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## EMAIL MANAGEMENT AND IT'S SOFTWARE EVALUATION FOR CUSTOMER RETENTION IN RETAIL SECTOR

Syeda Shaheda Siddiqui and Mohammad Muzzammil

**Abstract:**-Retail industry plays a crucial role in any economy. Customer retention plan and its implementation is a basic requirement for the success of a retailer. Information technology is contributing modern business in many different ways. Internet based email systems is playing an important role in acquisition and retention of customer in modern business. Being a most common application of the internet, email has brought a big revolution in the way of doing business. Companies can send information far easier and faster and can easily track past communications. Emails reduce cost and save time. A rapid development is going on in email tool and technique owing to the advent of new software. Intelligent software and smart tools enhance the effectiveness and capability of email. The core objective of this research is to evaluate useful email software that enables email system to read, understand and reply emails automatically, do analysis of emails for business purpose, organize and distribute them, extract data and information, store them and present them to related officers for an action. These software can do the job that was not possible for even a big staff in any organization. The success of any modern business depends on the fact that how efficiently and profoundly it uses this tool. "Let the email manage you and your business" should be the new strategy of a successful business in modern world.

**Keywords:** Retail industry, retention, information technology, email management, software.

### INTRODUCTION

Retail industry is truly said to be most dynamic industry. The health of this industry is directly linked with the health of national economy. Retail sales are often called barometer of national economy (Prince, H.J., 2003). It should be noted that retailing has been one of the most dynamic sub-sectors in the Indian economy. The major concern of retail owners or their managers seem to be looking for new ways to keep their valued customers happy and satisfied. "From shopping malls to individual mom-and-pop shops, one constant that remains the apple of the retail industry's eye is customer loyalty." (Beuder, J., 2013). They are aware of the fact that it costs companies much more to attract a new customer than to keep three existing customers retained.

Different marketing orientation like; selling orientation, product orientation, production orientation, societal marketing and sustainable marketing have been introduced. Customer retention, customer loyalty management, relationship marketing and e-relationship marketing are current prevailing ideas in modern international business management field. Customer loyalty management and relationship marketing are considered as a base for customer retention (Kotler, P. et al 15-21).

Retention of customer is not achieved by only giving the customers what they are expecting; rather it is to exceed their expectations. Here, maximizing profits or increasing shareholder value, does not hold valid any more as a dynamic strategy (Reicheld, Frederick, 1996), rather it is the delivery of high standard services to customers. Customer retention is directly related to profitability. Research by John Fleming and Jim Asplund (Fleming, J. & Asplund, J.) shows that retained customers produce 1.7 times more profit than normal customers, whereas having engaged employees and engaged customers returns a revenue gain of 3.4 times the norm.

Business owners, with the help of technological innovations, have great advantage in different operations of their business like; supply chain management, transportation, cash flow, Inventory, production, marketing, advertising and managing their staff. Technological innovations also support business with improving companies' sales, services and penetration of multiple markets. Internet based email is quite effective in maintaining customer relationship and remaining closer to them regardless where they are located.

Even other social networking sites need email facility for their operation. Emails are time stamped proof of any transaction. As the emails include the correspondence details, they minimize the chance of conflict. Some of the salient feature of email is that email can be documented and saved and anyone can archive emails easily for any future requirement. In addition to being cheap and speedy media of communication, it is considered of secured feature too. Marketers use it as very effective tool of marketing. It decreases the layers of managers. Being a nice non verbal tool it is mostly used for business. Email has changed the way organizations do business because it has an advantage of being easy. Newly introduced software have enhanced the function and capacity of email to a level never imagined before.

#### **EMAIL MANAGEMENT**

A specific field of communication management is email management. Email management is related to manage high volumes off electronic mails that an organization receives (Aamo, Doug, 2011). It is important part of management of customer services. Now, call centers hire email reply agents along with call support employees. Many software solutions are used to manage emails. The Database management (DBM) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) resulted in email management. In 1990s email emerged as most important communication media between business and customer. Business organizations use specialized systems along with suitable software and trained employees for communication with their customers using emails.

Most of the modern businesses have their own website. They have an email address attached to that web. Email address identifies the website, which they are related to. Email servers quality depends on the integrity of the 'Internet Service Provider' (ISP). An email management system comprises on different elements to manage the various stages of email process. One of the basic task of email management is to assign a reference number to coming emails. This is also called ticketing. Emails related to one issue are grouped with the same reference. This facilitate the email users to find out emails easily and spending less time. Spam and unwanted emails are filtered and they are assigned another ticket number. Module of data enhancement prepares the emails for further process. Module can also access database and retrieve information related to email sender or his transaction records with organizations. The module of intelligence analysis can read the message and analyses its contents for understanding the subject matter of the email.

#### **ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF EMAIL IN CUSTOMER RETENTION**

Email is a cost-effective, easy and personal channel that helps in improving the retention of customer in any organization. Most marketers still believe that marketing through email is most powerful tool in revenue generation. This is because it is personal and traceable. Most companies use email for customer retention. Usually, marketing managers use email as part of their arsenal for customer acquisition. Managers are spending huge amount of money to acquire new customers. Due to the lack of customer contact and relationship building, businesses lose their customers (in fact, this accounts for 67% of lost customers). It is very crucial to optimize and maximize the use of email as a tool to increase customer retention. Here are some good ideas on how to use email in your customer retention strategies.

Research carried out by the Direct Marketing Association claims that email marketing is expected to make a ROI (Return on Investment) of a value equivalent to \$44.00 for each dollar that has been spent on it in 2011. According to Chris Brogan, the president of New Marketing Labs, more customers are engaged through using email. As a matter of fact 93% of email users have built relationships with a consumer brand, compared to 15% on Facebook and 4% on Twitter (Evans, Felicity (2011).

No doubt, email has great importance in modern business world. Millions of email messages are exchanged among customers, suppliers, companies, marketers, employees and managers on daily basis. There are several reasons behind the superiority of email when compared to other means of communication. Email is sent within no time. Email has streamlined the communication by allowing immediate responses between parties. It is not bound with working hours or working days. It continues nonstop 24 hours a day and 7 days per week. Email has tremendous power to reach to many groups and larger audiences within no time. Likewise, managers can reach all their employees in a single email. Different teams working apart geographically can keep in touch very efficiently through email. Emails are cheaper than physical documents as they consume paper, envelopes, folders and incur postal charges. Again physical documents get lost or destroyed. In case of email, just resend the file attachment with a single push of button. Emails are replacing physical contracts. Emails can transfer e-copies of legal documents and that are legally binding. Through use of email, managers keep track of old records. Emails are used as a proof too.

#### **TIPS FOR CUSTOMER RETENTION USING EMAIL**

Marketers have been using emails over decade to drive acquisition and retention of customer. Managers need to allocate resources and time for ensuring that they are able to retain their customers. With the utilization of smart tips in their customer retention strategy, managers will observe customer happiness which is the key of customer retention.

Email is a best tool to maintain link with the customers. Manager should use it occasionally for staying in contact with them and send personalized messages to each specific group of customers at the related occasions. Customers have many

options while choosing the companies with which they want to do business. Business should keep customers engaged by periodically sending them personalized emails that reflect their experiences with it. Thank giving to them on days that are special to them, for example, a one year anniversary as a customer, a birthday, national day or religious festival, etc. is considered a good email practice. Let them be surprised with a targeted thank giving along with an offer at the time they least expect it.

Email is a best tool to send friendly reminders; like renewal and seasonal shopping, etc. Business should take care of not making reminders a negative experience for them avoiding any word of pressure or pointing finger towards your customer with blame. Managers ought to include a behavioral or environmental excitement to invite them to come back to the website or shop again.

Before starting any promotional campaign, sending email to notify them with great benefits being offered at this occasion, is a good practice. Customers usually give attention to customer survey reports. They should be provided such reports using email. This will help them to be more decisive regarding related product or brand. Remember that there is nothing more important than personal, one-to-one relationship with customers. Use email to boost personal relationships with them. Occasional customer gifts would never let your customer defect from you. Notify them about their gift through email. Send them greeting messages on special occasions. Development of employees and staff is a common in business sector. You could be special if you start educating and adding value to your customers using your email. It will fit best if it is matter of new technology or latest product. Remember that even a old product for a starter is a new product. Send an email with necessary information and guidelines for using it in normal tone. Your customer's appreciation will manifest in a way that they would never leave you. Always remember that email is the most effective channel to increase customer retention. You have to manage it through proper training to your staff and/or through using smart software for handling email capability at your organization.

#### EVALUATION OF EMAIL SOFTWARE

Here is a brief evaluation of email software posted on the net. They enhance the capacity, accuracy, efficiency and capability of email system with additional functions helpful in reading, sorting, arranging, saving and retrieving important data. Evaluation of email software is short and to the point. For a detailed review, related website listed in the references should be referred.

##### **Client Heartbeat:**

This software is capable of measuring customer happiness and or unhappiness. It helps improving the satisfaction of customers and implementing customer retention programs. It is helpful in building customer loyalty. It can also be used in sending out surveys on customer feedback automatically.

##### **Vero:**

This software is very helpful in sending relevant and personalized emails. The software Vero takes actions by sending emails whenever a customer performs an action in an applications or in website or if he/she is browsing ecommerce store of a company. It is a dynamic tool working on behalf of email owner.

##### **ToutApp:**

One of the best features of ToutApp software is that it is able to create group and segment of customers. It enables the managers sending email to each segment making it very personalized. ToutApp is fast and easy to send emails. It has some very good tools of automation for targeting a group.

##### **Emailtopia:**

Emailtopia is very helpful in productivity of email in all sizes organizations. It provides tracking, routing, reporting and archiving for group email addresses such as info@----.com. It is capable of managing emails and getting emails to right agent with complete visibility of management.

##### **Moxie:**

Information is safe with Moxie due to authentication and HTTP settings that allow only authorized person to access sensitive information. Intelligent routine rules access text within emails and forwards to the agent with expertise or authority to deal with the issue – increasing agent efficiency for personal touches.

**eGain Mail™:**

With the help of eGain's software of email management, managers can take a lead over other companies by replying to the enquiries professionally and promptly. It helps the organizations in managing large size emails of customers and web forms effectively and responsively.

**Help Scout:**

Help Scout does not maintain a difference between read or unread mails. Email remains on top of the inbox unless some employee takes action. So there is no chance of missing any email of the customers. If a member employee is going to look or reply to the same email any other employee is working on, this software pops up a real time notification.

**Eptica Email Management:**

This software tackles the issues of improving email handling efficiency and the quality of email responses. Eptica Email Management™ can reduce handling time and costs by as much as half. Eptica's unique linguistic techniques and workflow features help the managers in driving organizational efficiency.

**Mail Manager:**

It takes the simple approach to archive emails alongside other documents in the standard system folders. By keeping related folders together will be easy to find them. Fast and powerful search ability of Mail Manager can save time and make it easy to see emails in system folders.

**VisNeticMailFlow:**

VisNeticMailFlow is affordable and powerful email management software. It is able to provide all the information of customers a manager is dealing with. All the emails flowing in and out are visible to all. It helps to know the current status of all email inquiries about the organization. Managers may easily know how quickly and efficiently are the customers being replied.

**eMail Manager:**

eMail Manager runs under a high security system which includes: redundant web servers, load balancer, dedicated firewall, and high availability database. Global communication has been facilitated with the support of many languages. Users at eMail Manager can easily access specific emails and can reply using an HTML text editor.

**Email Center Pro:**

Email Center Pro software responds to each customer with high accuracy and speed. It helps in making staff more productive. It improves communication between departments, makes sure messages are answered by the right person, and customers get the help they need. All communications with customer are at the fingertips of manager. An email history assists the manager in addressing new concerns quickly.

**mailparser.io:**

mailparser.io is flexible and quick to set up. It can work for any big or small company. mailparser.io can be used to mine data and gather email address and name from incoming mails automatically. It can also transfer the information in the form of structured data and can be published directly into spreadsheet format to be referred by the staff of organization.

**Atmail:**

AtMail is not just a simple email program rather an email solution for medium and small sized firms with the attributes of flexibility of mobility, easy to implement branding options, shared calendars etc. It is flexible enough to switch from desktop/laptop to mobile phone or tablet without compromising any of its features.

**Yesware:**

The businesses that rely on email as a communication, Yesware may prove very helpful to them. Sales and public relations teams can fully utilize this software. The application is free at a certain level. The impressive feature of Yesware is that it integrates with several CRM services. It is very useful for the groups that use CRM to record sales activities.

**Sendloop:**

Sendloop is easy to set up and operate. It designs attractive emails and tracks how the users are doing. This service is for those businesses that don't have a lot of time or skill to devote to email campaigns. The goal is to make advertising straightforward and effective.

**AffinityLive:**

It is easy to use, learn and navigate through. It covers multiple modules. It combines excellent features set with easy use facility. It has interdependent modules and simple user interface that enables managing business easily.

**Mailjet Email Service:**

MailJet is a cloud emailing platform. It is a service that can contribute to email marketing and also enables transactional emails. E-mail security is an interesting characteristic of Mailjet. The service of dedicated IP addresses to send emails is provided to silver account holders.

**BEST FREE EMAIL SOFTWARE**

There have been tremendous development in email clients during past years. Desktop client grew to be more sophisticated with many more features. I have mentioned below the best email clients in both categories; web-based and desktop. There are many more email clients used in different countries. I have chosen the ones which are most popular and common.

**Web-Based**

**Gmail:** At present it is the most popular webmail client. It offers more features than any time before. It is integrated into the Google ecosystem.

**Outlook:** (Microsoft): The new user interface of Outlook is very simple. It has the layout of Hotmail. It contains better visuals that are more appealing.

**Desktop**

**Mozilla Thunderbird:** It is free and open source POP/IMAP email client developed by Mozilla.org, the same folks who brought Firefox.

**DreamMail:** Its user interface has the resemblance to Outlook. It is an email client that deals with POP and webmail accounts. It is a brief evaluation of email software and client. The scope of research is not to encompass all the software developed in this regard all over the world. The main objective of research is to introduce the enhancement that can be achieved in email management through using email software. The major source of information has been the web for this research. There is a continuous development in this sector on national and international level. Each business organization has its own requirement. IT personnel at an organization can choose a suitable one after a detailed review of a software. It depends upon the managers how efficiently and intelligently they use this tool for their business development through customer acquisition and retention.

**CONCLUSION**

Email has proven to be a great tool for managing business and achieving customer retention in retail sector. With the advent of new software it is growing to be more effective and powerful. Advanced and intelligent software are furnishing the email management with unlimited potentials. "Email as a simple tool to send a message" is now an old fashion. Now it is time to let email manage you and your business empowered by latest software of email management. However, as is the proverb, good always comes with the bad. There could be some risks and disadvantages associated with email management. A large proportion of spam emails without a proper filtering application may cause chaos. Email fraud is another threat. Targeted or untargeted viruses can be sent through email that can cause significant damage. It is very easy to leak out and distribute confidential information. If happens by mistake, could not be checked until it ends up to wrong hands. However, these challenges of email can be successfully met with the help of proper staff management, adequate tools and advanced techniques. These problems are negligible in comparison with its benefits. With the association of intelligent software, emailing system is truly expected to be more dynamic for managing customer relation and retention.

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