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The Anatomy of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Initiative.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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New Zealand.

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ABSTRACT

Much has been written in the field of Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Current literature has focused on various industries such as telecommunications, hospitality, banking, finance, insurance etc; nothing has been investigated within New Zealand's electricity lines companies and very little has been undertaken academically within New Zealand.

This thesis explores for the first time *The Anatomy of a CRM Initiative* within an electricity lines company; a phenomenon which until recently was inaccessible to scientific investigation. The researcher also breaks new ground by empirically measuring for the first time CRM processes and practices from a New Zealand organisational perspective.

CRM is based on three central assumptions that (1) customers want a relationship with suppliers of products or services, (2) CRM is a process or practice that all organisations to some degree either engage or should engage in, and that (3) good CRM increases the level of emotional bond between customer and supplier. As a result of undertaking this research, the researcher came to the conclusion that these assumptions may be fundamentally flawed.

In the context of the single case study organisation, the researcher found that few customers wanted an active relationship with their supplier and the extent of these relationships varied across segments; up until this research, previous authors had suggested this scenario existed based on anecdotal evidence alone. From a case study, lines company industry and wider New Zealand organisational perspective, not all organisations demonstrated processes and practices were in place to proactively engage with their customers.

Finally the research showed that the emotional bond between customers and the case study organisation is essentially the antithesis of traditional loyalty marketing which suggests that stronger emotional bonds are fostered based on good or excellent service. The researcher found evidence to suggest that, from a lines company perspective, emotional bonds are driven by poor quality rather than good quality.

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