

Dashboards

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Summary:

Dashboards allow users to view and access information from a single location, without having to navigate to separate 'silos' to find the information they need.

Introduction

In the early VW Beetle, drivers had to get out of the car and use a dipstick to find out how much petrol was in the tank. Eventually, this task was facilitated by including a gauge on the dashboard. The automobile dashboard has become a central location for executing tasks, and for getting feedback on status.

On the web, people are frequently forced to 'get out of the car' to conduct tasks that should be more readily accessible. This is a problem from the user's perspective, particularly as people tend to be impatient with the web, and to have limited attention available. When users are forced to visit multiple locations within a company website, other channels (especially the telephone) become more attractive.

People want simplicity, fast paths and convenience.

The Opportunity

There is a real opportunity for companies to consider the use of dashboards to provide an effective channel for customers to engage, view and interact with a business.

We see in many of our user interactions (most recently in mainland China), that people do not want to labour through reading large amounts of information, or to be presented with brochures on the web. They want fast and easy access to login immediately and manage their relationship with a company. For example: What is my balance? How many points do I have? What can I do next? What special offers do you have based on my profile? How much do I owe? When is my next bill due?

One of the greatest frustrations on the web is the problem of finding the information you need and this can be exacerbated through:

- Obscure navigation
- Deep menu structures
- Inability to compare items
- Loss of context between pages and sections
- Inability to find answers to common questions
- Difficulty in logging in
- Distractions such as unnecessary multimedia.

The Dashboard Benefit

The customer is not required to navigate deeply to find the function or information they require. The dashboard presents a one-page personalised view of the customer and their relationship with the company.

Dashboards can be applied well in many contexts, including:

- Billing
- Banking
- Customer Support
- Rewards Programs.

The dashboard can offer ‘teasers’ to functions that are available to customers who register and log in – such as points balance information, transaction history and personal profile.

The Business Benefit

The user is provided with a real incentive to revisit the site, and information can be personalised based on the customer’s profile. The dashboard also offers an opportunity for a company to up-sell or cross-sell products as the customer is already in an established relationship with the business.

Conclusion

Companies should consider servicing common customer tasks using the dashboard concept to reduce the traffic being handled by Customer Support. This way, Customer Support can be freed up to manage more complex customer calls and open up opportunities to sell other solutions. The aim should be to develop one customer view that can be serviced either by calling customer support or over the web.

Even if a ‘dashboard’ as such is not used, some of the concepts should be applied so that essential functionality is always readily accessible.