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CRITICAL FACTORS FOR BUILDING A CUSTOMER SUCCESS TEAM

HOW TO BUILD A CUSTOMER SUCCESS TEAM FROM A STARTUP TO SCALE UP

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Dissertation

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Acknowledgments

To my beloved grandmother, for all her love and support.

Abstract

In the last five years, the concept of Customer Success has been gaining ground in the business world and presents itself as a great opportunity in a universe with companies focused on customer-centric strategies. In this increasingly competitive environment, the customer's expectations evolve as the companies' search for better serving their customers and enriching their experiences with the product as much as possible. In contrast to the growing search for the term and the emergence of new opportunities for professionals to work as Customer Success Manager - especially in Startups - there are few academic articles on the subject to elucidate definitions of the concept or explore its application within companies.

Thus, this master dissertation presents an extensive bibliographic review on the - few - current academic articles exploring the concept of Customer Success Management and emphasizing its difference from the Customer Relationship Manager, CRM. The research also relies on qualitative interviews with professionals specialized in the subject and consequent data analysis, seeking to define critical factors for the implementation of the concept inside an organization and with the practical and real application of it within a Startup.

Finally, in addition to validating the concepts defined in the literature review, it was also possible to explore and structure seven critical factors that help structure the Customer Success Team within a Startup. Practically, the work was developed at Coverflex, a Portuguese startup in the Technological Innovation sector, and will be used in full by the company to become customer-centric, where the Customer Success team plays a key role.

Keywords: Customer Success, Customer Success Management, Customer Relationship Management, Critical Factors

Resumo

Nos últimos cinco anos, o conceito de Sucesso do Cliente vem ganhando espaço no meio empresarial e se apresenta como uma grande oportunidade em um universo de empresas focadas em estratégias centradas no cliente. Nesse ambiente cada vez mais competitivo, as expectativas dos clientes evoluem à medida que as empresas buscam melhor atender seus clientes e enriquecer ao máximo suas experiências com o produto. Em contraste com a busca crescente pelo termo e o surgimento de novas oportunidades para profissionais atuarem como Gestores de Sucesso de Clientes - principalmente em Startups - existem poucos artigos acadêmicos sobre o assunto para elucidar as definições do conceito ou explorar sua aplicação dentro das empresas.

Assim, esta dissertação de mestrado apresenta uma extensa revisão bibliográfica sobre os - poucos - artigos acadêmicos atuais explorando o conceito de Customer Success Management e enfatizando seu diferencial em relação ao Customer Relationship Management (CRM). A pesquisa conta ainda com entrevistas qualitativas com profissionais especializados no assunto e consequente análise dos dados, buscando definir os fatores críticos para a implementação do conceito dentro de uma organização e com a aplicação prática e real do mesmo em um Startup.

Por fim, além de validar os conceitos definidos na revisão da literatura, também foi possível explorar e estruturar sete fatores críticos que ajudam a estruturar a Equipe de Sucesso do Cliente dentro de uma Startup. Na prática, o trabalho foi desenvolvido na Coverflex, Startup portuguesa no setor da Inovação Tecnológica, e vai ser aproveitado na íntegra pela empresa para se centrar no cliente, onde a equipa de Customer Success desempenha um papel fundamental.

Palavras-Chave: Sucesso do Cliente, Gestão do Sucesso do Cliente, Gestão de Relacionamento com o Cliente, Fatores Críticos

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1. Introduction

According to the Emerging Jobs Report (2019), made by Linkedin Business, the job-title "Customer Success Specialist" occupied the 6th place in the top 15 emerging jobs in the US - ahead of positions like Back End Developer and Cybersecurity Specialist - with 36% annual growth. The same report also states that 72% of professionals working in this area are concentrated in the Software & IT industry and that job posts on LinkedIn for Customer Success Manager in the U.S. grew 34% in 2018.

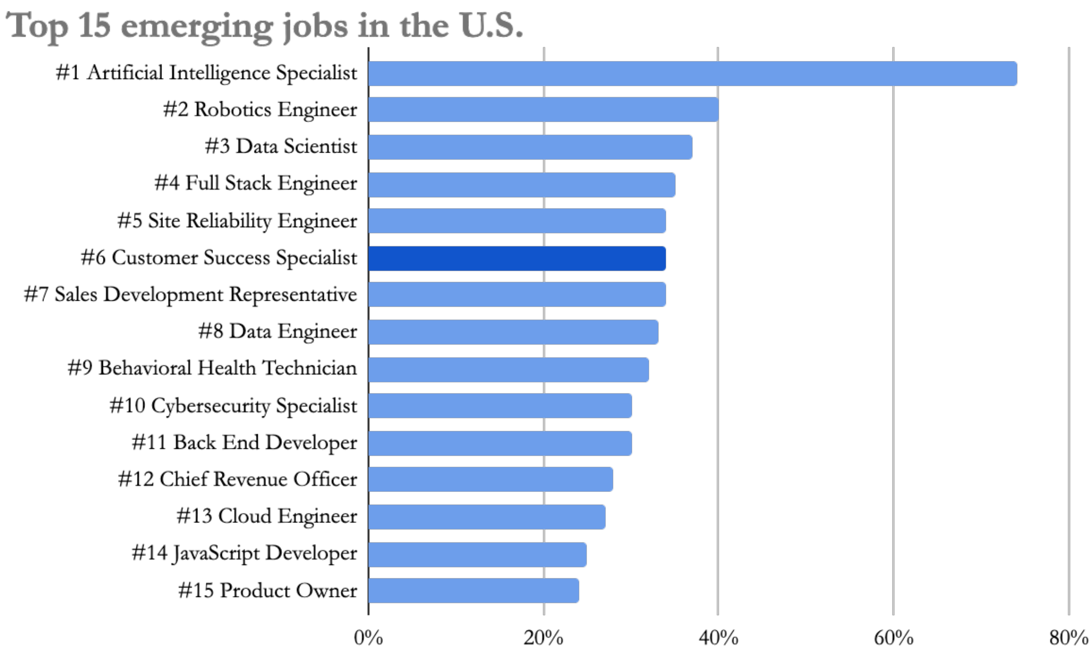


Figure 1: Ranking in percentage of the top 15 emerging jobs in the U.S. (Linkedin Business, 2019)

According to Gainsight (2019) as cited in Hilton et al. (2020), between the years 2015 and 2018, the number of Linkedin users (the largest social network for business in the world) with the position of Customer Success Manager increased by 600%, from 5,000 in 2015 to more than 30,000 in 2018.

During the past few years, especially after 2017, the concept of Customer Success Management (CSM) has been gaining attention within companies. Consequently, the amount of information on the topic continues to grow: more than 40 international conferences were held on the topic in 2020 accompanied by an emergence of new books, digital tools, and technology platforms discussing the subject.

Despite the recent popularity of the term, there are few academic researches on the topic, and the definitions of the concept are not standardized and detailed. By 2020, only seven academic articles were referring to "Customer Success," and only three of them systematically addressed the CSM's potential to represent innovation. Also, the term is often confused - not to say that it equates - with the concept of Customer Relation Management (CRM). From an in-depth reading of this bibliography, one might question: are these terms really equivalent?

A recent study made by Hilton et al. (2020) presented an analysis of the proportional academic usage of keywords such as "Customer relationship management", "Customer Experience," and "Customer Engagement," which revealed an average ratio of 2.85:1000 from 1995 to 2019. Applying that same popularity ratio to the keyword "customer success," the results are considerably lower, with only 179 academic articles referring to the concept for the same period analyzed.

Interest in the concept began to increase from 2015, as shown below, in the "Interest over Time" graph from Google Trends. The graph describes the search for the concept from the end of 2004 to May 2021 and illustrates how there was almost no interest in the term until 2015 and, since then, there has been a gradual growth to the searches with a peak in popularity in 2020.

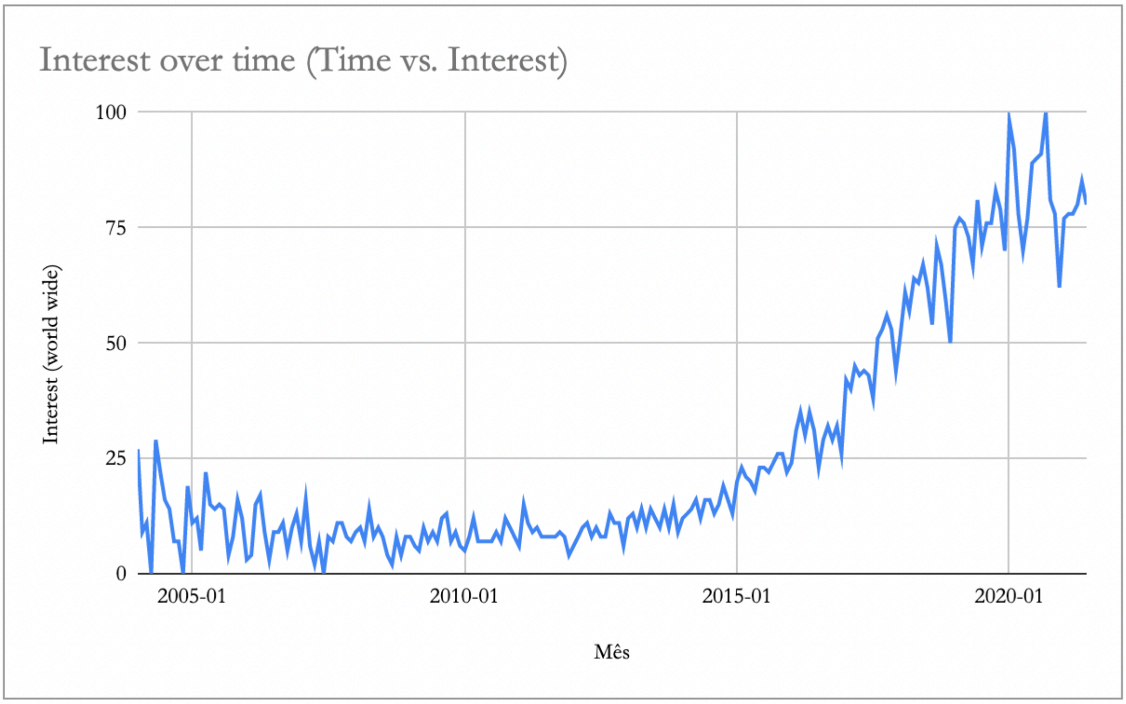


Figure 2: Year (2014 to 2021) vs. Variation of interest in the CS term (Google Trends, n.d.)

The initial articulations of the CSM provide examples in which the concept ranges from small iterations in client management practices to a radical overhaul of client management practices at the organizational level (Hochstein et al., 2020; Porter & Heppelmann, 2015; Zoltners et al., 2019 as cited in Hilton et al., 2020). In other words, the CSM can represent small changes in the incorporation of customer-centric language as well as culture across the organization, with little change in operations or practice.

Marketing studies show that creating a good relationship with the customer is essential, and it is up to 20 times more expensive to get a new customer than to keep an existing one (Goodman et al., 2000). The suggestion that acquiring customers is much more expensive than maintaining them is supported by most researchers and companies today, but the numbers may vary according to the type of business.

Since there are few academic articles on the topic, there is also a lack of inputs to help define critical factors for implementing Customer Success within a company. In previous academic researches on the theme, which will be detailed in the nexts chapters, there's no results that suggest an approach to implement the concept in a company.

Thus, this research intends to define the concept of Customer Success Management (CSM) and to place it in relation to the concept of Customer Relationship Management (CRM). The research's main objectives are: to support the design and implementation of the CSM concept within a financial sector Startup, which will be presented in the next chapter, from its details to main challenges; and to make a first definition of what are the critical factors to ensure the success of CSM's execution, based on qualitative interviews with Customer Success Managers. Also, in this dissertation, the terms "client" and "customer" will be used interchangeably.

1.1 Dissertation Outline

This dissertation is structured in seven sections:

The first Section includes the Introduction. The next section, Section 2, presents Coverflex, the company that will base the main case study, the project in question, and the research problem. Section 3 consists of a review of State of the Art in the relevant areas of the research scope, comparing different alternatives, and identifying existing gaps. The following topics are addressed: definitions of the concept of Customer Success Management (CSM); definition of the Customer Relation Management (CRM) Concept; discussion concerning a difference between CSM and CRM; a brief contextualization of the main tools used in the areas of CRM, Customer Support and Customer Success

In Section 4, the dissertation presents a qualitative approach to data collection, which involves Observation, Interview, and Document Analysis. The section explains why the different methods were chosen, how they were carried out and points out some contingencies and limitations of the study presented.

In Section 5, relevant parts of the project are detailed as a result of the data analysis, and Section 6 the discussion of the results presented in the previous section.

Section 7 brings conclusions and final considerations. In addition to the main findings, the basis for future research is specified.

2. Coverflex

Coverflex is a new employees' portfolio for modern companies with a solution that allows them to reduce costs and maximize their employees' earning potential. It acts as a B2B company, aiming to replace the traditional model of company compensation by facilitating these services' management. The company principal goal is to eliminate compensation problems with solutions such as:

- The organization of different benefits, health insurance and meal allowance, avoiding separated compensation processes that add-up cost and bureaucracy;
- The formulation of satisfactory offers with relevant benefits to employees, which can be very challenging and time consuming for many companies;
- The development of personalized benefits for different employees once, according to research done by the company, "the same benefits for everyone" is an approach that does not work.

To tackle these challenges, Coverflex developed the Employee Wallet, a system that allows a company to assign personalized value to each of their employees. Acting as an aggregator of services, the Employee Wallet is a platform where the employee can decide how to better use their own benefits through the app or the card. With this platform, the company gains time and money savings with a tax efficiency solution, since Coverflex becomes the sole supplier of hundreds of products and services that the company offers to employees. There are many different products associated with the platform, some of them listed below:

Meal allowance (1) : A VISA card, contactless, accepted in online services and a vast network of restaurants and supermarkets.

Business benefits and expenses (2): Access to a myriad of benefits that employees can choose from and use with tax efficiency. The benefits currently offered by the company are: Technology, Coverflex Childcare, Education Expenses, Gym and Fitness, Health and Wellbeing, Senior Expenses, Retirement and Investment, Social Pass and Professional Training.

Health Insurance and Workers' Compensation (3) : Employees can improve coverage and add family members to the policy through the app.

Exclusive discounts (4) : Access to a wide range of discounts in addition to tax efficiency.

When the company acquires the benefit, each employee is granted access to register with Coverflex (web and mobile) and a card, and can:

- Access insurance documentation through the application;
- Add family members to health insurance;
- Pay for children's daycare immediately;
- Keep employees' money for meal and benefits in separate pockets, but in the same card;
- Employee with independence to spend the amount as he/she wants;
- Access to Savings and Retirement products.

The company, on the other hand, has all the processes integrated and is already able to start enjoying:

- Automatic reports for payroll processing;
- Adds and removes employees easily;
- Load employee wallets at any time, for a single employee or all at the same time;
- Decide what benefits are available to the team;
- A single point of contact and in several languages (EN and PT).

The company continues to improve its product, and launch new features in the market; in addition, it has achieved results above expectations, and aims to expand into new markets this year.

1.2 Project Background

Coverflex launched the Employee Wallet project on the market in January 2021, and in less than six months it has already surpassed all established goals. As usual in a startup setting, the company is very focused on the product (Product-Centric) in the first phase. They will later migrate to the Customer-Centric model; that is, the product is the priority initially with the development of new features, adjustments, and improvements to the platform (Comunidade CS PT, 2021). At Coverflex, it is no different; the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) is being improved weekly, and new features are being launched. The Portuguese government already regulates the “tax exemptions” for all benefits offered by Coverflex.

With the success of the product, and given the lack of a similar solution in Portugal, the company is projected to reach the goal of attracting customers in the first half (H1) of the Portuguese strategy plan, and is already evaluating two more European markets for start product expansion. Due to this fast growing scenario, one of the company's corporate strategies started to focus on the creation and implementation of the Customer Success area in the short term.

Currently, Coverflex contact with customers is made by their own sales team with the customer's Acquisition team. After the contract is closed, all contact is made exclusively by the Operations team, and these contacts consist of: the onboarding of managers account, onboarding of employees; specific support about benefits, meal allowance, insurance, discounts, and any support that may arise during the journey.

Because of the significant investments made by several players in the sector and the accelerated technological innovation environment, this research aims to understand the best way to implement a Customer Success Team in a company. (Coverflex, n.d.)

For Coverflex, which is in the initial phase of building the Customer Success department, this scientific article will serve as the basis for structuring the team. In addition to the starting points to be explored, which were selected together with the mentor within the company, the other points collected during the interview will also be used. The company will also have access to the interviews carried out and other materials collected during the development of the article.

3. State of the art

3.1 Literature Review[1]

The idea of this literature review is to explore hypotheses surrounding the Customer Success concept, their differences concerning the concept of Customer Relation Management, and some tools that are a reference for customer management. For Melissa Rosen (2020), Customer Success is often positioned in relation to customer service, support, or experience. In some cases, even, it is placed as "better than." In others, it is still defined by the way it differs from these fields. In practice, successful customer success management is mixed with customer service, support, and experience, especially in startups or small companies. These terms are just terms: the day-to-day practice is composed by interdependent combinations of this larger set of tools.

The following section reflects what has been published on relevant topics by accredited academics and researchers. It also presents several definitions and critical questions that will be present throughout the dissertation. The final subsection provides an overview of the main ideas discussed during the state-of-the-art review.

3.2 Conceptual Background

3.2.1 Customer Success Management (CSM)

Fawcett and Cooper mentioned the concept of Customer Success as an element of Industrial Marketing Management in 1998 and defined Customer Success as derived from compulsive performance measurement efforts. Only in 2015, the concept of CSM was coined by Porter and Heppelmann and, five years later, by Hochstein et al. (2020) as cited in Hilton et al. (2020, p.17):

> "Responsible for managing the customer experience and ensuring that customers get the most out of the product"; (...) "The proactive (versus reactive) relational engagement of

[1] Literature reviews are essential to provide an overview of sources to explore while researching a particular topic and demonstrate to your readers how the research fits within a more extensive study field (Fink, 2014 as cited in USC Libraries). A good literature review can also help select the best methodology for the research and validate premises.

customers to ensure that the potential value of product offerings is realized by the customer."

The authors also relate CSM directly to Customer Experience and Customer Engagement, as this is the only way to maximize the value in the use of customers proactively. It means taking the customer to the broader use of their product or service, considering the financial value and the customer's social, operational, and strategic issues. When integrating the concepts, the idea is to assess customers' localized perceptions about the product's value, measured by satisfaction and loyalty, and proactively maximize the value in use of customers without simply using the seller's limited offer.

In other words, the authors propose that the company should not adopt the most restricted and traditional focus already known in approaches to Customer Experience and Engagement, but rather reactive support, satisfaction scores, predicting customer actions, and proposing additional sales, considering finances, social, operational, and strategic issues. Besides, the authors suggest that despite including this concept in a modular way in some departments, there must be work functions focused exclusively on the CSM, as a new functional unit in the organizational structure of a sales company that links the marketing activities, sales and support (Porter & Heppelmann, 2015; Hochstein et al. 2020 as cited in Hilton et al., 2020). The strategy assumes gains:

- Proactive customer intervention as opposed to reactive customer support;
- Broader customer results as opposed to more local satisfaction;
- Customer ex post value versus customer ex ante voice;
- Customer growth instead of billing and upsell.

Complementary definitions of CSM suggest that CSM represents a change in mentality where, instead of winning over the customer, customers are introduced to the path of value (Zoltners, 2019). Hochstein et al. (2020) use the metaphor that CS Manager is the builder within a company since it "builds" the value in use of customers, and once again, we have managed to differentiate CSM from customer experience and customer engagement, putting the customer in the foreground as the lead actor who strives to achieve their value in use, instead of adopting the traditional customer management narrative with the seller as the lead actor, offering something the customer engages with and experiences.

Mendonza et al. (2006) argues that to manage the transition to a client-centered organization, it is mandatory to establish the resources, knowledge, and tools necessary to meet the client's requirements with the appropriate products and services. Unfortunately, many organizations, especially financial ones, have a product-oriented culture that may be inconsistent with service-customer expectations.

For this change to occur, successful managers must overcome customer obstacles, exposing and, hopefully, alleviating any competing objectives between interested parts at all points of customer integration with the company. Furthermore, Porter and Heppelmann (2015, p.17) as cited in Hilton et al. (2020) attribute to CSM performance functions,

> "For which traditional sales and service organizations are not equipped and have no incentives to adopt: monitor product use and performance data to measure the value their customers capture and identify ways to increase it."

Hochstein et al. (2020) find flaws in the traditional Key Performance Indicators (KPI) since they represent outdated indicators, such as satisfaction and loyalty. Instead, Hochstein et al. (2020) describe the CSM as a departure from Customer Experience and Customer Engagement by relying on essential indicators that represent customers' current value in use and predict future customers' value in use. Likewise, Porter and Heppelmann (2015) and Zoltners et al. (2019) as cited in Hilton et al. (2020) argue that CSM should focus on metrics that are at the service of customers' value in use. Altogether, the CSM starts from traditional customer management's key performance indicators, and moves towards a new set of key performance indicators focused on customers' current and anticipated use value.

The idea of creating a relationship with customers based on quality, dialogue, innovation, and learning is considered a more sustainable strategy and can be seen as essentially inimitable by competitors: in essence, a strategy that could create a long-term competitive advantage (Gronroos, 1996; Payne and Frow, 2005 as cited in Mutum & Nguyen, 2012).

3.2.2 Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

In recent years, a significant paradigm shift has been noted in the strategy of companies. Before, it was common for companies to seek market leadership through the efficiency of production, in order to reduce operating costs per unit produced, resulting in the capacity to sell products and services at lower prices. Nowadays, in contrast, companies have started to focus their attention on a transaction-based sales platform for a more relationship-based approach (Mutum & Nguyen, 2012).

What is now known as the Relationship Marketing (RM) paradigm, suggests that its customers must define a particular business through an ongoing relationship (Webster, 1992; Peppers and Rogers, 2004; Payne and Frow, 2005; Vargo, 2009 as cited in Mutum & Nguyen, 2012).

This shift turned discussions and attention to CRM and loyalty approaches. This transition in marketing emphasizes engagement with customers and long-term relationships that allow a company to compile a wide range of knowledge about an individual and their needs. (Payne et al., 2009; Peppers and Roger, 2010 as cited in Mutum & Nguyen, 2012).

CRM refers to relationship marketing efforts informed by a customer database that tracks customer interactions with the sales company repeatedly and across all touchpoints. Commoditized database technology allowed CRM to thrive in the late 1990s, allowing small and medium-sized businesses to track customer demographic and transactional data.

The initial articulations for CRM appeared for the first time in Long Range Planning, where Stone et al. (1996) reported research on the use of information technology to manage customer relationships. The most cited article on CRM appeared in the Journal of Marketing Research. In said article, Reinartz et al. (2004) conceptualize, operationalize, and validate CRM processes and dimensions as a construct and empirically investigate CRM implementation. Throughout the literature, definitions of CRM vary but tend to correspond broadly to the description of Reinartz et al. (2004): "a systematic process to manage the beginning, maintenance and termination of the relationship with the customer at all points of contact of the customer, in order to maximize the value of the relationship portfolio." CRM data allowed researchers to discover the return on various relationship investments to drive customer retention, expansion, and appreciation (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Mithas, Krishnan, & Fornell, 2005; Payne and Frow, 2005; Verhoef, 2003 as cited in Hilton et al., 2020).

In addition to the knowledge and implications of CRM, one of the main issues reported in the literature is the lack of models that could guide companies towards implementing this type of strategy. Each company is different, has its own culture and business processes, etc. Consequently, it is essential not to consider CRM as a magic solution that will solve all its problems. On the contrary, companies should undertake individual and personalized studies to figure out the best way in which CRM can benefit and impact their organization.

There are several aspects involved in the achievement of ideal CRM objectives. According to Thompson (2009) as cited in Gruber & Svensson (2012), the primary processes through which a customer relates to an organization are marketing, sales, and service. In addition, and depending on the business area, other sectors might affect this relationship and should be considered. Most of the time, these complementary strategies involve broader scope and more general changes in the organization. For instance, the Human Factor (people) has a fundamental role within the CRM strategy, both on behalf of the organization's employees (who must be immersed in a cultural change) and the customers. Another important factor is Technology, and it is necessary to investigate how to operate within the company's technologies to facilitate and favor the implementation of the CRM strategy.

3.2.3 Difference Between CSM and CRM

In order to understand CSM in relation to CRM, it is necessary to explore two concepts that also serve as a basis for arguing this differentiation: Customer Experience and Customer Engagement.

Customer Experience is related to the design and assess of the customer journey as the set of experiences and reactions to the sales company's offers and touchpoints (Fornell et al., 2010; Grönroos, 2011; Lam et al., 2004; Oliver, 1997 as cited in Mutum & Nguyen, 2012). It is based on CRM: the contact with customer points data allows product and service design teams to assess customer reactions and reactively improve products and services.

In an increasingly digital world, Customer Experience is also a term that has gained increasing attention in the corporate world. According to Lopes (2013), it is increasingly related to disciplinary areas and fields such as design, marketing, and human-computer interaction.

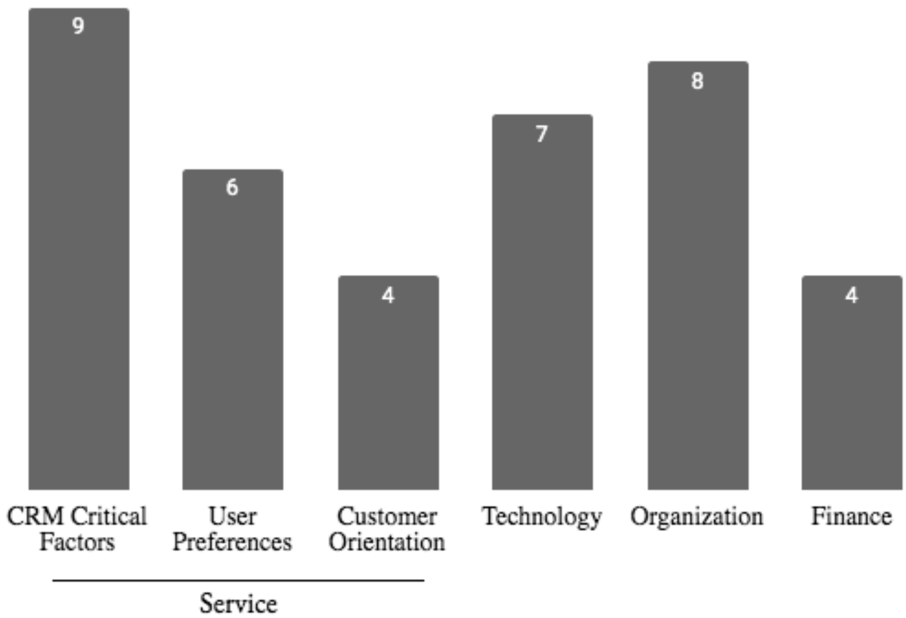
On the other hand, Customer Engagement seeks to "motivate, enable and measure customer contributions to marketing functions" above and beyond simple purchase and use (Harmeling et al., 2017). Customer Engagement arose in response to the emergence of social media, which allowed companies to more easily measure ancillary behaviors, such as words of mouth and customer feedback. It aims to build and strengthen customer-company relationships and achieve subsequent benefits, such as increased customer loyalty and retention (Purcărea, 2018; So et al., 2016 as cited in Hilton et al., 2020). The Customer Engagement survey includes broad points of Engagement, such as (1) cognitive, (2) emotional, (3) behavioral, and (4) social elements (Vivek et al., 2014).

According to Hilton et al. (2020), the CSM stands out as the *next evolution* in client management practice. In this way, CSM is based on the CRM base when considering customer demographic and transactional data but goes further, using streaming sensor data and other unstructured customer data to gain insights into value in use and predict future customer use. The CSM is based on the Customer Experience, seeking to improve the customer experience with the product, but goes further by prioritizing the financial, social, operational, and strategic objectives that can be more distant from the product but very important to the customer in a broader level. Additionally, CSM is based on Customer Engagement when considering customer loyalty but goes further by prioritizing the customer's goal rather than simple metrics of engagement behavior. For example, while Customer Engagement could be responsible for promoting content to increase the time users spend on an application, CSM would be in charge of limiting users' counterproductive screen time.

This comparison is helpful to clarify how the initial articulations of CSM evolve and innovate based, not only on traditional CRM but also on Customer Experience and Customer Engagement while serving customers' value in use.

Therefore, CSM is not only based on traditional customer management practices but also represents a departure from those practices, proactively prioritizing customer experience and involvement towards maximum value in use (Porter & Heppelmann, 2015; Hochstein et al., 2020 as cited in Hilton et al., 2020).

As a summary of the reading, the graphic analysis of the STOF model, proposed by Haaker et. al (2008, p. 115), describes the main concepts and design variables of the selected articles within the four business model domains, i.e. service, technology, organization, and finance.



Graphic 1: STOF Model Characterization according to the articles selected by the author

3.3 Some Customer Management Tools

According to Riserbato (2020, p.13):

> "At the heart of any business organization is one primary goal: to solve client pains and generate revenue doing it. clients at the center of every business function, it is still so easy to fall into the trap of solving for our own processes instead of solving for the customer. This is doubly true in organizations that haven't solidified their client management process."

With that in mind, it is essential to have customer management tools, to help the companies organize intentional actions necessary to maintain a positive relationship with their client base, using each interaction to guide them to expected outcomes. Client management can include customer lifecycle planning, setting expectations, establishing trust, setting boundaries, and measuring happiness.

The next four topics describe some of the tools used by Customer Success professionals according to Enotas (2019):

3.3.1 HubSpot

Hubspot is an American company that presents a CRM platform that is an important reference in Inbound Marketing, but also offers a very complete and free CRM software. It was created in 2014 by the MIT graduate students Brian Halligan and Dharames to prevent unwanted marketing interactions. For instance, when a customer is in the process of buying something but does not want to be interrupted by marketers or harassed by salespeople eager to help. From its main features, HubSpot is successful because:

- It allows the installation of a plug-in in Gmail or Hotmail to keep track of email information in real-time;
- It has a panel where it is possible to drag the leads according to the stage in the sales funnel;
- It classifies the business in profit and loss, access to scheduled appointments and previously sent contracts;
- It sets presentations of the performance of each action to established goals;
- It allows total control of the relationship with customers via email, social media, or any other contact;

- It organizes interactions with users in a timeline, and if synchronized with Hubspot Marketing, finds out what information the lead consumed to reach the company.

3.3.2 Pipedrive

Pipedrive is an American Sales Management tool that helps small sales teams to make their processes more efficient. The software aims to meet salespeople's needs in the first place, assisting in visualizing their sales processes (scheduling, completion, and monitoring of activities). Founded by Timo Rein and Urmas Purde, it has the following characteristics:

- Action planning so that no business falls by the wayside;
- Visualization of the stages in a sales funnel, allowing to understand where all opportunities are and move them according to the moment of the user;
- Total monitoring of interactions with customers, from the conversations, held to the people involved in them;
- Reminder to perform the subsequent actions, such as follow-up by email or phone call;
- Simple, intuitive, and customizable layout.

3.3.3 ActiveCampaign

ActiveCampaign is an American company that has been gaining space in recent times. Created to provide growing companies with the tools they need to compete with even bigger companies, its personalized approach prioritizes automation for connecting the journey between channels, helps teams save time, connect with customers and grow. Founded in 2013, the tool has the following characteristics:

- It focuses mainly on the automation of communications;
- It provides support via chat, making it easier to solve a problem.
- It has a CRM Module charged as an additional.
- It allows to see where the contact is or was at the moment the email was received, as well as the anti-spam email, which shows in real-time the number of messages that became spam in the contact's inbox.

3.3.4 Trello

Trello is another American company that provides an online tool for managing projects and personal tasks. The project started in 2010, and after a private beta phase of the product, Trello was launched at TechCrunch Disrupt in September 2011, in the session of applications for the Internet and iPhone. Its main features are:

- It has a customizable panel where it is possible to drag the leads according to the stage in the sales funnel;
- Collaborative work system;
- Assignment of tasks to each member of the work team;
- Sending notifications (e-mail) of alerts and reminders.

Despite being used by the Customer Success department, the tools presented above were created and are offered as tools for CRM and/or Sales Teams. Still, there is no specialized tool directed to Customer Success in the market. The ones employed are generally adapted from other fields to the needs of a Customer Success team.

From the State-of-the-Art presented, it was possible to satisfactorily define the concept of Customer Success, despite the few authors and the low number of academic articles on the subject. To complement the literary production on the subject and validate the concepts defined in the State-of-the-Art section, this research explores primary sources through the contact with field accounts and practical views on the concept.

Regarding critical factors, this research will initially explore four main points defined by the author and Coverflex during interviews with experts in Customer Success: pain points, best practices, communication channels, and metrics. Thus, the following section will present the methodology used to validate Customer Success and define critical factors for its implementation in a Startup. The research efforts to answer: "What is management for customer success?" and "What are the critical factors that characterize this emerging area of customer management?"

4. Methodology

This study started with using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach proposed by Sivarajah et al. (2017). This approach is divided into several sections: defining the research question already explained in the introduction, determining the research sources, performing the discovery process using keywords, extracting data, and analyzing the findings to answer the research question.

After defining the research question, it established the sources (digital libraries and databases) that were necessary for creating the SLR. In this case, the selected source was Scopus, a database of abstracts and citations of articles for academic newspapers/magazines, which covers around 19,500 titles from more than 5,000 international publishers, including coverage of 16,500 peer-reviewed journals reviewed in the scientific, technical, medical and social sciences fields.[2]

From an in-depth bibliographical investigation, the research was refined and delineated by its main objectives: to define the concept of Customer Success and, mainly, to define critical factors for implementing a Customer Success team. As noted before, this research deals with a recent term that might explain the shortage of relevant literature in the concept's definition. Few authors have defined the term, and most of the research related to Customer Success leads to the definition of concepts related to Customer Relation Management. In addition, no study defines Success Factors (or critical factors) that could help implement the Customer Success Concept at Coverflex.

To better understand the positive and negative implications of implementing the Customer Success concept and provide support bases for creating a Customer Success Team at Coverflex, the author conducted a series of semi-structured interviews based on a questionnaire with ten experts in the field. This research model consists of developing concepts that help us understand social phenomena in natural (and non-experimental) environments, emphasizing users' meanings, experiences, and views (Pope & Mays, 1995).

[2] After that, three data gathering were made on Scopus based on the keywords (KEY (customer AND success) AND KEY (user AND management)) another with (KEY (customer AND success) AND KEY (user AND operations)); and the last one with (KEY (customer AND success) AND KEY (user AND experience)). These researches resulted in more than 500 papers, and some filters were applied so that the main articles were selected.

4.1 Qualitative Data Research

Qualitative Data Research is generally not as easily measurable as quantitative and can be obtained through observation, open survey, or interview questions. It serves better to answer questions such as "Why? How? How?" Therefore, it is an excellent way of gaining insight into your target audience's thoughts and behavior—an audience that one might have identified through quantitative research in the first place but failed to analyze in more detail initially.

One of the most common types of data collection in qualitative research is individual (or face-to-face). Here, the interviewer collects data directly from the interviewee. As a very personal approach, this data collection technique is ideal when one needs to collect highly customized data.

For the research in question, a semi-structured survey was applied: a more spontaneous method where the interviewer asks only a few pre-determined questions and later engages in an intuitive conversation. One of the advantages of this method, and the reason for choosing it, is that it allows exploring predefined concepts and essential points while adapting new questions along the way. During a conversation, it was possible to uncover new opportunities from the answers of each interviewee, embracing new points of view and unexpected deviations.

For that reason, the research's questions can be divided into two broad types: structured and unstructured. From the instrument's design point of view, structured questions present more significant difficulties; from the content perspective, it may be more challenging to write good unstructured questions.

4.1.1 Data Collection

The chosen technique to collect qualitative data was a Semi-Structured Interview with specialists in Customer Success (Manager or Head of Customer Success). The decision was made because of the need to gather in-depth information on the topic from people who had direct contact with the concept and who would be able to define essential factors for its implementation. For this, surveys were made with the respective positions on Linkedin, from different companies - but always Startups - that operate in various countries in Eastern, Western, South America, and North America. All interviews were recorded without objection from the participants.

The semi-structured interview offers a broader range than other formats from its qualitative nature. While different modes of research aim to capture accurate data of a codable nature to explain behavior within pre-established categories, the chosen method helps to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that could limit the research field (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

Together with the company, based on some results extracted in the literature review phase, and with a quick data analysis stage, five main points were defined to guide the conversations: definition of the concept, pain points, best practices, communication channels, and metrics. The interviews were supported by field notes and audio recordings, and counted with the participation of ten experts in the field.

4.1.2 Sample Selection

The target population of the interviews was specialists in Customer Success. Thus, the objective was to find people who had relevant management positions such as Head of Customer Success or Customer Success Manager; who had been working in one of these positions for more than a year; and working from different countries and companies with various business models.

The main goal was to curate a particularly efficient selection of responders that could account for the Customer Success larger practice, virtually exhausting possible approaches, concepts, or insights. The most interesting experience from carrying out interviews was to perceive the phenomena of Customer Success being diluted in the same terms and expressions. In other words, achieving "information saturation", or "data saturation."

> "Generally speaking, saturation is used in qualitative research as a criterion to stop data collection and/or analysis. Its origins lie in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), but in one way or another it now imposes acceptance on a range of approaches to qualitative research. In fact, saturation is often proposed as an essential methodological element in this work. Fusch and Ness (2015: p. 1408) categorically state that "failure to reach saturation has an impact on the quality of research conducted"; 2 Morse (2015: p. 587) notes that saturation is "the most frequently praised guarantee of qualitative rigor offered by the authors'; and Guest et al. (2006: p. 60) refer to it as having become " the gold standard by which intentional sample sizes are determined in health science research." Several authors refer to saturation as a "rule" (Denny 2009; Sparkes et al. 2011) or an 'announcement' (Morse 1995) of qualitative research, and consists of a series of generic quality criteria for qualitative methods (Leininger 1994; Morse et al. 2002)." (Saunders et al., 2018, p.09)

To find the interviewees, in addition to looking for references in the contact network, a search was also made on Linkedin to define interesting profiles for the sample. After 34 interesting profiles were defined for the interview, the profiles were contacted. Among them, 35% (or 12) were not adhering to the profile sought, 24% (or 8) were not interested or were not comfortable giving an interview, 12% (or 4) did not respond to messages, and 29% (or 10), which was the number initially defined, agreed to participate in the interview.

Thus, the sample presented: 60% of the interviewees with the position of Head of Customer Success, and another 40% with the position of Customer Success Manager; 40% men and 60% women; and, finally, the interviewees work or have worked in the current position in countries in South America, North America and mainly Europe. The Table 01 below presents some more characteristics of the interviewed sample:

Table 1 - Sample Characterization

Cod.	Age Range	Country	Gender	Job Title	Years working with CS	Company Segment
I01	20-30	PT	F	Head of CS	2	Health
I02	30-40	PT	F	Head of CS	6	Software
I03	20-30	ES	F	CSM	2	Software
I04	30-40	PT	F	Head of CS	3	Internet
I05	30-40	PT	F	CSM	3	Food & Beverages
I06	30-40	BR	M	Head of CS	1	Staffing & Recruiting
I07	40-50	EE	M	Head of CS	6	Media Production
I08	30-40	BR	F	CSM	2	Outsourcing
I09	30-40	BR	M	CSM	3	Software
I10	40-05	US	M	Head of CS	6	Software

One of the main characteristics of the sample is the wide variety of the segment in which the interviewees' companies operate: 40% are characterized as software companies, and the other 60% are distributed in: Health, Internet, Food & Beverage, Staffing & Recruiting, Media Production and Outsourcing. In addition, it is possible to verify that 20% are in the age group of 20 to 30 years old, and have 2 years of experience in Customer Success, 60% are in the range between 30 and 40 years old, and in this case, the position is experience working with CS ranges more, from 1 to 6 years; and finally, the age group from 40 to 50 years, which characterizes 20% of the sample and both with 6 years of experience in Customer Success.

An interesting phenomenon that happened in 20% of the interviews was the effect known as "snowball", that is, an interviewee recommending me and making a referral to interview another Customer Success expert, usually from their own network.

The sample frame is the subset of the population that we want to study. In this case, the interviews are necessarily professionals who act as Head of Customer Success or Customer Success Manager, with at least one year working in this function.

For the sampling technique, the non-statistical technique was used. A non-statistical technique is often used in statistical work due to simplicity or the impossibility of obtaining probabilistic samples, as would be desirable. As in many cases, the effects of using non-probabilistic sampling can be considered equivalent to those of probabilistic sampling.

The data collection was done through interviews, given through the video conference platform Zoom, with each one of the interviewees individually. The interviews lasted an average of 40 minutes, with the shortest time 16 minutes, and the longest time almost 1h30 minutes of interview. To assist in the interview, a script guide was defined (see Appendix 1) so that all the essential topics could be reviewed. However, the script was not necessarily restrictedly, as some points were collected organically.

The results of the interviews are structured below, where seven principal issues emerged and converged between the interviewees: definition of the concept; organizational structure, communication channels, way of working, metrics, pain points, and best practices.

4.1.3 Data Analysis

The analytical process started right after the interview phases, which took three weeks to complete. Despite this, as mentioned earlier, some data analyses were made in the literature review so that it was possible to establish safe goals in the qualitative interview.

According to Pope et al. (2000), this analytical process allows the researcher to look for deviant or harmful cases; that is, examples of conversations or events that go against emerging propositions or hypotheses and can be used to refine them. This continuous analysis is almost inevitable in qualitative research since the researcher is "in the field" collecting the data, making it very difficult not to start thinking about what is being heard and seen.

The collected data were subjected to a careful investigation leading to the development of standards, which consisted mainly of explaining, understanding, and interpreting reality, people, tasks, attitudes, and current situations. The results of this analysis are presented in the following section.

5. Results

The theoretical framework and literature review provides the information necessary for a researcher to plan the data collection process in the qualitative researcher. He or she can decide how open the research will be and what kind of participants will be included. For this reason, researchers often reflect on how open the starting point will be and what kind of literature review is needed. None of the questions have an explicit answer." (Kyngäs et al., 2020)

To develop a question that synthesizes the research problem and addresses the questions, it is necessary to analyze the problems separately. In this section, different points are analyzed to build quantitative research without losing sight of the central objective of the research, which is to understand how to build a Customer Success team.

5.1 Definition of the CS concept

Since there is a lack of academic articles that define Customer Success, one of the primary points addressed in the interview was the point of view of those who work with the theme. "What does Customer Success mean in your opinion?" or "How would you define the concept?" was one of the questions made. Moreover, although the questions are pretty open, the results converged to some unanimous concepts about the studied topic.

Regarding the definition of the concept, 100% of the interviewees converged to the fact that, from the customer's point of view, the position of Customer Success is directly linked to Customer Engagement, that is, in the creation of value for the customer (value, in fact, was the most cited word when defining the concept), making the customer see the added value and use the product in a maximized way (use and profit). When he or she is buying something from the company, the customer wants an outcome, and that outcome is Customer Success.

Often mentioned interviews refer to the critical point, concerning the customer's point of view, which is the relationship created between the Customer Success Manager and the Customer. In this sense, when defining Customer Success, 50% of the interviewees indicated that the relationship is an essential pillar within Customer Success; some even made the analogy to a "friend within the company."

From the company's point of view: for 90% of respondents, Customer Success is related to Growth - increased revenue, usually through upsell - where CS manager invites the customer to buy items, upgrades or other add-ons to generate more revenue; and for 60%, Customer Success is related to

Customer Retention, the ability of a company or product to retain its customers for a specified period.

In addition, much has been said about the positioning (organizational structure) of a Customer Success department within a company. Due to the frequent appearance of this topic in the conversations, we will discuss it specifically and in-depth in the following section.

5.2 Organizational Structure

The Organizational Structure happened to be one of the main points of divergences among the interviewees. However, this divergence only happens when they define in which structure the Customer Success team is positioned within the company they work for; concerning the place where the interviewees believe that customer success should be positioned, it was possible to perceive almost a unanimity.

In the company where 50% of the interviewed work, the Customer Success team is positioned within Operations; that is, the team reports to the COO. For these companies, communication with customers must be positioned close to the support team, where it is possible to collect much of the feedback from customers and product improvements. For 30% of the interviewees, the Customer Success team is positioned with the Sales team. This structure can create a continuous flow from the presentation and contract of the product to the accompaniment of this customer during their journey in the company. For 10% of respondents, the CS team reports to the Head of Products; for 10%, "Success" is an independent team in the organization.

This lack of standardization may be one of the reasons why the unanimity of interviewees think that it makes sense for the Customer Success team to be an independent organization, that is, to be structured under a VP of Customer Success, maintaining conversations with all departments within an organization. The Customer Success team would work alongside several different departments such as Marketing, Support, Sales, Products.

5.3 Communication Channels

Communications Channels have been highly impacted by the current Covid-19 crisis, with the emergence of social distancing requirements. Since the interviews were conducted in the context of a Pandemic, the responses were affected by the interviewee's current working setup. Still, some of the experts reported having in-person meetings with customers once in a while.

When asked about this topic, before even starting to answer the questions, most respondents underscore how fundamental Communication is for Customer Success management. Therefore, establishing a successful communication channel - regardless if by email or chat - is essential at the beginning of CS implementation. It is crucial, though, to choose one specific channel instead of having scattered information "all over the place." In addition, most customers want to look for answers by themselves, speak to as few people as possible and have the documentation available to them at the written and visual levels - combining different mediums such as short tutorial guides, video guides, and webinars.

Regarding scale, we can think of a pyramid shape to better visualize the different strategies to various customers' sizes: At the top of the pyramid, for enterprise, communication will always be TaylorMade for customers to maintain a closer relationship. In the middle of the pyramid, the midmarket, it's ideal to establish a just-in-time communication plus one to many, such as webinars, email campaigns, community posts. Finally, at the bottom of the pyramid, the idea is to work on communication through automation for small businesses.

Therefore, the premise is always to establish the communication channels immediately, and evaluate communication levels for different groups of clients. Finally, 90% of respondents said they use email primarily for communication, 40% use the phone and email, and 20% use chat or Whatsapp. They also reported that, if necessary, it is reasonable to arrange a face-to-face meeting (when possible) or a video call. In-person contacts help to solve problems efficiently and are a powerful tool for straightening the relationship between the customer and the company.

5.4 Way of working

A critical point that needs to be clarified - since it is not yet explored in the literature - is the distribution of customers among managers in Customer Success. There are two fundamental strategies: a horizontal structure, in which each manager has their own portfolio of customers, and a vertical system, where all CS Managers are responsible for all customers with different levels of engagement.

When asked about what strategy should be applied, most of the experts agreed that it depends on the size of the company and the size of the customers. The chosen method should account for the number of markets the company grapples with and its volume. In general, the interviewees believe that it is essential for the managers to have the agency to adjust and personalize their work with each client.

In 90% of the interviewees' companies, the Customer Success Manager had their own client portfolio; that is, they worked as an Account Manager to guarantee to the clients that they are in charge of keeping up with the quality and efficient use of the product, providing the best possible experience. Only for 10% of respondents, the CS department was structured in a more vertical way, where all managers were responsible for ensuring the client's success.

The Way of Working follows a similar logic than Communication Channels, once their distribution depends primarily on the size of the customers. At an enterprise level, it is important to give a portfolio to the Customer Success manager. This makes it easier for the CS Manager to know his or her responsibilities and is also easier to set goals. To the other clients, it is crucial to create a structure that is neither too TaylorMade nor too much on a single one, such as webinars, education, sections, and everything else. This can be distributed in the eighty-fifty, that is, having 80% of customers escalating as much as possible through customer journey deals, always guaranteeing the best experience, creating a scalable and very automatic process without losing the human touch nor the personality; and then have the remaining 20% of customers in a closer, hand-hold relationship to avoid Churn which means that there is a considerable risk for the company and that is a risk that the company does not want to take.

5.5 Metrics

When dealing with metrics, although each of the interviewees brings a metric that is directly related to the universe in which they operate, one of the indicators, when it comes to Customer Success, was unanimous among the specialists: Churn. Another metric, almost unanimous among the interviewees, having been mentioned by 90% of them, was the Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR).

Churn, a metric mentioned by 100% of respondents, is one of the most critical metrics in Customer Success, and can be defined as the number of individuals or items leaving a collective group during a specific period. In addition to the number, it is essential to understand why the customers are leaving and how to avoid and treat causes and issues. One way to measure this movement is to calculate the Net Churn, to help guarantee that the company sells more as a team than loses. Ideally, the goal is to keep this number always positive: if the company has, for example, 10 thousand of dollars of Churn in the month and the company sells 15 thousand of dollars, that means that the difference of 5 thousand is a positive Net Churn.

The second most important metric, with 90% of respondents classifying it as an equally important metric, is the MRR, or Monthly Recurring Revenue, which can be defined as the metric used by companies that operate with a recurring subscription to calculate the forecast of monthly earnings. When done well, tracking this metric also helps measure MRR growth by measuring enrollment, renewal, and cancellation of subscriptions/plans.

The NPS, or Net Promoter Score, was cited by 50% of respondents as an important metric for a Customer Success team. It analyzes the feelings of customers about the product. It is a well-known methodology for being straightforward, effective, and related to revenue growth and used to measure customer loyalty through "first hand" feedback.

In addition, 20% of respondents mentioned Time to Value, represented by the number of days it takes for a customer to see and feel the value in the product. It is essential to understand what he or she expects with the purchase of that service, what he or she is hoping to get in the first X months and define an action plan together with the client and the milestones.

Finally, the Health Score, based on what it's defined, characterizes the healthy customer (each company must have its health score, depending on different milestones and different vital features.). For this metric, a good tip is to place the company's customers enrolled in Customer Success in 3 different buckets: poor health score, average health score, and good health score. From there, define what the company thinks their customers should do daily, to position them in each of these pools, and what they think they have to stop doing to go from a poor Health Score to a good Health Score, for example.

Another good tip is to distinguish the metrics and KPIs by different action plans: onboarding, adoption, revenue, and finally accounts at risk, and for each of them, there will be different metrics. For example:

- Onboarding: initially define what onboarding is and then measure the average number of days to do onboarding, the number of customers who are late to do onboarding, how much this represents in cash.
- Adoption: daily active users, monthly active users, number of sign-outs, mapping new users; in addition, core features not used, since several things are offered to the client, it is necessary to define the value of the product, that is, need to help the user to reach this outcome.
- Upsell: map the customers who have upgraded services in the last 30 days. When a customer leaves one plan for the other, they expect something more, the value renews. The CS Manager must be aware of this change in expectation.

- Renews: map the customers who will renew in the next 90 days, map the engagement, customer relationship, and approach.

  In addition, it is essential to monitor the Customer Success team:

- Manager: what level of effort is being put in, emails, talk time, level of engagement, individual's health score system, the portfolio they have, if it looks complete and solid in relation to the rest of the team.

5.6 Pain Points

One of the initial objectives of the interviews was to identify the Pain Points of a Customer Success team. Despite being a very open question that could lead to different interpretations, the responses presented some points of convergence that are worth discussing: the issue of low usage of the service/product, challenges with customer experience, and lack of resources.

One of the concerns presented by CS Specialists is the non-use of the service, and this can happen in two ways: through a block in the process chain, for example, with the miscommunication between the CS Manager and the Project Manager; or the loss of value along the chain, which happens more often, for example, when the main point of contact between customer and company is super engaged but the end-users are not engaged enough or do not see the value in the product.

Other frequently presented issues were Resources and guaranteeing the customer experience: how to go from a customer base of 100 to 1000 and ensure that the company maintains the same positive and personalized experience. Especially in the initial phase, there is an extensive follow-up, and the clients themselves demand it.

Lastly, two other facts mentioned a lot during the interviews, which can be classified as challenges for a Customer Success team are: how to better collect, engage with, organize and review data and how to deal with the myriad of tools and systems that are used across the business. In the last ten years, the number of different tools to run operations has increased considerably and this excess leads to disjunctive disparities throughout an organization.

5.7 Best Practices

Another important topic for discussion in the interviews was Best Practices and, since it is a very open question, it generated a number of different outcomes that do not necessarily fit into a standardized answer. From the contact with experts, it was possible to define main points of interest of Best Practices: metrics, company mindset, and synergy between teams.

Regarding metrics, it is crucial to have an extremely well-defined organization not only for Churn and MMR, but also for the company's Health Scores. The organization of metrics should guarantee that the results are being applied towards the relationship with the customer and their objectives and are useful in the formulation of action plans.

According to 60% of the interviewees, Customer Success must be a mindset within the company, instead of just a team. That is, the concepts of CS should guide the company's culture towards a customer-centricity. It's important to note that in the beginning, all Startups are Sales Lead and, with their growth and evolution, they turn gradually to Product. Being genuinely customer-centric and Customer Lead in all aspects of its activities and products is the next step in the evolution of a company.

Finally, ensuring the synergy of the Customer Success team with the entire company is extremely important. In some startups, such as Slack, the Customer Success team is 2 to 3 times bigger than the Sales team, and that's a very innovative and interesting approach. Obviously, according to different pricing models, strategies, and whether they are B2B or B2C, this question should vary. Another good practice mentioned, still related to synergy, was creating a successful Operations team to help the CS team make things happen: internal specialists, quality specialists, and data analyst training.

Some companies also stand out for the level of product education. That is, they anticipate any ideas or issues that may arise from the user and provide that information beforehand and the user rarely needs to contact the company. When a new issue occurs, the company is not only aware of that possibility but also well structured towards solution.

6. Discussion of Results

One of the main objects of the study, described at the beginning of this master dissertation, was to define the concept of Customer Success, as it is little explored in the literature, particularly in the academic field. The concept was well described, and it was possible to complement and reinforce the existing scholarship in the subject in a very satisfactory way.

In addition, the other main points that were established as the primary outcomes of the interview, namely Metrics, Communication Channels, Pain Points, and Best Practices, were also extensively explored and defined from the contact with Customer Success specialists.

One of the most explored points in this research was the definition of Metrics. According to Magretta and Stone (2002), after defining the company's objectives, its executives must be able to answer the following question: "Given our mission, how will our performance be defined?". The question suggests that Metrics and performance measurement are the critical elements for translating an organization's mission or strategy into reality. Metrics and strategies are closely and inevitably linked to each other. Strategy without metrics is useless; metrics without strategy make no sense.

Metrics fulfill the fundamental activities of measuring (evaluating how it is done), educating (since what it is measured is what is important; what is measured indicates how it is intended to be delivered value to the customers); and direction (potential problems are signaled by size gaps between the metrics and the standard).

Another important point within an organization is its internal and external communication capacity. Although the basic communication process is similar in many different contexts, a unique characteristic of organizations has a profound impact on the communication process – namely, its structure (Greenberg, 2011). Regarding the outcomes of the interviews, it was evident the importance of identifying a communication channel - regardless of what channel - with customers, and bearing in mind that more and more users are seeking to have information on their own. In addition, communication - and this depends on the size of the company - must be segmented according to the size - and importance - of the customer: for enterprise customers, a TaylorMade communication; in the midmarket, the ideal is to establish a just-in-time communication; and for small businesses, the idea is to work on communication through automation.

Best Practices and Pain Points emerged so that, in a practical way, mistakes made in the past could be mitigated, or so that successful cases could be implemented in the company. Furthermore, some benchmarks were raised and serve as good starting points for structuring a CS team.

In addition to the critical factors for implementing a Customer Success team, according to the interviews, when creating a CS team, the following points should be considered: Organizational Structure and Way of Working.

The Way of Working depends a lot on the size of the company and the size of the customers. But, if possible, it is more interesting when the Customer Success Manager has a defined customer base, and has the autonomy and the ownership to adjust things and develop some specific things for the client to personalize the work.

For the Organizational Structure, although each company organizes the Customer Success team "within" the product, sales, operations, technology or marketing team, ideally, Customer Success should be an independent organization within the company, that is, respond to a VP of Customer Success. It is also important that this independent team within the organization works in partnership with all departments of the company, and that the concept of Customer Success becomes intrinsic to the company's culture.

The graphic scheme below illustrates how an ideal organization of CS teams should look like according to the outcomes of the interviews:

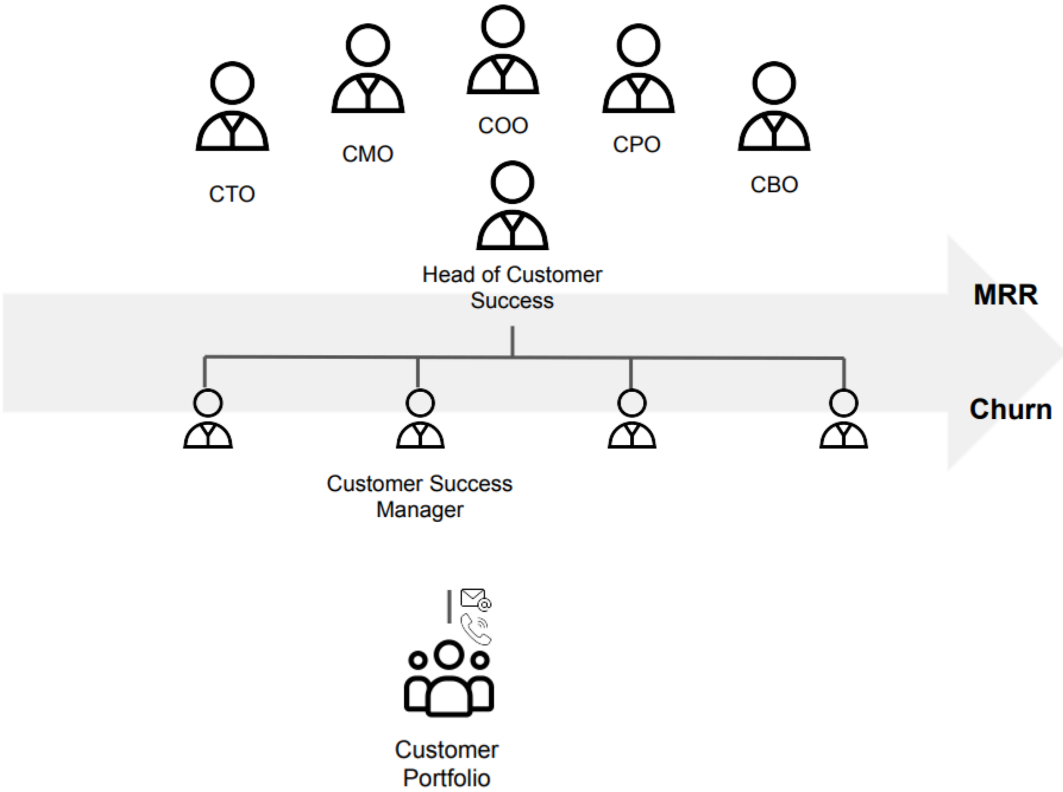


Figure 3: Organization Structure

CPO (Chief Product Officer): corporate title referring to an executive responsible for various product-related activities in an organization. It works directly with the Head of Customer Success, absorbing the demands that are passed on by the customer.

CTO (Chief Technology Officer): executive-level position in a company or other entity whose occupation is focused on scientific and technological issues within an organization. It is responsible for executing the demands that guarantee the client's success in the company and the maximization of results.

Chief Operations Officer (COO): senior executive tasked with overseeing the day-to-day administrative and operational functions of a business. It works together with CS Manager, but in a more reactive way, providing input on possible problems or even feedback given directly by customers to CS Manager.

CBO (Chief Business Officer): executive-level position responsible for operating the commercial strategy executive of the company. Usually characterized by the sales team within a company, it is he or she who establishes the initial communication with the customer, being responsible for him - generally - until the moment of onboarding, where the CS Manager assumes the relationship.

CMO (Chief Marketing Officer): corporate executive responsible for marketing activities in an organization. The established relationship helps in communicating with the customer.

For Coverflex, which is in the initial phase of building the Customer Success department, this scientific article will serve as the basis for structuring the team. In addition to the starting points to be explored, which were selected together with the mentor within the company, the other points collected during the interview will also be used. The company will also have access to the interviews carried out and other materials collected during the development of the article.

In a practical way, a mapping of the contact points with customers within the company has already been carried out, the team has already started to be structured, that is, professionals have already been defined to work as CSM, defined the customer portfolio of each one - according to suggested by respondents - and the essential metrics are already being raised. Initially, the department will work adjacent to the Operations team, responding to a Head of Customer Operations.

7. Conclusion

The present study intended to define critical factors for the creation of a Customer Success team within a Startup. It also proposed to make an analysis of the definition of the concept of Customer Success, since the concept is not explored in-depth within academic research.

Within the scope of the master's degree carried out, there was a very large synergy in relation to the work developed. Many tools that were presented during the classes were also used in the team structuring phase, from the problem characterization stage to project implementation. In addition, synergy also happened in relation to the company used as a case study, once it can be described as a Technological Innovation startup.

During the State-of-the-Art review, several topics were addressed and gaps in the literature were found, one of which related to the lack of academic studies for the definition and exploration of the concept of Customer Success, given the recent evidence of the concept in the market, especially of Startups.

Another gap identified in the literature concerns the lack of a theoretical basis capable of assisting in the construction of a SC team, with the definition of critical factors, namely: metrics, pain points, best practices and communication channels. Compared to other areas, such as CSM, a related term but with a very different definition, the amount of research on this topic is small. At an early stage of this research, it was established that a deep understanding of external and internal realities had to be established in order for the best methodology to be chosen, producing results of considerable corporate and academic influence.

In addition to the arguments initially defined for implementing a customer success team, during the interviews, it was clear that Organizational Structure and Way of Working must be considered as critical factors when creating an CS team.

Some facts must be considered, and can serve, for example, as the object of studies for future work, as they were discussed promptly by one (or two) interviewees, and possibly can also be considered critical factors.

The first one is the technology that must be suitable for the company's business strategy and culture. The commitment, support, and involvement of top management, which despite being mentioned in the interview, were little explored, and the role of top management level is essential for the successful implementation of CSM. Without their commitment and support (leadership and funding), the implementation will be hampered and will not be placed as a priority for the staff level.

End-to-end processes also greatly influence the success of the CSM implementation because they are one of the fundamental parts for the customer to get the most out of the product. The relationship/engagement with the customer must also be a factor treated with criticism since the customer plays a decisive role in the longevity of a company's business. The previous company-oriented ecosystem has now changed to a customer-facing ecosystem. Companies must listen to their customers if they want their businesses to prosper (Greenberg, 2010). In this sense, the process is highly related to technology and customers because companies interact with customers through a technology-supported business process.

Organizational culture is also essential; that is, the company's culture must be changed and adjusted to the agreed strategy, pivoting the culture towards a customer-oriented mindset. Since this issue is related to people, it is necessary to execute all the elements considered, such as business strategy (customer relationship/engagement), implementation strategy (including the scope of tasks, selection, and adaptation of technology), the culture of the company, organizational structure, training and change management. Last but not least, the "People factor", the core of the organizational structures, and the responsible for the success of the projects. Implementation will fail if not done correctly by people Malthouse et al. (2013).

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Script Guide Interview

Excellent! So here we go:

1. Can you tell me a little about your company? What is the business model? Is it B2B? B2C?
2. From what I have seen so far, there is little academic research that actually defines what Customer Success is. Could you define for me what Customer Success is?
3. How do you differentiate a Support Area from a Success Area?
4. What tools do you use? Best Practices
5. What Channels do you use to communicate with customers?
6. How is this communication made? Is there an Account Manager with a client portfolio?
7. And how is the CS area structured in your company? In what structure is it positioned within your company?
8. What does CS include in your company? Growth / Expansion / Retention?
9. What are the Metrics and Indicators that you use within the CS area?
10. What are the biggest challenges within the CS area in your opinion? That is, what are your biggest Pain Points?