

Moving to a different beat

■ Summary

Marillion's own direct online store, Racket Records, has a vision of achieving what the music industry say can't be attained. Minimal manpower but big ambition requires the team to be on the ball, juggling recording schedules, tour commitments, manufacturing deadlines, the list goes on. Within this backdrop they needed a system that would forge a profitable relationship with their fan base to ensure their survival.

■ Situation

When your 'product' is an art form, your goal customer satisfaction and your traditional route to market is disappearing fast, you need vision.

That's exactly what Erik Nielsen, the head of Racket Records and the force behind acclaimed rock band Marillion, possesses. In 1999, the band had one eye on the future and a clear appreciation of the power of the internet – so much so that they named their last major-label release marillion.com.

Engaging with their fan base directly in a way where the fan was in control was the number one objective and in many ways consistent with any organisation embarking on a so called 'Customer Relationship Management' programme.

However, existing systems consisted of a fan club database with further solutions bolted on to serve a variety of functions including selling CD's, merchandise and concert tickets direct, incorporating the nuances of preferred payment methods of different countries. As the business became more and more autonomous the inherited systems, now increasingly complex, lagged behind resulting in the ambitions of the band unfulfilled.

More and more valuable time was being consumed transferring transaction data from one part of the system to another as well as dealing with fans chasing their outstanding orders.

■ Solution

A key issue was the customer experience fans experienced when purchasing merchandise via one of the eight regional fan clubs across the world. Fans having developed a bond with these regional hubs preferred to transact directly with them. However the merchandise was distributed direct from the UK with the resulting reconciliation of customer details, orders and payments from eight locations becoming time consuming and unreliable.

What was required was an integrated system allowing a single view of the fan, including personal details, buying patterns, average value of purchases and propensity to purchase specific merchandise.

"We could have spent £500 for an 'off the shelf' system which would have only delivered 40% of what we wanted to achieve or spend £80K on a bespoke solution. FuseMetrix delivers 100% of what we need at a fraction of the cost."

With a dedicated customer area, allowing fans, and fan clubs, to update records and track purchases, the control was passed back to the customer. FuseMetrix allowed greater analysis of the fan base which in turn shaped future promotional activity.

'Your name's not on the system, you're not coming in'

"FuseMetrix also allows me to confirm at the box office of a gig whether someone who claims to have lost their ticket actually ever bought one by accessing his ordering history online!"

■ Benefits

The fans are more satisfied, resulting in the number of daily emails they send querying their orders down by 83%. What previously could take up to two weeks for the small team to distribute to the fan base can now ship within the same day of ordering, and in some cases the same hour.

Whether in the studio or backstage at a venue around the world, Erik has access to key data at his fingertips, any time of the day including the 45,000 fans on the email list, 20,000 active customers, half of which he classifies as "regular" customers, and the 2,000 customers who he knows "will buy everything".

With such great customer insight, Marillion possess the systems to strengthen the loyalty of their global fans whilst ensuring they retain a lean and more efficient team behind the scenes.

"I knew what I wanted to do for the band, but FuseMetrix helped make it happen."

■ Key Benefits

- Customer Relationship Management
- Distribution
- E-commerce
- Warehouse Management
- Financial Planning
- Email delivery and tracking





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