



Optus – establishing a Centre of Excellence

Optus is an Australian leader in integrated communications - serving more than seven million customers each day. The company specialises in a broad range of communications services including mobile, local, national and long distance telephony, business network services, internet and satellite services and subscription television.

In 2001, SingTel became the parent company of Optus, paving the way for Optus to become a strong and strategic telecommunications player within the Asia-Pacific region. The SingTel Group is Asia's largest telco with operations in 20 countries.

"Optus has a clear, single-minded focus on delivering a superior customer experience. We believe in: Getting it right...Making it simple." Paul O'Sullivan, Chief Executive

The challenge

Customer Lifecycle Management had been identified by the SingTel Group as a high priority capability to leverage across the region. Accordingly, the CEOs of Optus and Singtel decided to create a centre of excellence for customer experience at Optus and then export the expertise, processes and learnings to other countries in the Singtel group.

Vincent Dempsey is GM Customer Management at Optus: "Optus was chosen as the centre for excellence because we are further along the continuum compared to other telcos in the region. We have mobile number portability, for example. We are also the challenger brand in this market whereas Singtel is the incumbent brand in Singapore. It creates a different market dynamic.

"We wanted to create a centre of excellence for the total customer experience: the touch point, how we contact them, the products we develop and market – taking an end-to-end approach. But in order to set up a centre of excellence, we first needed a benchmark to work from."

The solution

Optus decided to commission CM Frameworks and Customer Connect (Australia's CMAT Assessors) to undertake a Customer Management Assessment Tool (CMAT) study to check the company's performance with regard to the customer experience. "We wanted them to look at all areas of our approach: How were we handling our interaction with our customers? What were the processes and how effective were they? We asked the assessors to evaluate how we perform, where the gaps are and what we should be aiming for," said Dempsey.

"The CMAT study would show us what a centre of excellence should look like based on the best practice performance of global companies.

We would implement the necessary changes at Optus and Singtel then, when we had our performance results, the approach would be rolled out to the whole group."

The process

"The level of engagement with Assessors on the CMAT process was very good. They gave us a lot of assistance to ensure that the wider organisation was engaged via emails prior to the interviews taking place. The interviews were well structured and the interviewers themselves were experienced and asked good, pertinent questions.

We decided jointly with the Assessors which areas and roles should be included in the study."

Over a period of two weeks, 32 people were interviewed, from director level to GM, manager, marketing executives, sales people and customer care operatives. Because the process is evidence-based to show up any gaps, it was important that the interviewees were able to produce documentation showing what they were doing.

The outcome

“The ensuing report was very good. It came in a useful format, agreed with the Assessors in advance to meet Optus’ requirements. We went through every single finding and fleshed them out where there were ambiguities. The output needed to indicate priorities, which the Assessors were happy to do. It was really very useful, actionable output,” said Dempsey.

The next step is to review the findings internally and agree a business case for implementing some of the improvements. Optus will grade the suggestions according to the business benefits they will deliver and on ease and speed of implementation.

“In terms of timeframe for the centre of excellence, we have shared the initial results with Singtel. We now need to prove it in Australia. We need to invest in the next step and show that it works. The challenge will be to stay on track even in the face of changing priorities.

I’m pleased to say the CMAT study rates high in its usefulness compared to other consulting jobs we have had done in the past,” said Dempsey.

For more information contact Elaine Kirby on (+612) 9810 0982 or email ekirby@cmframeworks.com