well Wishers & Patrons

**A Very Happy,
Prosperous
& Peaceful Diwali.**

