

Customer Success Management – What, Why and How

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Abstract

"In business-to-business (B2B) markets, customer success management (CSM) is gaining increasing practical importance. Reflecting the growing importance of CSM in business practice, there is a corresponding research stream in academic literature that sheds light on customers' experienced value in use. By monitoring and improving customers' key performance indicators, suppliers proactively manage customers' goal achievement when using suppliers' market offerings. CSM thus comprises two aspects; first, customer-related activities that aim at monitoring, securing and enhancing customer success, and second, the implementation of organizational structures and processes within the supplier firm that enable the performance of the respective customer-related activities. CSM was first implemented in industries that utilize subscription- or consumption-based business models like Software as a Service (SaaS) or cloud services where recurring revenues are center stage for suppliers' financial performance. Hence, the original idea behind CSM development was the goal of the respective providers to stabilize or even expand the business relationships with their clients. In the meantime, CSM applications are seen as an important step forward in achieving customer centricity and are spreading globally across industries; especially in firms active in solution or servitization businesses that are characterized by complex offerings in which value to the customer is created and experienced throughout the customers' entire usage processes. Beyond this backdrop, this Special Session seeks to provide an overview of the actual status of CSM implementation in practice as well as of recent research that is directed at its characteristics, drivers and success factors. Consequently, the first paper on "Customer Success Management – The Construct, Its Conceptual Roots and Managerial Relevance" by Wolfgang Ulaga, Andreas Eggert, and Anna Gehring describes the main characteristics of CS and shows its practical roots as well as conceptual characteristics. The second paper on "How Supplier Firms Implement Customer Success Management" by Bryan Hochstein explores the new role of CS managers and identifies maintaining customer health as one of their core tasks. The third paper by Katharina Prohl-Schwenke and Michael Kleinaltenkamp on "How Business Customers Judge Customer Success Management" reveals how suppliers' CSM initiatives are evaluated by the respective customers. The presentations of the papers should serve as impulses towards a vivid discussion among the authors as well as with the audience."

Keywords:

Track: