

# Why CDI?

by Mani Kumar Manda

Most customer-centric companies have a problem. It's hard to be truly customer-centric when you don't have a clear, unified view of your customers. On the one hand, companies which focus on customers are 60% more profitable than non-customer centric companies, according to a Deloitte survey ("*Making Customer Loyalty Real: Lessons from Leading Manufacturers*", *Deloitte Research Report*). But according to Gartner, "75 percent of leading companies are incapable of creating a unified view of the customer".

So being customer-centric increases profits, but most companies can't do it yet. Not only that, "data quality problems cost U.S. businesses more than \$600 billion a year", according to [The Data Warehousing Institute](#). That's a staggering amount of money.

And poor customer data quality is one of the leading causes of failure for large CRM, ERP and Business Intelligence projects ("[Gartner: Poor Data Quality Dooms Many IT Projects](#)").

The bottom line is that fragmented, incomplete customer information costs your company real money.

Success in the marketplace today relies on ones ability to develop a new competency – Superior Customer Information experience which is essential in today's world to effectively interact with the Prospects and Customers. And not to mention the ability to reduce costs in various interactions such as providing the right service level to the right customers, increased response rates in marketing campaigns, more effective targeting, and so on and on. Often many initiatives in an enterprise depend and thrive upon a customer source that is reliable, accurate, complete and dependable. The ironic part is that most of the companies lack the available of such source of customer data.

While Customer data is one of the most important asset and should be treated along lines of all other assets that shows up on Balance Sheet, the truth is that only now many organizations are focusing on this subject as part of Customer Data Integration (CDI) initiatives specifically and broadly as part of Master Data Management (MDM) initiatives. Every Fortune 500 company is in one of the following stages when it comes to MDM – Evaluating, In Planning stage, mandated to look into by executive team, in the midst of implementing a foundational CDI solution, had recently implemented some sort of CDI solution.

The CDI industry as such is evolving and many products have matured to a state for enterprise adoption and implementation of these solutions. Of all the solutions that are available in the market, two top tier enterprise level solutions exist and both are from Oracle -- Oracle CDH and Siebel UCM. While both products have some customer base and their own strengths and weaknesses, it is Oracle CDH that has large customer base and also forms the foundation for Fusion application that Oracle is planning out to merge the best of Oracle, Siebel, PeopleSoft, JD Edwards, Vantive, Retek and many other applications that Oracle had acquired in the recent years.

Any Data quality initiative need to keep above facts in perspective while developing a project plan and must include plans for a deliberate and continuous expenditure of effort to manage the customer data. This effort can be done by establishing Data Governance Policies and Procedures, Roles and Responsibilities and the establishment of Governance Team.

The core objective of a CDI/Data Quality Project is to build a single source of truth about the Customer with an ability to form the foundation to see the enterprise view of the Customer both in breadth (Corporate Hierarchies) and depth (transactions such as orders, invoices, leads, opportunities, campaigns, etc.), an ability widely known as 3600 view of the Customer with the data that is accurate, complete, correct, available and consistent.

The customer data in such a system should be well defined, Accurate, Precise, Relevant, Complete, Consistent and is readily available for use across the Enterprise. Only then a Superior Customer Information experience is possible. We know we are there, when this Customer data can provide or form the basis for:

- Single view of the Customer
- Exceptional Customer Intelligence
- Superior analytical, marketing and decision making capabilities
- Synchronized across all systems – ERP, CRM, Customer Support and other key functional applications (home grown or packaged)

and forms the foundation for solutions for additional initiatives such as Sales and Marketing initiatives, Business Intelligence, so on. CDI is not only to better understand the customer and their attitudes but also preventing fraud, not to mention offering the right service at the right time (a timely credit increase, incentives for prompt and quick payments, etc.) and most importantly providing a superior Customer experience with increased loyalty.

It is in this area that Rhapsody calls its niche and has established as a pioneer and expert through its participation in user groups, conferences and seminars. Rhapsody's and it's principles name resonates with CDI and many users of Oracle Applications associate both with expertise in providing CDI solutions.

This brand identity as an expert in CDI in general and Oracle CDH/eBusiness Suite in specific provides us an opportunity to compete with the likes of IBM, Oracle Consulting Services, Bearing Point, Deloitte, etc. Rhapsody has excellent relationships with other ad-hoc product vendors such as D&B and Trillium. Rhapsody has some level of associations with some of the top practitioners in this area. With all the expertise, brand recognition and relevant partnerships, Rhapsody is poised to grow as a niche provider of CDI solutions.