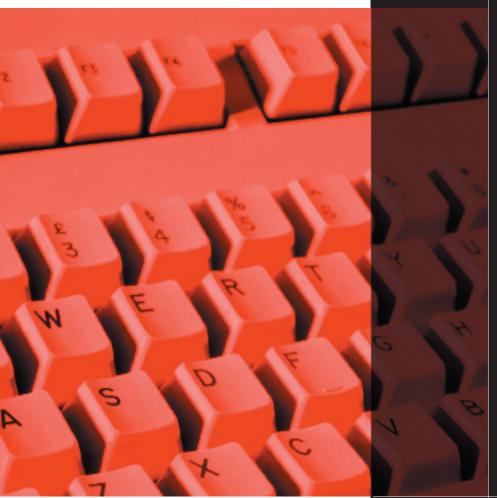# Managing Customer Relationships With Email

VisNetic MailFlow

Opportunities & Challenges

The Internet provides streamlined, cost-effective channels for delivering products and services to customers. As a result, today's customers are progressively more Internet-savvy, and it's increasingly likely that many of them are (or will be) reaching out to you via email.

In fact, email and web-based communications are growing faster than any other means of customer interaction. Used correctly, email has the capacity to help you deliver quality online service, establish lasting customer relationships, improve customer loyalty and satisfaction, and even reduce service costs.

But this evolution of communications does not come without risks. Effectively managing email is critical to your organization's ongoing ability to service customers. The customer of today is increasingly familiar with your competitors, and is no longer willing to wait for you to get back to them. From the moment an email-based customer inquiry reaches your company, the clock is ticking. You must have the capacity to:

- Answer customer inquiries quickly and efficiently, despite potentially high volumes of email

- Answer customer inquiries accurately, with information relevant to the customer's needs

- Build and sustain lasting relationships with your customers

As you research means of managing the opportunities and problems of email-based customer communications, you will also find that the successful formula differs considerably from a traditional call-center service. There are new concepts and models which, when used properly, can greatly enhance your online customer service capability.

The Problem with Client-based Email

Traditional email, though increasingly widespread in use, fails to provide a framework for efficient and successful customer interaction. In the traditional model, each company representative runs email client software on their workstation for the purpose of interacting directly with customers. In such an environment, email communications are dispersed and isolated, and opportunities to manage, facilitate, and standardize customer interactions are practically non-existent.

Drawbacks include:

- ❑ Very difficult to monitor employee productivity
- ❑ No ability to intelligently or efficiently distribute employee workload
- ❑ No centralized store of communications history with customers
- ❑ Limited system administration potential (backups, archiving, etc.)
- ❑ Limited ability to increase productivity and training potential via collaboration
- ❑ No ability to report on mail loads in order to refine business processes & operations
- ❑ No ability to access email systems from remote locations via the web
- ❑ No centralized store of customer contacts

The Role of Email Management

Email management software, especially web-based solutions, can provide a litany of tools and features designed to allow managers to intelligently and proactively direct the flow of email through their organization.

Route Inbound Email – Email management software can effectively route email correspondence sent to an organization into individual queues. This allows groups of individuals to process messages sent to *sales@*, *info@*, *support@*, and other generic email inboxes. Specialized routing rules can be applied to inbound email messages, allowing for **intelligent direction** and pre-processing of email.

Centralized Knowledge Base – Email management tools can be used to build up a **centralized repository of effective answers** to common email inquiries. These can then be re-used by employees, providing productivity gains and quality control, as well as facilitating training efforts.

Email Policy and Standards – Enforce your organization's business rules with email processing features that allow for the application of headers and footers to outbound emails. These can be used to add **notices and disclaimers** to emails, decreasing liability and increasing standards conformity.

Incident Tracking – All email messages (inbound and outbound) relating to a specific incident are tracked automatically and viewed as a single unit of correspondence. This greatly facilitates customer interaction and personalization potential. It also ensures that **email messages are never lost, overlooked, or forgotten**.

Reporting and Analysis – Email management reporting systems can provide important insights into an organization's **communications trends** and efficiency. Reports can be used to identify problems early on, before they affect customers.

Communications History – Employees working with email management software have the ability to view the **entire history** of communications with any customer. This ensures that conversations with customers are always "in context"; the customer won't need to start from scratch each time they contact your organization.

Web Access – Some email management solutions are accessed by nothing more than a standard web browser, allowing employees to provide superior email customer service **from any location** that has an Internet connection.

Email management systems can provide an open, shared, and collaborative environment that obviates the need for "big brother" style email monitoring solutions. By providing access to the communications history of employees (based upon security rights), these systems allow management to increase accountability and head off problems early.

Conclusion

Regardless of what means of customer communications your organization prefers, email is quickly becoming the medium preferred by a large percentage of Internet-savvy customers. Organizations of any size must be prepared to provide excellent customer service via email. With the proper tools in place, they can succeed like never before.

Mark Richards, Internal Product Manager
As Internal Product Manager for Deerfield.com, Mark Richards is responsible for providing a vision for growth in the email customer relationship management field. Deerfield.com includes powerful email management software (called VisNetic MailFlow) in its advanced line of Internet building-block software, based on the concepts of Internet connectivity, security, presence development, and business communications.

For more information, please contact mark-richards@deerfield.com.

Deerfield Communications, Inc.

PO BOX 851

Gaylord, MI 49735

USA

Phone (989) 732-8856

Fax (989) 731-9299

Sales Email: sales@deerfield.com

Feedback Email: feedback@deerfield.com

www.deerfield.com

Manage
VisNetic MailFlow,
VisNetic MailCast

Secure
VisNetic Firewall, Personal Firewall
VisNetic AntiVirus, MailScan,
VisNetic ActiveDefense,
VisNetic SafeFile

Host
VisNetic FTPServer, VisNetic WebSite,
VisNetic MailServer, DNS2Go

Connect
WinGate, WinGate VPN, GateFilter,
VisNetic FTPClient