

7 Must-have Social CRM Capabilities

Social CRM software has been accepted as a must-have by most tech-savvy marketers, service delivery folks and CIOs. A try-and-test approach is good to follow when finally narrowing in on the Social CRM product for your brand. In our experience, marketers who go down this path know what parameters to check and can effectively articulate these requirements to their technology providers. The must-have capabilities on their Social CRM wish list include the following:

A Social CRM that Uses Twitter Firehose

A tool that uses just the Twitter Search API (equivalent to going to Twitter's search option and typing something) gets some of the recent tweets and is not a comprehensive search tool. For a brand, this can be quite dangerous as you won't know whether all tweets are being captured, and you don't want to take the risk of missing important customer tweets.

Smart brand managers have figured this out and asked for a tool which is integrated with Twitter's Firehose. This is essentially the API or supply of all tweets that are being created. A search query on Twitter Firehose will get all relevant tweets for your brand. Depending on the category, 60 to 70 percent of all online mentions are on Twitter for most brands, therefore underlining the importance of this capability.

A Tool That Can Handle Direct Messages

This requirement is especially for Twitter, but also for Facebook and other social media. It means that each time somebody tweets and you tell them to DM their number to you, you can actually look at that through your SCRm and avoid the painful exercise of manually checking your Twitter account. The ability of integrating direct messages into your social CRM is extremely important and a huge contributor towards the effectiveness of the tool. Most brands would like to take conversations from the public sphere of social networks to a somewhat private sphere and the best way to do private communication is through direct messages with the customer.

A Product That Handles All Social Networks at One Place

Brands need an omnipresent online product because the bottom line is that customers make their pre-purchase decisions anywhere, from Facebook and Twitter to other social networks like LinkedIn, Youtube and TripAdvisor. There are products that handle only Facebook and Twitter without giving marketers access to other social networks. They might also not handle Indian consumer complaints forums, and several other Web portals that are also important for a brand's reputation. Keeping a tab through a single platform that tracks all your online mentions is considered to be a huge help by marketers.

A Product with a Strong Ticketing Mechanism

Most social CRMs are able to show a live stream or live feed of all mentions for their brand. The agents within the company can directly interact with some of these mentions. However, one of the things which brands miss repeatedly is the ticketing ability of the tool. Without a solid ticketing ability in addition to the conversation view, it is extremely difficult for the customer service/branding team to actually take action on all mentions systemically. This results in a chaotic experience for both the brand and the customer.

Additionally, it's only with a ticketing mechanism that it becomes possible to track metrics like resolution rate, average resolution time, and the actual experience of the customer instead of vanity metrics like response time.

API Integration Capabilities

Integrating Social CRM with the internal CRM can maximize the return on investment on this whole online conversation management process. This is what the API integration does. Every social interaction online with the customer through Social CRM should become part of the internal CRM as well. This way, when a brand keeps accumulating social profiling data for each customer, it leads to better and targeted marketing messages.

A Product That Captures Duplicate Mentions

A very Indian behaviour we have seen is that one customer will go and write the same complaint on Facebook, Twitter and other platforms and the brand has no way of knowing about the duplication. As this requirement is more relevant in the Indian context, we find most of the international Social CRM products don't take care of it. Ticketing functionality again is an asset. In

essence, once you have a unique identifier for a customer from one platform, a good Social CRM tool will be able to identify him across all platforms and present an aggregated customer view for your team to take action upon.

A Product That Lives Up to its Category

A good Social CRM product is what it says it is, i.e., a product that helps brands manage one-on-one relationships with existing customers. It helps them track, respond and resolve all customer complaints across the World Wide Web while leveraging their internal repository of customer information. It isn't a product meant to handle online or social media campaigns, or determine the best media advertising mix or target content plan. Marketers who opt for a product that claims to conflate all marketing solutions and functionality into one product will miss out on the depth of functionality that specialized products have to offer.

In 2015, it will become very important for marketers to get all of this right. The good news is that it is possible to bring on board a product that takes care of all the above.