TeamSupport

The Customer Pipeline

A methodology to truly know, support, and grow with your customers

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Introduction

Companies strive to be customer-centric, but they're often held back due to pre-conditioned beliefs that growth mostly comes from new client acquisition. Thus, they invest incredible amounts of time, energy, and resources pursuing new clients and net-new revenue.

Sales pipelines increasingly became a business imperative, evolving into the primary focus for increasing revenue. They offer an organized, visual way of tracking multiple potential buyers through different stages in the purchasing process.

However, innovative business leaders are aware that revenue growth is not only dependent on net-new. In fact, 77% of revenue comes from existing customers.

These customers also:

- ⊘ **Give businesses easier access to decision-makers**
- ⊘ **Provide information on their goals and the issues they face**
- ⊘ **Have much shorter sales cycles**
- ⊘ **Go through a simplified purchase process**

Given the data, top business leaders know that they should shift focus towards their current client base, but they're unsure how to do so. Without the right frameworks, centralized information, and specialized tools they end up in a frustrating cycle. Businesses want to offer a more customer-centric experience, but they don't see results since they aren't optimized for this approach.

From their perspective, they think they're doing the right things, but the positive outcomes are lacking. Businesses that are confused about how to prioritize customers fall back to the one thing they're confident doing – placing net-new revenue at the center of their processes.

Bringing customers to the forefront of your business doesn't have to be a difficult task. By putting the same effort and care into current customer bases as you do for sales pipelines, your organization can successfully adopt a more strategic and prominent cycle for revenue growth.

Based on the methodology developed by TeamSupport, your business can create a Customer Pipeline, a tool that enables you to truly adopt customer-centered practices and build a solid foundation for growth.

Benefits of Customer-Centered Practices

Turning your focus from prospects to your current customer base offers many benefits for your business.

Existing Customers are More Likely to Purchase Upgrades and New Services

87% Happy and satisfied customers are 87% more likely to purchase upgrades and new services.

Happy and satisfied customers are 87% more likely to purchase upgrades and new services. Your business is a known and trusted entity to this group of buyers, so there's less friction standing between them and repeat purchases. Depending on the type of products and services you provide, you can make upsell and cross-sell recommendations based on the initial sale and other customer data you have available.

Greater Returns

3X Companies that prioritize customer experience have 3X greater returns than those that don't.

Companies that prioritize customer experience have 3X greater returns than those that don't. With competitors a click away, it's important to meet customer expectations and reduce the friction they encounter during their interactions.

Greater Increased Earnings

The Temkin Group found that companies that earn $1 billion annually can expect to earn, on average, an additional $700 million within 3 years of investing in customer experience. Becoming customer-centric has a real bottom-line impact and drives long-term growth.

Key Brand Differentiator

A Walker study found that at the end of 2020, customer experience overtook price and product as the key brand differentiator. They want to have a quality experience from start to finish, with every touchpoint reinforcing that the business has a customer-centric focus. Positioning yourself as a leader in your market segment will require keeping the customer experience front and center.

Improved Advocacy

According to Esteban Kolsky, 72% of customers will share a positive experience with 6 or more people. On the other hand, if a customer is unhappy, 13% of them will share their experience with 15 or more. Word of mouth and social proof bring in more customers, and keeping them happy minimizes negative reviews.

What is a Customer Pipeline?

A Customer Pipeline is a natural extension of the customer-centric ideology. Much like a sales pipeline, it's a practice that provides a comprehensive, end-to-end view of your customer's entire experience. It that provides your business with the opportunity to fully understand your customers, learn where to prioritize your efforts, and engage with them accordingly.

Your customer pipeline allows your customers to feel like they're your only priority. You have greater visibility into what happens after your customers have gone through the sales pipeline and chosen to do business with you. By using this approach, you set your customers and your business up for success by helping customers with their needs effectively, establishing yourself as a customer-centric organization, and building long-term loyalty.

With a customer pipeline, you now have a way to truly know your customers, proactively support them, and grow with them.

Know Your Customers

Customers are more than a support ticket number. Behind every request is an actual human being, and a customer pipeline allows you to truly understand the relationship between your business and that individual. You'll learn more about key areas, such as:

- **What pain points do your customers bring up in support tickets? Do these align with the pain points that you've established, or do they have concerns that you weren't previously aware of? Do you have the right resources available to solve all of their pain points, or are there gaps that need to be filled?**

- **Are your customers frequently calling in to report issues? Are these repeat calls about the same issue or new ones? Do they need help getting started with your products or services, getting the most value out of them, or solving usage issues? What steps are they taking before reaching out to your support team? Are you able to provide enhanced self-help resources to address these issues?**

- **Do you only talk with customers when they need something? If that's the case, then you'll only get a small window into what they feel about your business. You'll also miss out on customers who are having problems, but do not want to reach out about issues themselves. You can significantly expand your knowledge by connecting with customers outside of support tickets.**

- **If there are issues, what is the root of the customers' problems? You can discover trends about your customer experience quality, your products, and your business reputation by digging into these root causes.**

Knowing your customers at this level requires reframing your business processes from incident tracking to a comprehensive understanding of your relationship.

What is a Customer Pipeline?

Support Your Customers

A customer pipeline puts you in a position to proactively support your customers, rather than waiting for them to get frustrated enough to contact you directly. You tackle the issues before they turn into problems, due to the deeper insights that you now have access to about who your customer is and how your business impacts them.

You also have the opportunity to step in before customers choose to quietly leave for a competitor. This group may not reach out for help on their own, but if you step in before they get fed up, you can set them up for success.

Grow With Your Customers

Growing with your customers goes beyond adding more money to your business pocket. It also means adding new features based on their changing needs, and updating your practices as time goes on.

A customer pipeline gives you details on their stated business goals, and whether their current usage and support requests indicate that they're reaching them. If the customer fails to reach their goals, how can you change what you're doing to better suit their needs? You can also discover potential new use cases for your products and services based on how your customers implement these solutions.

Map potential upsell and cross-sell opportunities to repeated customer questions and support requests to proactively support their business goals and drive incremental revenue. You improve their customer experience and boost the value of your products and services by matching customers up with the right upgrades.

How to Create a Customer Pipeline?

Now that you know what a Customer Pipeline is, it's time to implement this valuable tool.

Step 1: Establish the Baseline Health of Each Customer

Create a detailed list of customers and individual contacts in the company and gather all of their information such as:

- **When they became a customer?**
- **What channel did they come through?**
- **What products and services did they purchase?**
- **Are they using these products and services as intended and on a regular basis?**
- **What does their support ticket history look like? Include the frequency at the nature of their requests.**
- **What other publicly available information do you have available to you on this customer?**

Assign a Customer Rating Based on Their Overall Health

Based on the information gathered, assign the customer with a rating based on their overall health. This rating could be as simple as a Net Promoter Score (NPS) or as sophisticated as a Customer Distress Index (CDI). The proprietary CDI allows your customer service team to monitor customer satisfaction proactively. It computes a single number for each customer, which will give you an idea of how often they interact with your support department and how quickly their issues are resolved.

The CDI goes beyond looking at customer metrics in a vacuum. A customer may look like they have a good score, but it could be low compared to your overall trends. If you just look at the number on its own, you could miss out on a customer in distress. The individual metric computations also look at the averages of your customer base as a whole, so you get a better sense of their relative distress.

As you continuously use your chosen customer rating methodology, your scoring approach can greatly improve.

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Step 2: Create Risk Profiles

Use the ratings to segment your customers into categories to identify those who are at risk of churning, and those who offer opportunities to expand their relationship with your business.

- ⊘ **Risk category: Some customers fall under the risk category, which includes people with low or declining satisfaction scores, low product usage, negative ticket sentiment, or contraction in spend. Customers at risk could churn soon, so you need to act fast to save your relationship.**

- ⊘ **Opportunity category: These customers might have a high volume of tickets, but that could indicate they're engaged with your business rather than dissatisfied. These customers are good upsell and cross-sell candidates.**

Step 3: Act Accordingly

If the customer is at risk, you need to change how you support the client. What is the root of their issue? How can you solve it? Reach out proactively because they could quietly leave for a competitor.

If the customer is positioned as an opportunity, look at your available information to offer the best upsell and cross-sell recommendations based on their product and service purchases, use cases, and customer support interactions.

Conclusion

Implementing a customer pipeline requires a lot of moving parts, and your support software can greatly simplify this process. By having the right solution supporting your new customer-centric approach, you can focus on strategically applying these insights to your business. Look at your customer support technology stack and ask yourself these questions.

Is Your Support Software Unified?

✅ **Customer data is frequently fragmented across data silos, making you miss important information on each account. Customers get frustrated if they need to repeat their issues to multiple people to get the help they need. Unified support software brings all this data together for a comprehensive customer view, resulting in a better customer experience and better productivity.**

Does Your Support Software Nurture Cross-Team Collaboration?

✅ **Customer touchpoints go beyond one team, so your support software needs to nurture this collaboration. Is it easy for your tech support team to see the customer's profile and appropriately assist them? Or do they need to open up multiple applications to track down important customer insights?**

The Customer Pipeline methodology is only as successful as you make it. You must enforce and practice this with the same discipline and vigor as you do sales pipelines.

Once you create this tool, the work doesn't stop there. You need to commit to continuous action and constantly refresh this pipeline to ensure that you're moving forward with a customer-centric approach to business.

![TeamSupport logo]

Start your customer pipeline implementation journey off on the right foot with a support software that fully embraces this methodology and can guide you to becoming truly customer-centric.

At TeamSupport, we help you keep your customers at the center of everything you do.

Schedule a consultation today to learn more about creating a robust customer pipeline and improving your customer experience.