

Manage Customer Preferences Across Communication Channels



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The customer experience is how a customer looks, thinks, and feels about your brand and is ultimately the product of the interactions between your customer and your organization over the duration of the relationship. When expectations are met, customers tend to remain loyal to the brand; when exceeded, they become advocates; and when expectations fall short, customers will defect and become detractors. As a result, top companies understand the customer experience is absolutely critical to achieving revenue growth, customer retention and operational efficiency goals and they are investing hundreds of millions, if not billions into people, processes and technologies to drive and evolve the customer experience.

One area of focus to drive the customer experience is leveraging the digital transformation of customers by allowing each to decide their personal preferences for paper, web and mobile experiences. This choice, known as the customer preference, helps the brand build trust and the foundation for a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship across channels— paper, email, mobile, social, and more.

The remainder of this paper reviews Crawford Technologies solution in terms of the unique business problems that it helps solve. The analysis includes an up-close review of the PRO Preference Manager, as well as discussion of the strategic benefits that the offering delivers.

DEFINITION & OVERVIEW

Customer Preference Management aligns a customer's or prospect's priorities and choices for a given interaction by collecting, storing, and managing these preferences across multiple touchpoints including print, websites, call center, IVR, mobile, and social media. Specifically, in the context of the customer communications management (CCM) space, it's the Customer Preference Management system that receives, records and maintains the ongoing individual customer preferences for multi-channel and accessible document delivery. As individual customer preferences evolve in response to the myriad of communication channels now available, preference management goes well beyond suppressing paper and enabling electronic presentment, it becomes an integral part of the digital transformation of customers.

Although we often focus on Millennials and X'ers when we speak of digital transformation, companies need to ensure they accommodate preferences from all customers across all generations. Businesses must shift from their company-centric and financially-motivated view of what goes digital and when, to giving all customers the choice as to how, where, and when they receive communications. By doing so, the likelihood of customers remaining loyal to the brand and engaged in the conversation increases.

Overall, the design and functionality of preference collection and management interfaces are extremely diverse as they reflect the individual brand's interpretation of customer-centric decision-making. That said, there are core features and functions within any given Customer Preference Management system that help meet the needs of customers and prospects. Unfortunately, many service providers fall short and as a result, customer experience suffers.

- ▶ Security - Identity theft affects almost 20 million residents in the US annually (Bureau of Justice Statistics) making the safeguarding of personal information and data paramount. In addition to the security concerns, benchmark preference management systems explain why the customer data is being collected and how it will be used.
- ▶ Simplicity - Only request the minimum data points needed to properly manage the preference. Request too much and you can create animosity or even mistrust.
- ▶ Flexibility - The ability to "opt-in" easily is just as important as a clear path to opting out. To build trust in a relationship, both sides need the ability to end it.
- ▶ Viability - Ensure the customer or prospect knows "what's in it for them." Make it very clear the value preference management brings to the customer.
- ▶ Regulatory - Comply with state, federal, and industry regulations. Companies today must accommodate customer preferences for braille, large format, e-text, and audio formats to meet

provisions such as Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

- Listen, learn, lead - The costs of inactivity in developing benchmark preference management systems will outweigh the costs of action.

CHALLENGES

The active collection, maintenance, and distribution of unique customer communication channels and frequency preferences comes down to listening to prospects and customers; however, it has proven to be a very complex challenge for companies with multiple business units, departments, databases, and communication channels.

Most preference centers are focused on a single channel, such as email. These solutions are either purchased or purpose-built and are relatively easy and inexpensive to deploy. For enterprises, the solution most likely will need to address multi-channel touchpoints and address all channels while seamlessly aggregating customer information to present a holistic picture of the customer preferences. In other words, the system must recognize and take into account the distinction between each channel in order to deliver effective engagement intelligence and optimization.

Another major challenge in preference management is the centralization and integration with the enterprise's CRM and other marketing databases due to legacy infrastructures and architectures. It's not uncommon for enterprises to have numerous data siloes spread out over the enterprise running on non-compatible technologies. A truly compliant preference management system relies on a single repository of preference data and intelligent distribution to all appropriate parties within the enterprise.

Storage and accessibility of the data and information collected through these systems must meet state, federal, industry, and even international requirements. With regulatory requirements in a constant state of evolution, it is essential to have the processes and infrastructure in place to stay current and compliant.

Lastly, the organization's senior leadership tends to place the responsibility for development of the preference management system on the IT department. Marketing and product management gather the requirements for a more efficient customer engagement platform that includes a sophisticated preference management system. IT then reviews the spec and returns a feasibility report that is expensive and overly time-consuming or worst case, is deemed "impossible" given the enterprise's current infrastructure and architecture. This ultimately discourages senior leadership and they shelve the initiative, only to return to it during the next budget/planning cycle.

Taken together, these challenges can delay or even defeat an earnest attempt to listen to and learn from prospects and customers. The good news is that preference management technology has changed the landscape for enterprises and they have a willingness to consider a holistic approach to addressing the problem.

In response, Crawford Technologies has developed PRO Preference Manager, a standalone solution with easy-to-use interfaces for onboarding channels and managing customer preferences. Organizations now have a solution for providing complete multi-channel preference management, including accessibility, for their customers without relying on IT to custom build a solution. Productivity, accuracy, security, flexibility, and regulatory compliance are what PRO Preference Manager delivers.

PRO PREFERENCE MANAGER

Designed and developed to ease digital transformation by providing control to an individual through the self-service interface, PRO Preference Manager administers, records, and maintains the ongoing customer preferences for all document and content delivery from paper to web to mobile including accessible document formats to meet the needs of all customers. To further add to its value, PRO Preference Manager can be installed as a standalone application and mobile APP or integrated with existing web applications and APPs to ensure an exceptional client experience even for the most demanding and sophisticated consumers.

- ▶ Receives, records, and maintains the ongoing individual customer preferences for multi-channel and accessible document delivery.
- ▶ Promotes paperless initiatives.
- ▶ Provides easy integration into and interoperability within existing systems.
- ▶ Enables end user self-service or customer service representatives to manage preferences in real time through easy to use UI.
- ▶ Delivers business intelligence to be leveraged by the enterprise as a whole.

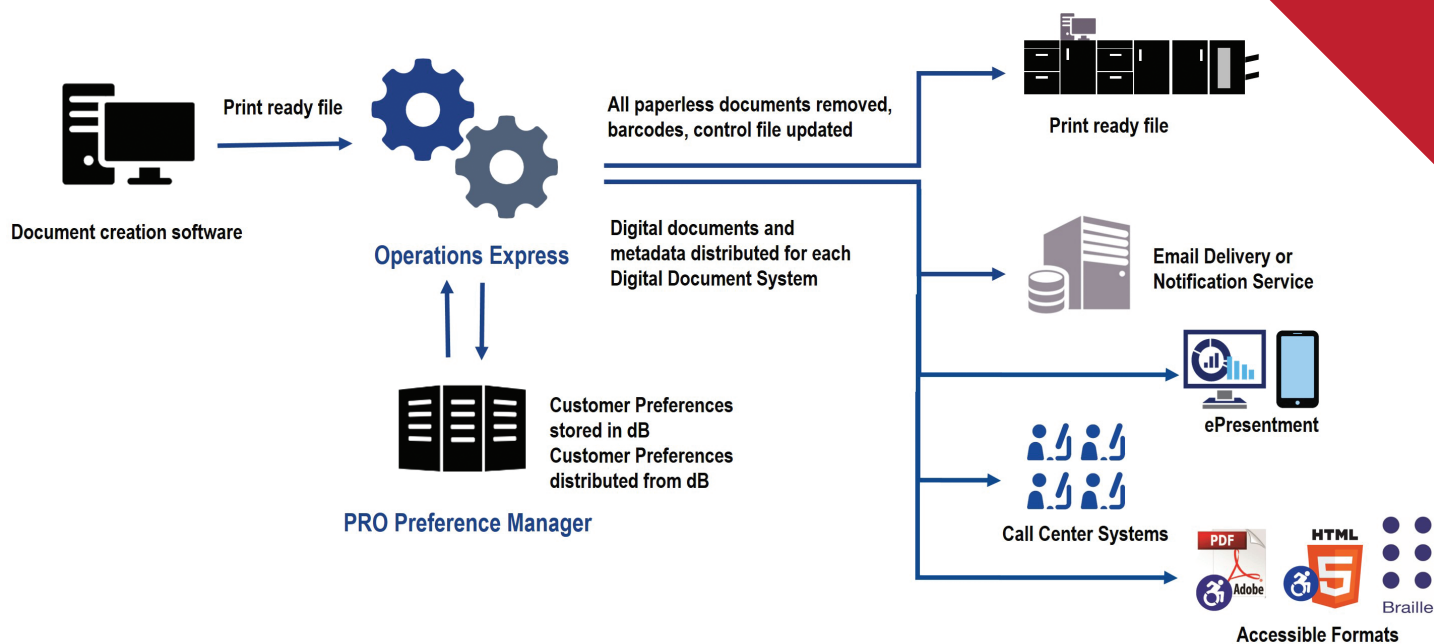


Figure 1 – PRO Preference Manager within a CCM Workflow

THE VALUE IT BRINGS

Flexibility

PRO Preference Manager's flexibility ensures that it will meet all of your needs. It can be fully integrated into your existing electronic document delivery system, or third party biller-direct systems, aggregator portals and secure email delivery channels. In addition to supporting industry standard electronic document formats, PRO Preference Manager fully accommodates managing the preferences for ADA accessible document formats such as braille, large print, audio files and e-text.

PRO Preference Manager receives and maintains your customer's document distribution preferences for all of your customers and their documents. Your existing document creation applications simply query these stored preferences before creating print output or digital document content and control files for electronic delivery system.

Accessibility

Accessible communication channels are for the most part, poorly managed in terms of preferences. They follow exception based, manual workflow processes and rely heavily on costly help desk support to properly execute. And because these are one off transactions, there is little to no automation forcing the customer to take responsibility to reach out to the provider. This ultimately creates poor customer experiences while increasing the business risk in complying with stated accessibility regulations.

PRO Preference Manager addresses accessible preference management from the onset, enabling customers who require assistive technologies to request their required format once and have it recorded so that they receive their communications on a regular basis in a way that is accessible to them. Most organizations manage these requests as exceptions, requiring the consumer to call in every month to request their document or communication in a format they can access.

From braille to large format, e-text and audio formats, every customer's preference can be captured in PRO Preference Manager so the creation and delivery of communications in this format can be automated—saving both time and money while providing the best customer experience possible.

Productivity

Utilizing a solution like PRO Preference Manager takes the burden off your office staff, thus providing you with more time to concentrate on your core business activities. Firms offering innovative business process outsourcing (BPO) technologies and services help clients reduce their costs significantly, dramatically increase efficiency and optimize operational workflows. Outsourcing helps you increase the efficiency of your facility in the following ways:

- ▶ Allow professionals to focus on core business activities: Make best use of their time to maximize productivity, bringing better value to customers.
- ▶ Access to the latest technologies: Companies gain access to the latest tools and technologies.
- ▶ Provide excellent quality of service.
- ▶ Provide access to advanced technological features.
- ▶ Reduce overhead.

IN SUMMARY

Companies know that digital business transformation is absolutely critical to evolve and drive the customer experience so the business may achieve its revenue growth, customer retention, and operational efficiency goals. Allowing customers to decide contact, product, and personal preferences enable brands to deliver great paper, web, and mobile experiences.

Customer Preference Management gives a customer choices according to their preferences and those choices allow the brand to build trust and loyalty and the foundation for a mutually beneficial relationship across multiple channels -- email, mobile, social and more.

Crawford Technologies PRO Preference Manager application platform enables businesses to offer multi-channel delivery without implementing a parallel production system. PRO Preference Manager supports all communications channels equally. Consumers that would prefer to receive electronic documents can turn off the printed output and receive comparable communications electronically. Additionally, businesses avoid creating channel-specific processes and manage all the content for their customer communications through a single source.

From digital, print, large format, braille, web, mobile, and audio formats, every customer's preference can be captured in PRO Preference Manager so the creation and delivery of communications in this format can be automated—saving both time and money while providing the best customer experience possible.

APPENDIX A: ABOUT MADISON ADVISORS

Madison Advisors exists to advance the print and electronic communications objectives of Fortune 1000 companies. Madison Advisors specializes in offering context-specific guidance for a range of content delivery strategies, particularly those addressing enterprise output technologies and customer communications.

Madison Advisors offers services and expertise primarily through short-term, high-impact consulting services. With no-nonsense, quick engagements (measurable in days or weeks, not months), Madison Advisors directly helps our clients achieve very hard and specific return on investment (ROI) related to their print and electronic communications initiatives.

Madison Advisors' analysts are dedicated to technology and market research that is delivered through short-term project engagements as well as articles, publications, and presentations. We specialize in customer communication technologies including enterprise output management, content management, customer relationship management, e-billing, and infrastructure technology.

For more information about Madison Advisors, visit our web site: www.Madison-Advisors.com.

APPENDIX B: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Erwin Principal Analyst

Over the course of his career, Dave has researched, acquired and integrated multi-channel customer communications management and delivery platforms used for the design and distribution of print, web and mobile customer communications. He has managed and directed requirements gathering, prototyping, development and launch of customer experience and self-service portal applications and provided business and technology valuations for potential mergers and acquisitions by reviewing products, services, patents, copyrights, software, trade secrets, and customer executive relationships to identify and document key areas of risks.

Prior to joining Madison Advisors, Dave held senior positions at Racami, LLC., NCP Solutions, a Harland Clarke Company and DocuGlobal, a successful technology and services startup serving the PSP and enterprise in plant operational space.

Dave earned a B.S. in Business Administration from the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA.