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Think Customers: **The 1to1 Blog**



Topic:

Acting on Customer Information

by Tom Hoffman

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Acting on Customer Information

Oracle Corp. Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer Jeb Dasteel discusses how the software giant goes about collecting, analyzing and acting on information it gathers from its customers.

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Collecting, analyzing and acting upon customer information is fraught with a slew of process and technological challenges for most organizations. Such efforts could be particularly daunting for company like Oracle Corp. which has been involved in more than 60 acquisitions over its history.

But Oracle has developed a time-worn methodology for synthesizing customer information and making it actionable. Tom Hoffman speaks with Oracle Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer Jeb Dasteel about the approaches the company uses to collect customer feedback.

Tell me how Oracle collects, analyzes and acts on information it collects on its customers.

Dasteel: We've spent the past six-and-a-half years developing what we consider now to be a closed-loop process where we collect feedback through a variety of mechanisms. We have a whole series of collaborative and relationship-oriented programs that drive us to be strong partners with our customers. We have programs that help us formulate the right kind of lifecycle services for customers adopting Oracle technology. We also have a response aspect to these programs which allow us to distill key themes from all of the feedback we receive from customers in various ways and drive a response to that feedback.

We also have a sophisticated customer reference program enabling us to increasingly leverage our most satisfied and loyal customers through customer referencing, which is ultimately core to our business.

Oracle has inherited a lot of customers through its 60+ acquisitions. What are some steps that the company has taken to gather customer feedback and customer satisfaction consistently across its various product sets?

Dasteel: Customer feedback has become one of the central tenets in how we go about acquiring organizations. Once an acquisition is done we put into motion a whole set of actions that are now quite systematic because we've been through it more than 60 times. We consistently and quickly capture customer feedback from the acquired organization's customers and roll it into the comprehensive Voice of the Customer program we use at Oracle.

Whether we're looking at feedback from acquired customers or customers that are currently in the Oracle install base, what's key to us is that we collect feedback across many different channels. We collect quantitative feedback. We collect qualitative feedback. We conduct a lot of Web-based surveys. We conduct customer focus groups. We have a very large scale user group community. We do a fair amount of listening through social networking. And we take advantage of independent third-party benchmarking.

If you add to all that some of the anecdotal feedback we get from customer executive councils and customer advisory boards - which we do constantly - you'll find that we have a complete story to tell. The whole process is executed across the entire customer base, representing the voice of the customer in a comprehensive way.

We execute across every feedback channel for all acquired customers, and we have a process that drives us to do it at very specific stages in the acquisition and post-acquisition customer integration process.

What are the biggest lessons learned from customer feedback?

Dasteel: There have been many. One of the things we've become pretty good at doing is taking the sum of our qualitative and quantitative feedback from our customers and using that to develop a series of key themes that have a significant effect how we service our customers. These are the top ten themes that our customers tell us we need to be working on to become increasingly customer centric.

Key customer feedback themes often have to do with some combination of how we can continue to improve management of customer relationships, account management practices, and very specific attributes of product effectiveness. There are services-oriented themes as well.

Broadly, those three categories - relationships, products and services - represent the three pillars of feedback that we get and actions we take across the business.

In a very formal way, we report out to the organization and work with all of Oracle to conduct root cause analysis and implement corrective actions that literally respond to what our customers are asking for.

By Tom Hoffman on March 30 2010 09:22 AM | [Permalink](#)