

OVH Builds – Case Study

Introduction

The Internet has abolished distance between customers and business. Accelerating the whole sales process and creating successful businesses such as OVH, a French ISP and web-hosting operation that has spread its wings into cloud services. OVH has a 700,000 strong customer base spread across 16 countries and operates 17 data centres.

A large constituency of satisfied clients sounds great, but Mael Dreano, Digital Sales Manager for Microsoft at OVH, spotted a serious gap in the company's understanding of that customer base. This in turn was hampering its ability to attract new customers and close sales.

*"It is not easy to understand your customer when you are an online business.
And we have so many customers, all SMBs.
We cannot know why all of these people chose a particular product."*

– Mael Dreano, Product Manager, OVH Buildings

Mr Dreano was determined to bridge this gap in his knowledge, and he enlisted the Microsoft Optimize Secret Shopper Programme from Alinea Partners to do it.

This 160 points assessment of the customer journey was what he needed, to see OVH in a new light. Alinea bills the insights gleaned from its exhaustive trawl through customer contact points as "moments of truth". These revelations are a series of truths that only a diligent outsider can uncover.

Sharp Insights

Mr Dreano recounts how Alinea's approach missed nothing. "The Secret Shopper Programme is very thorough. They started out with a clear and well-designed contract. They called our support line, checked our proposals, identified where a follow-up call might close a sale. In fact everything was investigated by them."

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The assessment concentrated on OVH's offices in Lille and London. Both of these operations had a different online presence. Much of OVH's content from the French website had not been translated for the UK version. This included detailed explanations of services and customer testimonials. There is also a difference in scale, with 50 sales staff in Lille dwarfing the London sales team of just three.

The Secret Shopper exercise prompted OVH to translate a lot of the French material into English. "We have translated a lot more content and we have also found a way to support the UK sales operation and make it more flexible" says Mr Dreano. After learning that the UK team was losing sale opportunities at busy times, OVH has reconfigured the relationship between the London office and a much larger team in Dublin. This means that when the UK team is tied up their Irish colleagues can step in and take calls directed to London.

An outside inspection is not something that all people welcome. Inevitably there is an element of apprehension about the weaknesses that may be uncovered. In OVH's case the only reservations centred on whether it would occupy too much time in busy schedules. A silent shopping process did not distract Mr Dreano's colleagues and they really liked the results.

"The sales team were very happy to see the new website. They use it as a sales tool to give advice to and reconnect with the customer."

– Mael Dreano, Product Manager, OVH Buildings

Changed Picture

Today's OVH is in the middle of a transformation brought on by the Alinea report. Although it focused on operations in the UK and France the Secret Shopper exercise has contributed to the worldwide picture.

Mr Dreano says: "We are working on a relaunch in the US and were able to apply recommendations from the report to that launch."

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Hard and fast results are easy to see. Revenue from sales of SQL licences, typically embedded in a cloud deal, has risen by 26% in the year of 2016. Traffic on the OVH website is up by 100%, but everyone knows that a casual visitor is not the same as a customer. By applying Alinea's recommendations, OVH is drawing potential customers deeper into its content and has a 10% rise in click-throughs on the website new customers and close sales.

"This is striking evidence of the value of focusing and optimising a buyer experience", says Adam Bogobowicz, a Microsoft Industry Market Development Director. "We all intuitively understand that customer experience is key to boosting sales so it is exciting to see how OVH used the Secret Shopper Programme to improve the customer buying experience and to turbo-charge an already successful operation.

Alinea has created a series of new initiatives to polish up the customer journey and Mr Dreano is impressed. "We couldn't see where our weak points were. Thanks to the Secret Shopper Programme we have identified new revenue streams and sales opportunities as well as having an improved website and an emailing campaign."

In addition to overhauling the company's sales process, Alinea has addressed OVH's core demand. "The Secret Shopper Programme gave us the tools to try and understand our customers." Mr Dreano concludes. The worries about this being a time-consuming exercise proved unfounded and he is adamant that any business will benefit from a cool external appraisal. "Don't even think about whether to go ahead, just do it! I just had to put aside 30 minutes for a briefing with Alinea and then we had feedback sessions of 90 minutes. It is really relevant and it's not a big investment in time. This should be a high priority programme!"