



FROM PRODUCTS TO SERVICES

Rapid technological advancement and changing consumer behaviour urge businesses to expand their service proposition and reinvent customer support. In this context, SIBUR held a workshop in the Tver Region on customer relations and marketing and sales (M&S) development.

The workshop brought together SIBUR employees and external marketing and sales professionals for an exchange of experience and best practices between different business units of SIBUR and other companies – both partners and peers from other industries with a strong track record of success in implementing various marketing strategies, and business consultants. The two-day event was devoted to working out SIBUR-specific approaches to customer management and more diverse cooperation practices, and finding win-win solutions and new areas of common interest for joint promotion of products along the supply chain from manufacturer to end consumer.



IN 2016, SIBUR LAUNCHED A CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME WITH REGULAR CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS AND CUSTOMER TRAINING SESSIONS, EMPLOYEE COMPETITIONS IN CUSTOMER-FOCUSED SERVICE AND REGULAR COVERAGE OF THE TOPIC IN CORPORATE MEDIA.

The common perception was that consumers are becoming increasingly demanding as they look for integrated solutions with extensive service packages on top of the traditional product offer.

“We see areas for growth here,” said Vsevolod Starukhin, Director for Sales and Marketing Development at SIBUR. “For example, recently we conducted an internal survey and discovered that while our employees are aware of the company's market leadership they believe we need a stronger focus on marketing support of our sales and better partner relations.”

Vsevolod Starukhin said that, in 2016, the company launched a customer experience management programme with regular customer satisfaction surveys and customer training sessions, employee competitions in customer-focused service and regular coverage of the topic in corporate media. A lot of attention is currently given to implementing the action plan created on the basis of customer feedback.

“We have accumulated ample knowledge and expertise across different functions. Our goal today is to reinvent the M&S function to a certain extent,” said Andrey Frolov, Sales Director of SIBUR's Plastics, Elastomers and Organic Synthesis Division.

“We have been planning this revision for a while, first, to analyse the accumulated experience and, second, to decide which changes are required in the processes, tools and people for improved effectiveness.”



According to Andrey Tikhonov, chat bots are one of the most promising communications tools.

Excellence in customer relations is precisely what the new solutions currently developed and introduced in SIBUR aim to achieve. These solutions were presented at the session by the representatives of the company's various departments.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SOLUTIONS INTRODUCED AT SIBUR TO STRENGTHEN CUSTOMER RELATIONS IS THE E-COMMERCE PLATFORM LAUNCHED EARLIER THIS YEAR.

Service to track logistics. According to Vsevolod Starukhin, one of the most important solutions introduced at SIBUR to strengthen customer relations is the e-commerce platform launched earlier this year. Its functions are constantly expanding – by the end of the year, remote payment, e-workflow and delivery tracking systems are expected to be in place.

“Logistics tracking service is currently in high demand by market players,” said Petr Kabin, manager of Plastics, Elastomers and Organic Synthesis Division. “The new system will make their cooperation with SIBUR even more convenient.”

Chatbot to handle standard requests. Andrey Tikhonov, Head of Product Development and Technical Support at SIBUR's Plastics, Elastomers and Organic Synthesis Division, told us about digital communication instruments paying special attention to chatbots. SIBUR has launched a pilot project to develop SIBUR SBS Bot, a digital channel for technical contacts with TPE customers. “Chatbots are one of the most promising digital instruments able to provide prompt and accurate response to our customers’ requests. They are quickly evolving from simple solutions with limited functionality to complex systems able to maintain a meaningful dialogue with customers and learn through AI technologies. Chatbots will help significantly improve the service speed and save labour resources.”



Vsevolod Starukhin: one of the most important solutions introduced at SIBUR to strengthen customer relations is the e-commerce platform.

ONE OF THE MAIN GOALS OF THE R&D CENTRE IN THE SKOLKOVO INNOVATION CENTRE WILL BE TO DEVELOP NEW PRODUCTS IN COOPERATION WITH THE CUSTOMERS AND TO TEST THEM AT THEIR FACILITIES.

We have already developed some basic functions of SIBUR's chatbot and launched the pilot project. The next step will be to make the

Products to be developed jointly with customers. Another functional innovation to be shortly made available to SIBUR partners is access to the services of R&D Centre for development and application of polyolefins. The Centre is in the final construction stage and will be opened in Q4 2018 in the Skolkovo Innovation Centre.

“The project aims to take SIBUR’s product portfolio to the next level,” said Sergey Tutov, Head of Product Marketing and Development at SIBUR’s Basic Polymers Division. “Our success in doing this will, to a considerable extent, depend on the ability to offer better products to customers.” That is why one of the main goals of the Centre will be to develop new products in cooperation with the customers and to test them at their facilities.



Polyolefin R&D centre in Skolkovo.

Apart from that, the new division will serve as a centre of competence for plastic processing companies. “We can also help our customers with staff training which should give us another edge in this highly competitive market,” added Sergey Tutov.

Partner success stories

Varvara Fedoseeva, Head of Mass Corporate Business Services at Alfa Bank, shared the formula of customer focus used at Alfa Bank. “We have developed our own formula of customer focus based on three pillars. The first one is simple and convenient products. The second one is staff that cares about the clients. And the last one is reliable processes.” Varvara added that the bank also conducts regular surveys among its customers, making results available to all employees. This allows to promptly respond to customer's requests and monitor the efficiency of customer support.



Varvara Fedoseeva: "At Alfa Bank, we have developed our own customer focus formula."

Sergey Dmitruk, Technical Director at 3M CIS talked about efficient cooperation between R&D and Marketing. "We rely on client-inspired innovations." It helps developers to focus on generating marketable and profitable ideas. Sergey illustrated his idea with one of 3M products. "Demand for sun control window films was plummeting. A survey conducted among the company's customers revealed their dissatisfaction with the metal component of the film obstructing mobile signals. 3M reviewed the technological concept, tested it with the customers and fine-tuned it on top. Soon the films were in demand again."

"I find it very useful to listen to what other market leaders from multiple industries have to say. They are transforming their internal processes from product-focused to customer-focused and I am sure that all attendees could benefit from their expertise," added Vsevolod Starukhin at the end of the workshop.



BORIS PORETSKY

What marketing consultants say

Boris Poretsky,
Head of Transportation Industry Consulting Business in CIS, Ernst & Young

“What we see today is the general shift in the marketing industry one would define with a single phrase: a shift from products to services. A company has to provide a service that communicates product (brand) value to all of its consumers along the supply chain. For industrial companies, deep integration with customers becomes particularly important as it ensures a clear understanding of their product requirements and increases product’s contribution to end-product value.

The technologies now provide companies with opportunities to analyse information flows and develop customised approaches to customer relations. At the same time, it is well worth considering both direct-customer relations and end-customer requirements as the latter determine the market situation in large part.”



ANTON PORYADIN

Anton Poryadin,
Strategy and Customer Practice leader at Ernst & Young CIS

“Successful customer relations require more than marketing efforts – there is a need for active communication by technology experts of partner companies who work to improve the shared production chain.

In this respect, I believe that SIBUR is on the right track as its product management is rooted in R&D to a large degree.”

Oleg Makarov, SIBUR’s Management Board member and Executive Director, noted in his closing remarks that such events are very important to the company as they help shape its plans for the future.

“At the workshop, the employees of the divisions involved in active sales saw other areas of the Company’s business that can affect sales. Besides, a training session is a powerful feedback tool – it helps us see our customer relations practice from their perspective and elaborate ways to improve business processes.”



Oleg Makarov, member of SIBUR's Management Board and Executive Director, summarises the outcomes of the training session.

THE INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS DAFFY AND MAIN POINTS OF HIS PRESENTATION ARE AVAILABLE IN THE [PEOPLE SECTION \(/EN/8/ARTICLE/PEOPLE/\)](/EN/8/ARTICLE/PEOPLE/).

A training session by Chris Daffy, UK's bestselling marketing author, called Using customer experience to create customer loyalty was the apex of the event.

Chris Daffy shared his vision of SIBUR'S current customer focus level.

"From what I saw in the management presentations, they have a clear understanding of a good customer focus; they are on track to achieving it. SIBUR is ready to do what it takes to achieve good results.

I am under the impression that the Company has got through best part of the way to take customer loyalty to the next level. I am sure that, with enough resources in place, they will complete this journey and become a loyalty leader."



Participants of SIBUR's workshop on customer relations, marketing and sales development.