Modern Mass Customization – Rule 4: Look Your Customer in the Eyes

by Jordan Reynolds

Following from the post Free to Choose: Mass Customization for Modern Manufacturers, here is the fourth rule to live by for modern mass customizers.

Success in a customer-centric business environment requires a seamless feedback loop between supplier and consumer. To maximize value realized from a mass customization strategy, you should view your customer as a collaborative partner in the product design process.

As your partner, customers need visibility into your business and your product offerings

Customers should have access to available product configurations, accurate pricing, and delivery estimations. They should be able to visualize and virtually interact with the product of interest, and see a representation of different configuration options. It should be transparent to the customer how different module options and arrangements will affect the quote and delivery times. In practice, this may require that you offer a customer interface with product configuration and e-commerce capabilities.

As their partner, you need visibility into your customer and their needs

Who are they? What have they ordered before? When do they typically need it delivered by? Why are they ordering it? The answers will help you accommodate your customers and reduce time spent on formalities in the front end of the sales cycle. Finding these answers requires a number of different business disciplines, including Customer Relationship Management and Business Intelligence. Most importantly, you need the ability to collect transactional data and the ability to read the tea leaves. Predicting customer purchasing patterns is an acceptable starting point. As these capabilities mature, new opportunities arise: Recommendations for different configurations that better fit your existing customer's needs, and improving the purchasing experience for new by approaching them with a refined set of product configurations from which to choose.

Many manufacturers strive to heighten the intensity of interaction with their customers, and most of the time this brings high fixed costs to the business. Modern configuration capabilities can eliminate these costs, expand sales, and increase customer retention. Web commerce platforms equipped with product configurators can be accessed by anyone with an internet-enabled device. By expanding accessibility to the purchasing front end, you will greatly enhance your products’ market exposure and expand sales. Direct interaction with customers eliminates the need for wholesale arrangements with distributors, and improves price realization. Customer experience is improved with the convenience of preferences and order history. Retention and trust flourish when your customer can see that you’re invested in their needs.

More Rules for Modern Mass Customizers

Modern Mass Customization – Rule 1: Modularize your People, Processes and Products

Modern Mass Customization – Rule 2: Follow the Rules

Modern Mass Customization – Rule 3: Honor the Order, Abandon the BOM

Modern Mass Customization – Rule 5: Brace for Change

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