IS AI THE FUTURE OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS?

Artificial intelligence is helping **Selco** to develop a cutting-edge approach to customer relationships.

Builders merchant Selco was faced with a major business challenge: how to better understand and engage with its customers when it came to purchasing behaviours, and how to improve customer retention in a highly competitive market. The company has 67 branches across the UK, meaning it holds data on hundreds of thousands of customers such a volume of business data, constituted a real gold mine for the company in terms of understanding customer behaviour. However, it would have required numerous people to carry out repetitive data processing and analysis in order to implement better processes, and such a manual approach would have been inefficient and expensive.

Selco conducted a thorough review of the market and chose to work with Sidetrade for an AI-driven technology solution to help the merchant achieve its goal. Significantly, this was the company's first-time introducing AI into the business.

Sidetrade's AI platform is powered by 'Aimie': machine learning and natural language processing algorithmic technology. Using Selco's significant data about each customer, such as products purchased, quantities, spend amount, payment method and number of purchases made, Aimie was quickly able to provide the marketing team with insights and predictions, which are now the basis for Selco's monthly customer campaign to address customer churn.

Selco's marketing director, Carine Jessamine, says her team use Aimie's predictions to prioritise customers at higher risk of churn, by engaging them with direct marketing offers, such as messages which reinforce value to the customer and incentives to buy.

Sidetrade was able to work with Selco around the secure transfer of customer data into a data pool developed by Sidetrade. This means Selco's customer purchasing behaviours are enriched with Sidetrade's data index of 313 million financial transaction records, giving Selco an AI tool with a sophisticated understanding of customer buying behaviour.

Jessamine says that it's important for tech firms to talk about innovation, but for business it's about addressing business challenges and opportunities and solving them to deliver the best service and experience for customers. She says that Sidetrade has listened to the business team, to understand their challenges, and respond effectively, without letting the technological dimension interfere.

With Sidetrade's AI-driven solution, advanced data processing and analysis has become a quick and invaluable tool for customer relations.

Selco is planning the next steps with Sidetrade's Upsell and Cross-Sell modules, which feature enhanced search functions and branch pages, while the ability to build project lists – previously done through an app – will now be hosted on the website.

Jessamine adds: "We have utilised Progressive Web Applications to ensure we have made the website as mobile friendly, quick and secure as possible and provide an outstanding user experience for tradespeople." **BMJ**