

Customer Relationship Management in University Libraries in the Present Era

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Abstract

University libraries are currently facing their greatest challenge. For more than a decade, university libraries have been under the pressure to change its way of information processing and transferring due to the financial constraints and the appearance of online resources. These situations cause the libraries to value their development of resources and the application of products marketing to better service. How to retain and grow users through enhancement of service becomes the great concern by library managers.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is not a tactical or functional approach but a key strategic process. It not only helps in understanding the demand of the customer in a professional style but also to know the approach and attitude of the customer. A comprehensive CRM will highlight the preference and learning needs of customer for better serve.

Keywords: Financial constraints; Customer Relationship Management; Professional style.

Introduction

A library is created to provide service to users. It has been transformed a lot in library service features by the effect of digital and networked environment change. The ubiquity of the Internet is used extensively in library surroundings and has a profound effect on library users. Users in every generation and in every stage have always wanted access to library resources. It has been important to know that libraries were there to be used when required, although it was not necessary to visit them very often. The question facing us today is whether the mission libraries have performed in the past is still relevant in today's world. Libraries are the main source of information since their inception. Earlier the libraries were involved only in preservation

of reading material with traditional systems. The main emphasis was only on preservation and to store the reading material at the most possible secured methods. The acquisition, processing, organizing and managing the library material was more important as compared to their use. Now we are living in the information society period where the seekers of information i.e. the customers of the library are only concerned with the information, they are looking for. They are even not concerned with the type of material, forms of material, retrieval procedure and the collection of library. He/She only demand for a specific information at the earliest possible time. So, the libraries have to be rather more specific towards their customers and have to be ready to welcome even more complicated customers. The libraries these days are facing an alarming problem of the rapid growth of the development of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary subjects. The varied diverse demands of customers have forced the libraries to switchover from traditional systems of managing the libraries towards the ICT based libraries for satisfying their customers.

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Problems Facing University Libraries these Days

Today University Libraries are facing many problems in bringing the change in their systems for satisfying their customers. Some of the problems which are identified are:

1. Lack of IT knowing library staff;
2. Shortage of IT equipments;
3. Customers are not aware about new ICT applied in libraries for information transfer;
4. Limited funds;
5. Library professionals are not ready to accept the challenge of IT revolution, they prefer traditional system;
6. Proper training to customers is not provided to access library resources; and
7. Remuneration to library staff for doing additional work.

What is a Customer?

A customer is the most important person ever in this office...in person or by mail.

A customer is not dependent on us...we are dependent on him

A customer is not an interruption of our work...he is the purpose of it. We are not doing a favor by serving him...he is doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so.

A customer is not someone to argue or match wits with. Nobody ever won an argument with a customer.

A customer is a person who brings us his wants. It is our job to handle them profitably to him and to ourselves.

Today, more libraries are recognizing the importance of satisfying and retaining customers. Satisfied customers constitute the library's reputation. Even out of the Five Laws of Library Science Dr. S. R. Ranganathan has described the importance of customers (users) in four laws. The first four laws of library science are specifically meant for customers (users). Whosoever comes to the library for any purpose is a customer. Therefore, the relation

of the library staff with the customer must be healthy and friendly. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) constitute the quality of library.

What is CRM

CRM stands for Customer Relationship Management. It is a process or methodology used to learn more about customers' needs and behaviors in order to develop stronger relationships with them. There are many technological components to CRM, but thinking about CRM in primarily technological terms is a mistake. The more useful way to think about CRM is as a process that will help bring together lots of pieces of information about customers, marketing effectiveness, responsiveness and market trends. CRM helps businesses use technology and human resources to gain insight into the behavior of customers and the value of those customers.

Why CRM

Customer relationship management (CRM) helps Libraries to gain an insight into the behaviour of their customers and modify their service operations to ensure that customers are served in the best possible way. In essence, CRM helps a library to recognise the value of its customers and to capitalise on improved customer relations. The better you understand your customers, the more responsive you can be to their needs.

One of CRM's greatest strengths is that it collects and organizes information about your customers and lets you analyze the data for future opportunities. For example, you can use CRM data to do a needs-based segment analysis of your various classes of customers. Needs-based analysis involves taking the customers' perspective and identifying what they need. Using this information, you can develop a service strategy that will let you offer services in an appealing way even in difficult times.

CRM in University Libraries

University libraries pondered how to operate and manage reader service in an effective and efficient way. CRM highlights the customer-centric approach and builds relationship with customers to conform to the customer focus in library operation and management both in physical or virtual times.[1] CRM is used popularly in library service and library managers need to concern themselves with collection design in that they arrange their holdings and services in a way that will attract customers to the library. Creating a relationship between how customers expect to use a library is setting as front burner. A relationship is a bond or connection between an organization and its customer.

University libraries offer services to multiple type of customers which include faculty, Research Scholars, PG students, Consultant members from universities, Institutions and organizations, Non teaching staff and trainees. The approach of each type of customers for seeking information is different and even the attitude and behavior towards library staff also vary from customer to customer. The work load on library staff and the shortage of manpower on the other side itself a hot issue. Therefore, it has become necessity to make a good relationship between the library professionals and the customers. Customer relationship management play a crucial role in Circulation, and Reference section, because these two sections have a direct relationship.

Armed with facts mentioned above, library service is a kind of invisible product and service in which readers participate. It can be seen that this necessitates development both

in printed and electronic resources according to readers' separated requirement. Library managers know that libraries are well applicable in the age of Internet and endeavor to catch up the trend. Readers will always be the critical focus of a library and is eager to build relationship with them related to interactive and customer oriented service such as circulation desk, website, reference inquiry, and personalized service. We adopted marketing concept and used 4S model to apply broadly both in library organization and mechanism of reader service which is mentioned on next section.

Conclusion

Customer Relationship Management is essential to compete effectively in today's electronic environment. The more effectively you use the information about your customers to meet out their requirements the more value and image of your library will be. The route to a successful librarianship requires that you understand your customers and their requirements and with CRM the satisfaction to the customers may be achieved.

References

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