

4 Digital Strategy Journeys

These companies are grappling with their digital futures

A DIGITAL STRATEGY—WITH CRM as the core—is mandatory for all companies wishing to survive in the digital future. Here are four examples of ISM customers that are committed to digital strategy, at different stages of the journey.

STAGE 1: ROUNDING UP THE TROOPS

Company A is a well-known B2C organization that's been in business for over 100 years, with more than 50 million regular customers. Strategic enhancements happen slowly. But in 2015, executives saw how Uber was shaking up the taxi industry, and how Airbnb was doing the same with hotels and resorts.

They knew if they did not provide customers with simple access to their products and services across all channels—both traditional and digital—their company would be at risk. Company A's board made the decision early this year to examine competitive digital strategy efforts and to conduct customer research to determine the areas of digital activity most important to them. While Company A is a little bit behind its competitors, they have at least rounded up the troops and are readying them for action.

STAGE 2: COMING OUT OF THE GATES

Company B is a global B2B manufacturing company. After researching how B2B companies are leveraging digital tools—mobile apps, journey mapping, branded communities, Internet of Things (IoT) sensors—an executive at Company B concluded that the first step in her three-year road map would be to connect 60 global salespeople who jointly manage global customers. She created an internal knowledge community built on a private social media platform. Step No. 2 in the road map would be to open the internal community to Company B's customers who seek online technical expertise. The beauty of a multistep road map is that Company B's personnel first get accustomed to using a social media community to share internal knowledge; the company can then open up the community to customers. Securing internal buy-in is often the most effective way to achieve a successful long-term digital strategy.

STAGE 3: PUTTING ALL THE PIECES TOGETHER

Company C is a global carmaker in the luxury segment. To sustain its global leadership, it has decided on a dual digital strategy: digital functionality offered inside of the car (for example, IoT and other technologies) as well as

digital engagement with customers, which will include some forward-thinking mobile apps and virtual reality self-drives. Given its emphasis on winning new customers, Company C is building comprehensive customer profiles containing online and offline insights, including car purchase data, service records, dealership data, industry databases (e.g., lease expiration dates), and demographic appends.

Integrating prospects' Web site and social media behavior into its comprehensive profiles remains the biggest challenge. Here's why: Prospects do not always provide Company C with their email address so that the company can perform data appends and engage meaningfully with them. Company C struggles, for example, to tie a prospect's IP address or a Facebook name back to the individual's actual name and email address. Tools are emerging to help secure this type of data, but putting all the pieces together remains a work in progress.

STAGE 4: REAPING THE REWARDS OF A SOUND DIGITAL STRATEGY

Company D is a global, B2B2C company that is also in the manufacturing sector. Five years ago, its leadership astutely created a five-year digital strategy for key global brands. The company is now implementing that strategy, one brand at a time. This strategy encompasses overhauling a brand's Web site, creating mobile apps, and launching a private, invitation-only social media community. The community provides customers, distributors, and internal personnel an opportunity to discuss engineering topics of importance to its members. Community members can consult Company D experts, create and/or join engineering dialogues with other members, share success stories, participate in polls and surveys, and more. In addition to providing valuable social insight, which gets fed into CRM customer profiles, the communities have helped sales: More than a third of customer members have purchased more Company D products, and more than a quarter of distributor members have sold more Company D products, during the past year. These are the exemplary rewards of a sound digital strategy. 

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A COMPANY REALIZES IT MUST EMBRACE ALL CHANNELS, OR BE PUT AT RISK.