“Effective Marketing and Customer Relationship Development Practices”

Presentation by Nino DeNicola at the SME Helpline Workshop in Brussels, Belgium • October 2001

the workshop

The consulting firm STEP (Strategic Trading European Partners) sponsored a workshop for 20 European countries obtaining customer insight into how small and medium sized businesses (SME) use National Contact Point Helplines in Europe. These Helplines provide SME businesses with funding assistance and business advice free of charge. The purpose of the half-day session was to share NCP Helpline “best practices” in customer relationship management to improve Helpline customer interactions, as well as, ways to increase awareness of Helpline.

the presentation outline

Nino DeNicola of Dialogue Resource, Inc. participated as an invited speaker and explained how customer knowledge can be obtained through effective customer relationship management. Key aspects of the presentation are as follows:

DIALOGUE RESOURCE, Inc.

Dialogue Resource, Inc. is a “high touch” strategic research and consulting firm that offers a range of market-based services to help business organizations plan and access their development and growth activities. Since its found in 1986, DRI has conducted assignments for more than 50 corporations, over half of them in the Fortune 500.

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STEP is an international consulting firm specializing in project management. STEP assists large corporations and multinationals, government institutions and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), by offering solutions to improve performance and reduce costs.

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I. Successful Customer Relationship Management

- The organization creates an on-going conversation with the client (continuous learning or “open loop” organizations). Customer needs are understood and acted upon quickly.
- The organization is aggressive in understanding marketplace changes (technological, regulatory, financial) and translates this knowledge services for clients.
- All contacts impacting the customer are captured and integrated to provide a full view of the customer.
- Current and potential clients view the organization as a business partner and resource.

II. For SME Helpline: Issues That Should Be Addressed

- Profile customer needs. How sophisticated are they? What are their chief concerns? What are their expectations for SME Helplines?
- Build a full view of the client. Are you keeping data on your client’s business and their requirements?
- Create on-going dialogue. Do you get feedback to see how you can improve the service?
- Act as business partner resource. Can you help evaluate

III. Our Recommendations for Optimizing the SME Helpline Value Proposition

- Launch “active” data collection via exit interviews (phone), questionnaires, client/consultant focus groups and online surveys.
- Act as host for an SME online “community” with guest speakers, SME success stories, etc. Provide a follow-up service via telephone outreach.
- Develop the website as an interactive forum with personalized/archive capability, SME bulletin board, same day e-mail response, alert system, etc.
- Create a client database by capturing “passive” stats, requiring client website registration and implementing data capture tools for phone representatives.