Customer Relationship Management

What to learn:
- What Customer Relationship Management is.
- The importance of Customer Relationship Management
- Identification of the mistakes made within the business with regards to Customer Relationship Management.

Customer Relationship Management is the process of managing a company's interaction with current and potential customers.

Self-Reflection
Ask yourself these questions:
-What do your customers say about you?
-How is your communication with the customers?
-Do you work on the feedback given?
-Do you listen to your customers

Small companies sometimes ignore the fact that inasmuch as they have attained clients, keeping them is also a job that needs to be done.

This process is done within the company. It is the responsibility of each entrepreneur to make sure that the structures, processes and strategies are put in place with regard to managing the relationship with customers.

Customer Relationship Management focuses on various aspects:

1)Data collection
Collecting data is important as it informs various aspects of the business and you will know what to work on. It is important that you gather this information internally and externally. Internally can be from the team e.g how they set up the meetings and run them, how calls are done etc. From external sources, you can collect data from customers to learn how the relationship is being handled and whether they are satisfied.
You will need to organize the data in a way that is easy for you to compare and analyze.

2)Interactions with customers
This is any kind of contact that the entrepreneur makes with the customers. This interaction starts from the beginning when you initially make contact with the customers, until the retention of customers and beyond. Interaction should not stop because a customer bought from you.

Your responsibility is to retain the customer and ensure that you gain more clients from the referrals they make.

3)Analyzing each interaction
After you have collected data on how interactions with the clients are, you need to analyze it. This will give you insights into the results of your efforts related to the customer relationship.

4)Improvement of the next interactions.
Analysis of the data will ensure continuous improvement of the process in your company. Ensure that you work with data each time you are analyzing customer satisfaction.

Below is a diagram that shows how customer interaction, data collection and analysis informs interaction improvements.
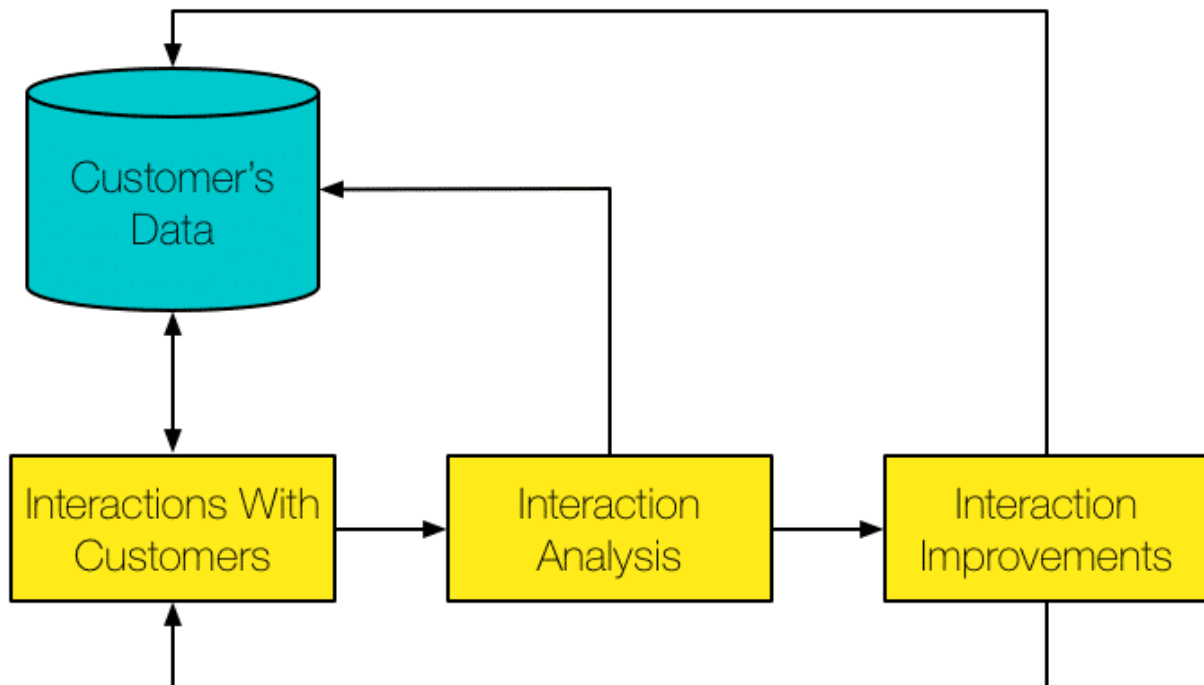
When creating a client relationship management system, one needs to strategize because business needs are different from one business to another. E.g one entrepreneur may be having a good customer retention rate (i.e number of customers they retain) but may lack an integrated system for collecting data from the clients.
Therefore, it is important to know what your needs are. Ask yourself these questions:
- What do you want to achieve?

- How can you achieve that?

- How you can continuously improve your relationship with your customers.

These questions will guide you in the implementation of your plan with regards to customer relationship management.

Below are aspects that you can look at, step by step when creating a customer Relationship Management System:

1. Who is my Target Customer?
It is important that you know, clearly, who your customer is. This helps you save time and energy when you do not manage relationships of people that do not matter to your business. Also, this will help you know the best way to collect data.
E.g If your target market is the youth, you may send them a survey via email. But if your target market is men who are 70 years and above, who live in a rural area, you would need a data collection system that favours them.

2. Goals related to your relationship with them
Every business has different needs depending on how you have been running your company. E.g maybe you noticed that the number of referrals have gone down over a period of time. In this case, your goal for managing relationships could be to increase referrals by 20%.
Another business may have a need for sales growth and the previous customers have been complaining about poor service. One of your goals would be to increase sales growth by 35% through customer service improvement. Etc.
Therefore, it is important to understand what you would want to achieve by managing these relationships.

3. How can I achieve those goals?
Now that you have identified what you want to achieve, you need to think about how to achieve them. In most cases, you will have two general activities when it comes to customer relationship management: **interactions with customers** and **learning more about them from all possible available data.**

4. How can I put in place a systematic approach to achieving those goals?
When you know what you need to do to achieve your goals, you can create processes. These processes will shape your customer relationship management efforts in your company. Put all your activities on a piece of paper and connect the dots. By doing this, you will come up with more ideas on how to improve all things related to the better customer relationship management system in your company.

5. How can I continuously improve relationships with my customers?
The last question is related to continuous improvement. Now that you already have your process maps related to your customer relationship management system, think about including checking points (as quality control and feedback) that will enable continuous improvement.

When you have the right answers to these questions, you will need to create a plan for your customer relationship management.

These are a couple of things that you can do to improve your customers' experience:

1. **Map out your customers' journey** and list all the steps that they take when buying your product or service. For example, imagine a dentist office that has an online booking system.

   This would be the customer journey: they find about the service, then they visit the website, they book an appointment, they receive a call from an employee to confirm their appointment, and then the customer comes in to see the dentist. Perhaps the customers come back for check-ups once in a while.

   At each point, the employees can figure out what key challenges the customers might have. For example, when visiting the website, customers may have trouble finding the booking form. It would therefore make sense to place the booking form in a prominent part of the site, and add the link to their Frequently Asked Questions section.

   The map can also help you figure out the appropriate timelines. For instance, the dentist office could have a policy that customers should receive communication within 48 hours of making their booking.

   This helps you make the customer experience much smoother.

2. **Treat your customers as you would like to be treated.** Be friendly, polite and respectful. No customer issue is 'too small to be handled. Empathy can go a long way.
3. **Make it easy for your customers to get help.** Ensure that you have a working phone number and email listed on your website. If you are running the business alone, set aside time to address customer queries

   Respond to customer queries as soon as possible - 48 hours is a good response time to work with. Ensure that all questions and inquiries on social media are addressed in a polite and respectful way.

   Adding FAQ pages and other resources enables customers to help themselves, which in turn makes it easier for your team since they are less likely to keep contacting you about those issues.

Additional Resources:

Customer Service Survey-
https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/customer/service-survey/
How to manage clients-
http://www.cvtips.com/interview/how-do-you-manage-client-relationships.html
Questions to ask Customers-
https://kapta.com/key-account-management/5-questions-to-ask-your-customers-at-the-beginning-of-the-relationship/
15 surefire ways to improve customer satisfaction:
https://callminer.com/blog/15-surefire-ways-to-improve-customer-satisfaction/
How to develop a customer experience strategy:
https://www.superoffice.com/blog/customer-experience-strategy/