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It has much to do with talking to your customers and customers talking to you and among one another about your products and services. Many at times organisations have put mechanisms and technologies in place that allow the customers to relate with organisations; ask questions and make suggestions.

If this is well utilised, it will help the organisation to satisfy its customers and retain them for life. Now let's go through the stages of the Customer Interaction Cycle as presented in the diagram below.

#1 Be Ready

In relating with your customers, you have to be ready. You must be ready to prevent attrition. You must be ready to guide your customers. You must be ready to see to it that you do not lose customers that are still learning about your competitors.

This involves welcoming the new customer to your Life Cycle and assuring them of superior products and services as they enter your Life Cycle.



#2 Receiving

The next thing is to receive the new customers into your fold. When you are receiving them, you have to give them a feel of what they should expect from your organisation.

You should also take into consideration the fact that they have not made their final decision as to whether [they should stay with your organisation or not.](#)

Understanding

As you and I know that if two people want to have a long-lasting relationship with each other, they have to take time to learn the likes and dislikes of each other, which will help them to have a long-lasting mutual relationship.

This principle is also applicable to you and your customer; you have to learn the best ways that they want to be served. Give them what they want, and they will be with you for life. In doing this, you have to listen to them, allow them to do the talking.

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Apart from that, you have to ask them questions concerning areas that are not clear to you about what they want. On a final note in this section, you have to confirm their facts and feelings. All these will help you in serving them better.

#3 Helping

if you want your customers to remain with you for life, you and your entire workforce should learn how to treat them like royalty.

You have to help them; they came into your life cycle so that they can be served. You should see that as an opportunity to gain them for life. Not only that, they will drag their friends and families to your Life Cycle.

#4 Keeping

This has much to do with guiding our customers so that you don't lose them to your competitor's life cycle. In order to keep your customers, you must be able to produce quality goods and services that are better than what they can get from your competitors.

You should understand one thing about customers: once better opportunities present themselves, they are bound to leave.

#5 Follow-up

This is just telling you that you have to [continue to learn about your customers](#). You must find out how they live their life, the kind of relationship they keep, their marital status, their mother's maiden name and all other details about your customers. You can also use their birth date to your advantage.

Take, for example, I have been trying to reduce the number of savings accounts that I have, but I will never close down my GTB account. They always wish me "happy birthday" on my birthday. The same thing applies to those who moved to GT Bank because of their zero account policy.

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Customer Interaction and CRM

In contemporary times, when the next organisation that produces similar products and services are just mouse click away, organisations have to devise ways of maintaining a consistent customer interaction in order to stay afloat.

In a customer -centric organisation, they device ways of learning from the customers in order to use the knowledge in devising ways of delighting the customers, we have said earlier that the beauty of a customer-centric enterprise is the ability of the organisation to predict the customer's next move and meet them at that destination [with goods and services that meet their specification.](#)

Through interactions with your customers, you should be able to group your customers based on the nature of their needs. You can do this by segmenting and profiling your customers in order to come up with models that can meet their needs.

This will help customers to come up with goods and services that will meet the need of a very large number of your customers, thereby reducing costs.

Changing Role of CRM

In the past, in advanced countries of the world, CRM was all about attending to some customer's complaints and setting up some chairs and tables in order for customers to ask some questions and get some inconclusive answers.

In such settings, the Customer Service Representative (CSR) is not fully empowered to resolve customers' complaints completely. In that archaic setting, as it is still applicable to many organisations in Nigeria today, customers' files move from one table to another unattended. It is very bad for a forward-looking organisation.

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What we are saying in essence is that CRM is ever dynamic. It is no longer what it used to be. In modern times, the multifaceted job of customer relations is no longer left in the hands of the Customer Care Agent. Almost all the departments that have direct contact with customers are involved in customer relationships.

In this era, you can't say that because you are sales salesperson, and not in Public Relations, there is nothing that concerns you about projecting the good image of the organisation to customers that you are trying to sell some products or services to. That is why CRM is no longer what it used to be.

Brainstorming Session

1. Discuss the Customer Interaction Cycle.
2. As a case study, [explain the customer interaction](#)

Action Point

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PS: I know you might agree with some of the points raised in this article or disagree with some of the issues raised.

Please share your thoughts on the topic discussed. We would appreciate it if you could drop your comment. Thanks in anticipation.

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