

Are your customers suitably 'Godmothered'?

Can the customer success manager be the modern fairy godmother your clients are looking for?

Temps de lecture : minute

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In SaaS organisations, the happily ever after can quickly become a nightmare to manage and coordinate, especially when the processes put in place are supposed to guarantee the perennity of your future income. So, how can you set up a customer success department to ensure customer satisfaction, adoption, value, renewals, and growth?

The customer success department fosters long-term relationships with customers by reaching out to them proactively, unlike the customer support team, which is responsive and reactive to customer issues. As their name implies, the customer success department ensures the client is experiencing measurable success with your company's solution. Meanwhile, the account manager focuses on growing the size of the client account by bringing additional revenue to the business.

The customer success department typically owns the renewal rate, NPS score, and churn rate. Some companies incentivise this department on additional revenue (upsell and or cross-sell) identification and collaboration.

As simple as it seems, this organisation's success within your company depends tremendously on the foundation laid out for them from interactions before they take over by the sales and deployment team.

The customer success manager is not responsible for deploying the solution, nor is it part of the support organisation. Instead, they inherit customers who have invested money and, are therefore, expecting results. Any false promises made previously, such as fluffy promises of return on investments or features not yet available on the platform, can be a source of frustration which, if left untreated, could end in crisis.

For this reason, your company must own the following ground rules:

Sales should not promise an impact on KPIs that your solution does not have a direct impact on. Instead, identify the sub KPIs that you can monitor and that your customer success will be able to use to build a KPI tree with an indirect impact on cost reduction, increased revenue and possibly, risk mitigation.

Mandate at least one executive who has the relationship history and understands why the customer is investing to remain involved in quarterly business reviews after the implementation. This ensures leadership in the relationship and empowers the customer success department.

Prioritise accounts by the revenue spent. It is only legitimate that the customers who spend the most get the best and most of your resources. The next in line is the clients who represent the most significant potential: shared revenue roadmap and strong partnership (customers who are willing to invest in your solution and your future without changing your vision or product roadmap).

Last but not least, do not overlook the profiles of the people you recruit to manage the relationship with your top customers. A customer success manager is not a junior person. It is a consultant profile that understands the business strategies of large companies and can speak to an executive profile with confidence.

Your customer success managers should be capable of running KPI trees

with your customers. What is their current situation? What should they measure, and how? Most of your customers lack expertise in your innovative field. You must evangelize in every way, including showing them which KPIs to choose from that are meaningful to their business and will monitor the success of your project. A predefined list of 20-30 sub-KPIs that are meaningful to the use case you will be addressing is a good way to ensure your customer feels comfortable picking at least five important and easy KPIs to measure.

Once the ideal state is defined and the KPIs your customer will measure with your assistance are defined, the customer success should put in place an operating rhythm of interactions including (but not limited to):

- Bi-weekly: Scheduling meetings with the operational (and power users) to train them (new use cases, new features, how to boost adoption)
- Regularly: Getting regular access to new people and team to evangelise your solution, the problems it solves, and the benefits and gain new supporters
- Monthly: Leadership (manager/director) sync up with a SWOT analysis of the project and KPIs dashboard.
- Quarterly Executive review with KPIs presentation, progress, SWOT analysis, and executive partnership (vision, roadmap, company updates...)

"People want to laugh and to hope and to see the magic in the world because it's real!" - Mackenzie

To empower your customer success department:

1. Keep in mind that the churn is never their sole responsibility. Work the entire stream of the revenue architecture to understand the origin of

the issues.

2. Support this department, the frontline of your customer satisfaction, the essence of your value to penetrate additional new business units, and identify new use cases to address.

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