



GFT Newsletter
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Learning: the key to innovation

Learn from your customers – and share in their success.

Dear readers,

Even if financial experts can't agree on whether the current positive signals genuinely herald the start of an economic upswing, we at GFT can at least look back on a successful first quarter. This positive trend bears out our strategy of continuing to strengthen our market standing through the power of ideas.



Ulrich Dietz,
Chairman of the Executive Board

At GFT, one of our greatest strengths is our ability to transform business ideas into marketable solutions. One key to our success is that we listen attentively to our customers' ideas and use our technological expertise to make them happen. Because only by working together can we learn from each other and transform ideas into reality – especially in a market like IT, where innovation is so crucial.

In this edition of the GFT newsletter, we use three very different examples to illustrate the potential success of engaging in dialogue with customers.

Social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn are ideal platforms for understanding customer needs better and responding to them rapidly. Entering into exchanges with customers in these networks can contribute significantly to product and service innovation. Especially for financial services providers, new media offer a veritable host of opportunities. Not only can financial institutions roll out new products and services on these platforms, they can boost their image considerably by engaging in direct dialogue with customers. ... [more](#)

The renaissance of customer relationship management also points to the importance of not just understanding your customers, but entering into dialogue with them – to the benefit of both parties. Long-term partnerships can only stay successful if companies take their customers seriously and listen to them. Or, more specifically, learn from them. ... [more](#)

At GFT, we don't just learn from our customers, we also learn from our several thousand freelance IT experts. Their training and project experience, reflected in their profiles in our worldwide database, help us see which skills will be in demand in the future to stay at the cutting edge of the market. To communicate instantly and efficiently with our IT experts across the globe, GFT has now developed the iJobs app. ... [more](#)

The world around us and its markets are exciting and complex. So let's listen closely to them – and most of all, learn.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ulrich Dietz', written in a cursive style.

Ulrich Dietz

My friend, the bank

- Thanks to Web 2.0, social media is paving the way for communication for years to come.
- Not only is social media reaching out to individuals, companies and organisations are becoming increasingly involved in social networking and online communities as a channel for sharing opinions, reactions and experiences.
- An increasing number of financial services providers are also turning to online forums to manage their corporate communications actively across the web.



Terms such as “Add as friend” and “Confirm friend” are now commonplace in online forums and emails. For many people, social media has become part and parcel of everyday life. With online social interaction becoming increasingly important, media monologue (one-way, “one to many”) is thus transforming into social media dialogue (two-way, “many to many”).

For the world of banking, social media has a lot to offer. The most apparent, but by no means principal advantage of social networking sites for banks is their potential to act as a channel for sales and promotions. However, the real value of social networking sites lies in their potency as a marketing tool in a broader sense – to understand customers better and respond to their needs and concerns. Social media is an ideal way to segment markets and integrate banking services into a broader communication channel which, with the advent of smartphones and other online mobile devices, will soon supersede ‘established’ services such as SMS.

As banks are traditionally perceived as cold and impersonal, any friendly approach towards the customer will be well received, at least initially. A new online community must embody the spirit of customer service and act as a platform for mutually beneficial two-way communication. For instance, let’s say a bank creates a Facebook profile to launch a credit card for young people. Users could use this opportunity to ask all kinds of questions, sometimes as mundane as whether the card will have a commission charge. So employees in charge of online communications must be able to redirect these questions to the appropriate banking staff and answer them – as if the Facebook page were a virtual branch.

There are three key pillars to bear in mind when launching a bank on social networking sites: community, which helps create the brand image, customer service, which acts as a catalyst for user participation, and business communication, for sales, promotions and events. There is also a fourth pillar, R&D, which although less evident to the user, can be very useful to the bank: social media is an excellent testing ground for new financial products and services.

The best approach is to set up a profile that offers a transparent and innovative service. Nothing satisfies the customer more than feeling special. Strategies such as sending deposit notices by SMS heralded the dawn of a new type of communication – one that banks can expand to previously inconceivable realms using social networking sites. Transparency and innovative services help bolster customer relationships – and as word of mouth does the rest, the arrival of new customers who also want to feel ‘special’ is merely a matter of time. In the long term, and if crises are managed correctly, profiles on social networking sites can only improve a bank’s public image.

The renaissance of CRM

- Customer relationship management (CRM) and business process management (BPM) will become increasingly interwoven in the future
- IT departments need to work even more closely with other departments, and integrate CRM processes into service-oriented architectures
- Business process management tools have the potential to bring significant savings



A new CRM philosophy is bringing business and IT closer together – by abandoning standard applications in favour of flexible, process-oriented solutions.

Modern customers expect businesses to treat them as individuals and approach them via the sales channels of their choice. They also use the transparency of the internet to compare offers, and are typically unwilling to swear permanent loyalty to a specific company. This poses a particular challenge for banks in the private customer segment, as it is price-sensitive and characterised by low margins. Financial institutions that wish to retain customers as well as acquire new ones need to personalise their offers to meet customer needs, and communicate these offers to customers, at the right moment, via the sales channel of their choice. The prerequisites for this have already been met: banks have never known as much about their customers as they do today. They can compile information from all kinds of sources and interactive channels, then analyse it. The results can be used to derive recommended courses of action by specific customer segment.

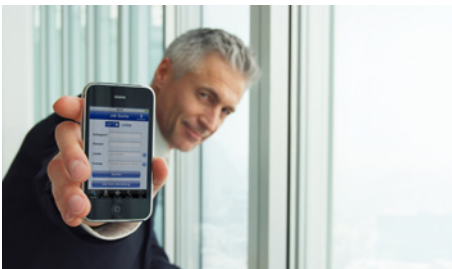
The first step in this approach is to capture and define customer-oriented processes. The profitability of existing customers, complaints management, cross-selling and up-selling potential – all are areas requiring interdepartmental cooperation. To break down a business process into its constituent parts – and then use IT to reconstruct it – all departments must work together extremely closely. When it comes to organisational requirements such as authorisation models and release processes, IT and other specialist departments need to work hand in hand.

BPM tools make it easier to model and adapt business processes systematically. They illustrate how information is processed chronologically, visualise processes and interfaces transparently, and make it possible to simulate process adaptations and optimise them flexibly. A process map provides an overview of the company and its customer-oriented processes. By integrating CRM processes into service-oriented architectures (SOA), banks can quickly see where they need to begin if they want to introduce new financial products or tap into a new sales channel – or if new legal requirements involve changes to procedures.

The better the visualisation of processes, the quicker changes and innovations can be realised. Financial services providers that use BPM and service-oriented architectures are in an ideal position to respond quickly and flexibly to customers. BPM also promises potential savings of up to 20% (Source: Gartner).

Redefining partnership: GFT's iPhone app for freelance IT experts

- Free iPhone app for freelance IT experts
- Rapid, flexible information on new jobs
- Lets freelancers view their contract and billing status
- Adds value for customers by rapidly linking expertise



GFT's new iPhone app helps freelance IT experts communicate on the move, wherever they are in the world – quickly and flexibly.

The huge number of apps offered in Apple's App Store shows that this is not just a short-lived trend or fad. By May 2009, the store contained 38,000 apps. Today, just over a year later, over 200,000 of these "little helpers" are available for download, with more being released every day.

In this short time, GFT has tapped into the app trend and used it to create new IT solutions. As well as a range of apps for customers, GFT has now launched its own free app. First presented at this year's CeBIT expo, the app allows IT freelancers to view new jobs while out and about, and check their contractual and billing data. This innovative service offers exactly the speed and flexibility that professional IT freelancers need.

More than almost any other profession, freelance IT specialists are constantly on the move and working for different clients. So as well as offering expertise, they are expected to provide maximum flexibility and mobility. The new GFT app frees up freelancers to concentrate on the project they are working on.

GFT iJobs empowers customers to find exactly the right experts for their projects faster than ever before – whether they are looking for individual specialists or pulling together entire teams. For all-round solutions which stand the test of time, GFT marries the expertise of IT freelancers with the wide-ranging experience and in-depth knowledge of salaried specialists. So our customers benefit from skills that complement each other perfectly and can be used as the situation demands – quickly, reliably and with quality assured. In this way, GFT acts not just as an international IT service provider, but as a skills manager. This offers customers considerable value-added.

GFT iJobs – an overview

The new app allows freelance IT experts to view open project tenders and search for them by country/location or by the type of expertise in demand. Matching jobs are sent quickly by email and can be read immediately on the iPhone. Registered partners can now also call up the status of their current contractual and billing data. GFT iJobs is available at: www.gft.com/ijobs.

About GFT

The GFT Group, headquartered in Germany, is an international provider of innovative IT solutions and services. As a strategic IT partner, GFT supports its clients in the optimisation of their business processes through intelligent IT systems and specialists and thus sustainably improves their competitive positions.

GFT is among the world's leading IT service providers in the financial services sector. The company combines established technology experience with a wide range of industry expertise, in order to develop, implement and maintain customised IT solutions (*Services division*).

GFT recruits and places IT freelancers across a range of industries and locations. It also oversees the complete management package for its clients. The basis for this is a worldwide reserve of experts, consisting of more than 180,000 freelance IT specialists (*Resourcing division*).

Ulrich Dietz founded GFT in 1987 and is now CEO and principal shareholder of the Group which, in 2009, achieved revenues of around 217 million EUR. It has more than 1,100 employees at locations in seven countries. GFT shares are listed on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange (Prime Standard: WKN 580 060, GEX).

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