EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Client Firm

Netflix (http://www.netflix.com) is the world's largest subscription-service company that sends DVDs by mail and streams movies and TV episodes over the internet. Netflix offers a range of monthly subscriptions that vary by price and number of DVDs rented at a time. The target market for Netflix includes males and females between the ages of 17-60 and households with income levels of \$30,000 and up. Netflix also appeals to different racial/ethnic groups with an assortment of foreign and international films. In terms of psychographics, Netflix targets 3 basic groups: people who are too busy to go out and shop for movies, people who are frequent renters and movie buffs, and people who want to get the most value for their money.

Evaluations

Netflix has a basic, easy-to-use and highly identifiable web site with its protruding red color, but some of the navigation around the site can be a bit complex. When it comes to advertising and prospecting, Netflix has moved away from pop-up and banner ads, which it was notoriously known for, and has grown to rely on its affiliate program to establish a significant presence on the Web and reach potential customers.

In order to receive e-mails from Netflix, one must become a customer of the company's services, as Netflix does not allow just anybody to receive its e-mails. In regards to contacting the customer, Netflix delivers a sufficient amount of e-mails to its customers. While most of the e-mails contain simple alerts for the customer, a good portion of them contain discounts for friends and family of the customer, but no discounts or offers for the current customer himself.

Netflix has effective online customer service in providing several ways for customers to have their inquiries answered. In regards to service problems, the company responds very quickly to customers and looks to make sure they are better off than before their problems occurred.

Netflix is doing very well on social networking sites, especially compared to its competitors. It's effectively engaging its audience on both Facebook and Twitter by soliciting follower response on many updates. Netflix also has a very large audience on both sites, so its updates are able to reach more people. Surprisingly, there are many negative complaints about Netflix posted not only on its own blog, but also on other web sites and forums.

Recommendations

Based on Netflix's current web site and marketing activities, we have come up with several recommendations that would help improve Netflix's e-commerce business, including:

- Netflix should use our Marketing Action Plan (MAP), which is designed to send current customers a promotional e-mail that offers 2 months of the next highest subscription service (above the their current subscription) for a discounted price.
- Netflix should allow prospects to sign up for Netflix e-mails without having to become a subscriber/customer.
- Netflix should increase its cross-promotion with gaming consoles that can stream Netflix instantly (Microsoft's Xbox 360, Sony's Playstation 3, and Nintendo's Wii).

See p. 8 for the complete set of recommendations.

PROJECT REPORT ON NETFLIX

CLIENT FIRM:

Netflix (http://www.netflix.com) is the world's largest subscription-service company that sends DVDs by mail and streams movies and TV episodes over the internet. Netflix offers customers an ever-expanding collection of TV and movie titles. The pricing range of the subscriptions varies depending on the type of plan. There is a limited subscription plan for \$4.99 per month where customers can receive 1 DVD at a time, but can only receive a limit of 2 per month. Then there are the unlimited subscription plans which range from \$9.99 to \$55.99 per month, depending on the number of DVDs allowed out at time.

The target market for Netflix's service is one that is quite specific. In regards to demographics, Netflix targets both males and females between the ages of 17-60. Netflix's products are targeted towards the lower-middle class and up, specifically targeted to people (or households) with income levels of \$30,000 and up. In addition, Netflix offers movie and TV titles that appeal to many racial/ethnic groups with its array of foreign and international films. In regards to psychographics, Netflix appeals to people (mostly adults) who are too busy to go out and shop for desirable titles. Netflix also targets those who are frequent movie renters and movie buffs. One last group Netflix targets are those people who wish to experience the most value for their money, as they are given the capability of renting as many movies as they can in a month for a fixed subscription fee.

EVALUATIONS:

Web Site

As one arrives at Netflix's web site, it presents itself as a very basic web site. One thing that stands out is the color that is associated with Netflix: the background of the entire site is all red. On the homepage, there is a log-in section where current members can sign in. Also included in this section is a chance for prospective members to start a 1-month free trial. The main tabs that are featured on the Netflix homepage include the following:

- Start Your 1 Month Free Trial
- How It Works
- Browse Selection
- 1 Month Free Trial Info

When one clicks on the "How It Works" tab, it takes him or her to a page where it lists frequently-asked questions (FAQs). Some of these questions are very simple, such as "How does Netflix work?," "How much does it cost?" and "Can I watch on my iPad or iPhone?" Also included within the "How It Works" tab is a list of what devices work with Netflix. These devices include gaming consoles (Microsoft's Xbox 360, Sony's Playstation 3, and Nintendo's Wii), internet connected HD televisions, mobile devices, as well as your own computer.

Netflix makes it easy for customers to search for and find movie and TV titles with its "Browse Selection" page. On the "Browse Selection" page, one can search for an item by movie title, TV show, actor/actress, director, or genre. When searching, one can further narrow down the list of available titles by identifying if he or she will be watching the title instantly (through devices such as a computer or the gaming consoles listed before) or having the DVD sent through the mail.

For members who sign in, they are directed to a more personalized page. On this page, the company recommends movies/shows that the members would be interested in, based on their previous selections, rentals and reviews.

There are a few really good aspects of Netflix's web site. First, it is very basic and simple to use. Secondly, if members want to rent a movie instantly, they can and are able to watch it in a clear picture (the video is not choppy and sporadic). However, there are also some bad aspects of the web site. First, the "Contact Us" and "About Us" sections, along with most of the other company information, are at the bottom of the page, which visitors might miss if they don't scroll all the way down. Another aspect is that there seems to be too much text on the homepage. Visitors might be turned off by this and leave the web site before even beginning to read what the site has to say. Lastly, with instant streaming, Netflix only offers 20,000 movie and TV titles via instant streaming, in comparison to the 100,000 titles the company offers through DVDs.

Netflix's web site would pass the "smash test." If one were to remove the logos and other identifying information from the web site, users should be able to identify that it's Netflix's web site from any piece of the sight. The main aspect of the site that would aid in the firm passing the "smash test" is the red color that is present throughout the site. Thus, if one was at a web site looking to rent movies, he or she should know that they are at Netflix's web site because of the red color that is associated with Netflix (See Appendix A for Netflix's "smash test").

Prospecting Activities

Netflix has a similar presence in both the Google and Yahoo search engines, with Yahoo resulting in slightly better search results. The following table details the search results for Netflix using relevant keyword search terms on the 2 major search engines:

| Search Term | Google | Yahoo |
|---------------|---|--|
| Movies | 8 th page of results | 4 th page of results |
| DVDs | 1 st page (9 th item) | 1 st page (7 th item) – also listed on the side of |
| | | the page as a recommendation |
| Movie Rentals | 1 st page (2 nd item) | 1 st page (2 nd item) – also listed in related- |
| | | searches box on the side of the page |
| Online Movies | 1 st page (8 th item) | 2 nd page (9 th item) |

Netflix uses many forms of advertising. It uses commercial and radio spots, banner and popups, as well as the Netflix affiliate program. The affiliate program allows Netflix-approved sites to have the Netflix free-trial promotion on these sites. These sites then collect referral fees from Netflix once a person clicks on the Netflix promotion and is redirected to the Netflix web site.

Many of the sites that Netflix affiliates with and sponsors are movie-related. However, there are also many sites, such as blogs and video game sites that it advertises on, which are not movie-related. Netflix tries to reach its audience through as many avenues as possible, and so it does not limit its advertisements to movie-related sites.

Just a couple of years ago, Netflix was notorious for pop-ups and banner ads. Since then, it has slowly moved away from those forms of advertisement and has come to rely more on word-of-mouth and the affiliate program. The free-trial ads can be seen on directory web sites, movie rental sites, blogs, as well as video game sites. Through its affiliate program, Netflix can also

maintain its presence on the Internet without having to use a plethora of pop-ups and banners, which tend to be boring and static. By having other web sites place free-trial promotions on their sites, or simply by having in-text hyperlinks on these web sites, Netflix can attract new subscribers without the use of more expensive ads. Several of Netflix's display ads can be seen on the neighboring attachment "Netflix Display Ads."

One area that Netflix lacks in is cross-promotion. As mentioned before, Netflix's movies and TV shows can be streamed instantly from gaming devices such as Microsoft's Xbox 360, Sony's Playstation 3, and Nintendo's Wii. However, Netflix does not currently take advantage and cross-promote with these companies and their products. This would help to increase the awareness of the company throughout the market, which can lead to more customers in the short and long-term.

To encourage trial of its services, Netflix provides prospects with a free 1-month trial. After the 1 month, these prospects then have the choice of cancelling their subscriptions or continuing them by beginning to pay a monthly fee. Netflix offers this free trial in hopes of expanding its customer base and locking them in for the long-term.

Conversion Activities

Netflix does not provide e-mail alerts to anyone who is not already a subscriber to its web site. Thus, in order to receive e-mails, one must become a subscriber and a customer. To encourage this, Netflix provides a 1-month free trial for any new subscriber. Upon subscribing, one becomes a user of the company's service and begins to receive e-mails from the company.

Therefore, we were not able to have a team member (prospect) opt-in to receive e-mails from the company, as the company would not allow this. This is something the company will have to look to change.

Customer Contact Activities

For the past 3 months, the current customer (Michael Wessel) has received many e-mails and direct mail pieces from Netflix. Each e-mail and direct mail piece was sent for a specific reason.

Surprisingly, a majority of the e-mails and direct mail pieces were attempts to get the customer to encourage others to try Netflix. The company does so by alerting the customer of a 1-month free offer of its services to friends and family of the customer. As a result, Netflix tries to get the current customer to promote the company to others, pushing them try the company's services and in effect increasing the company's customer base.

On the other side, none of the e-mails or direct mail pieces received contained offers, discounts or promotions directed to the customer. Instead, most of the e-mails and direct mail pieces directed at the customer contained simple alerts as to what movies Netflix would be sending the customer next and when they would arrive, in addition to e-mails that notify the customer of new titles that he or she might be interested in. Also, e-mails were sent regarding Netflix's plans and respective pricing points. Lastly, e-mails were sent regarding any changes in Netflix's operations. This included price changes, increased technology capabilities, and more.

Netflix does not send prospects any e-mails, and thus, we cannot properly compare and contrast the e-mails that are sent to customers with those that are sent to prospects.

Over the 3-month span, from September 2nd to December 2nd, 6 e-mails and 3 direct mail pieces were received. They were received at approximately even intervals over the course of the 3 months. This number was about right. It equals an average of 2 e-mails and 1 direct mail piece per month, which isn't too light nor is it too intrusive. It's just enough to spark further awareness of Netflix and interest in the customer's mind, or even to remind them of Netflix's services.

Overall, Netflix delivers a sufficient amount of e-mails and direct mail pieces to the customer, but only a few of them even benefit or offer promotions to the customer. The rest of them are mainly targeted toward friends and family members of the customer. This is something the company will have to look to change. Offering promotions to current customers can get them to upgrade their subscription, which means higher revenues for Netflix.

Customer Service

On Netflix's web site, a link to customer service, a help page, or a return policy is not present. Instead, visitors have to do a bit of searching to find out where to go for customer service inquiries. All of the customer service areas are found under the "Contact Us" link on the company's web site. Areas that are listed under the "Contact Us" section in which customers can receive assistance with include the following:

- DVD or Shipping Problem
- Problem Watching Instantly
- Your Account & Help
- Questions About a Charge?
- Call Customer Service

Netflix provides a toll-free number for its customers (1-866-716-0414) to call in order to ask questions, report a service problem or inquire about any other aspect of Netflix's business. Knowing that callers can grow impatient and will want to be attended to fast, Netflix offers a solution. For faster service, the company provides a service code (373 476) that customers can use. In addition, the company displays the current hold time for callers. This helps customers choose when they want to make a call, depending on how long the wait is.

On the other hand, Netflix does not provide other communication alternatives in the form of an e-mail address or online form for contacting customer service. One of the big complaints about Netflix is regarding the fact that the company does not offer an e-mail address or an address for customers to write to. Instead, Netflix only offers the toll-free number mentioned above for contacting the company for help.

In regards to questions and inquiries, customers can receive answers in a variety of formats, including the following:

- Self-Serve Common Answers Netflix offers a section of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and their appropriate responses
- Delayed Answers Netflix has a presence on Twitter and Facebook where the company responds to questions and inquiries
- Live Answers Netflix has a company blog where customers can comment with questions and inquiries, sparking up dialogue with the company

Overall, Netflix has effective online customer service. The company provides several ways for customers to have their questions and inquiries answered from members of the company,

including a toll-free number, social networking services (Twitter and Facebook), and a company blog. Netflix also provides self-serve sections on its web site where customers can find information and solutions to questions themselves, including a section of FAQs, information on how to fix shipping problems, and more. Netflix responds quickly to the inquiries and problems that surface (within 24 hours for the most part) and looks to ensure the customers are better off than they were before the inquiries and problems arose.

Netflix does not offer a "true" return policy because of the nature of the company's products. Netflix is a subscription-service company that sends DVDs by mail and streams movies and TV episodes over the internet. Thus, movies and TV episodes are not "bought" but are instead "received" for a monthly fee. However, if a customer experiences a problem with a DVD (i.e. receives the wrong one or receives one that's damaged), the customer can return it. The customer can go to the web site and describe the nature of the problem. Then, the customer simply mails the DVD back to the company in a pre-paid envelope and receives a new DVD of their choice the next business day.

Social Networking Activities

Netflix has a very strong presence on both Facebook and Twitter, 2 of the most popular social networking web sites, but does not have a presence on Myspace, which is considered a deteriorating social networking platform for businesses. After looking closely at Netflix's Facebook updates and tweets, it's clear that the company is frequently interacting with its customers. The Facebook and Twitter pages are very similar in that when often updates are sent out, Netflix elicits responses from its followers. "What is your favorite holiday movie?" is an example of an update Netflix would send out. Another example of a typical Netflix tweet would be a "fill-in-the-blank" where Netflix asks followers to tweet what movie or movie character should be appropriately filled in. In addition to movie themed updates, Netflix is constantly answering questions that its followers send them. These questions are mostly customer service related. One area that Netflix does not hit upon is offering promotions through Facebook and Twitter. Many companies are doing this because it is a great way to increase a company's follower base (who can become customers). Thus, Netflix should capitalize on this concept.

In regards to the company's blog, Netflix allows anyone to post comments under every blog update, be it a current customer or a prospect. Netflix also offers "Facebook connect" and RSS feed services on its home page. "Facebook connect" allows users to post Netflix activities right on their Facebook profile page. For example, if a user rates a certain movie 5 stars, this rating would show up on his or her Facebook page. Netflix RSS feeds are separated into personalized and public feeds. Personalized feeds allow users to post their personal Netflix activities on other web sites, such as "Movies in my queue." Public feeds offer general movie and television information, such as "New movies to watch instantly." Since Netflix doesn't have any retail locations, it isn't present on any location-based social networking web sites.

According to Tweet Level (www.tweetlevel.edelman.com), Netflix is doing an excellent job on Twitter. The web site ranked Netflix according to 4 basic categories: influence, popularity, engagement, and trust. The highest score was influence at 73.1. Netflix received a high score in this category because it is constantly interacting with its followers. Netflix scored lower in popularity, engagement, and trust, but despite that still received pretty good scores. One of Netflix's direct competitors, Amazon, scored a lower influence score at 69.8. Although Amazon may be more "popular" as indicated by the slightly higher popularity score (69.8 to Netflix's 68.6), Netflix beat Amazon significantly in the engagement category. This is mainly due to the fact that Netflix is much better at having conversations with its followers instead of just

broadcasting thoughts. Another competitor of Netflix, Redbox, overall scored the lowest of the 3 by having lower scores in every category except for engagement, where Amazon has the lowest score. Where Redbox fails and Netflix succeeds is trust. More followers trust what Netflix has to say and are thus more willing to retweet them and do business with the company. See these results for Netflix and its competitors on the attachment "Netflix Tweet Level Results."

Another measure of social networking influence is Klout (www.klout.com), where influence is given a score from 1 to 100 and measured across both Facebook and Twitter. Once again, Netflix scored the highest overall of the 3 at 68, compared to Amazon's 61 and Redbox's 52. The overall Klout score is divided into 3 categories: true reach, amplification probability, and network influence. True reach is a measurement of the breadth of the follower base. Amplification probability measures how often tweets are expected to stimulate conversations among followers. Finally, network influence is the influence level of the audience. Netflix scored higher than Amazon and Redbox in each of the 3 categories. Once again, this is chiefly due to the fact that Netflix is much better at not only engaging its audience, but also at sending out content that is both relevant and interesting. See these results for Netflix and its competitors on the attachment "Netflix Klout Results."

Public Relations Activities

Just by glossing over the comments posted under the blog on Netflix's web site, it's surprising that most comments are negative. Some contain complaints about Netflix services while others are angry about what Netflix doesn't offer. This is strange because Netflix's Facebook updates contain a heavy number of "likes" and comments. According to Complaints Board (www.complaintsboard.com), Netflix also has numerous complaints that are of the same nature of the blog comments. However, the complaints on this web site are more about service problems than about what Netflix should be offering. Examples of service problems that users complain about would be "I keep getting scratched discs" or "Movie will not play." There are also numerous other web sites containing user complaints about Netflix just through a Google search. Again, many people are upset about the fact that Netflix doesn't have high quality movies on instant streaming, or that it takes weeks for movies to be made available to customers. In lieu of these complaints, Netflix does a good job responding to service problems through Facebook, Twitter, and even some web sites that complaints are posted on. Not surprisingly, another common complaint is the fact that Netflix recently raised the price of its standard monthly service charge by 1 dollar (from \$8.99 to \$9.99). Many people are not happy about paying the extra premium for the service.

Netflix does aggregate its press release articles in the media center section of its web site, dating all the way back to 1998. The newest article pertains to the fact that Netflix raised its popular subscription service price by 1 dollar, to \$9.99 per month. With this, however, is the announcement that Netflix will also offer a subscription plan strictly for streaming online and to TV for \$7.99 per month. Other recent articles talk about how Netflix is on the cutting edge of technology by offering instant streaming to game consoles such as Xbox360 and portable devices such as iPhones. Also, Netflix's quarterly financial results are discussed in other press release articles. In all, Netflix's press releases focus on the company's services and operations, in terms of how they are developing and expanding.

Privacy Policy

When searching for Netflix's privacy policy, it was somewhat difficult to find. At the bottom of the homepage, it is located in a very small font and doesn't stand out for visitors to find. Upon

finding it, the policy is quite lengthy, yet is easy to follow and understand. After reading and reviewing its privacy policy, Netflix would be classified as a having no real privacy policy at all.

Netflix's privacy policy states that, "we will not sell, rent or disclose your personal information to third parties without notifying you of our intent to share the personal information in advance and giving you an opportunity to prevent your personal information from being shared." However, further along in the policy Netflix states, "From time to time, we may partner with companies whose products we believe will interest our users. In conjunction with these partners, we may send promotional announcements and/or serve web-based advertisements to our customers on their behalf." In other words, Netflix will release your personal information (mainly e-mail address) to other companies for marketing purposes, in which they would offer products or services that Netflix feels the member will be interested in.

In order to not receive e-mails from companies partnered with Netflix, members would have to log into their accounts and manage their e-mail settings. In doing so, they would have to request that their name be excluded from these mailings from Netflix's marketing partners.

Since Netflix's privacy policy states that it does share its customer information with its affiliates, our group would not want to be receiving e-mails from all of these other companies. We would only like to receive e-mails from Netflix, the company whose service we are paying for and interested in. We are only interested in hearing from and communicating with Netflix and not, for example, some airline company inquiring us about frequent flyer miles.

SUMMARY:

Netflix has a basic, easy-to-use and highly identifiable web site with its protruding red color, but some of the navigation around the site can be a bit complex. When it comes to advertising and prospecting, Netflix has moved away from pop-up and banner ads, which it was notoriously known for, and has grown to rely on its affiliate program to establish a significant presence on the Web and reach potential customers.

In order to receive e-mails from Netflix, one must become a customer of the company's services, as the company does not allow just anybody to receive its e-mails. In regards to contacting the customer, Netflix delivers a sufficient amount of e-mails to its customers. While most of the e-mails contain simple alerts for the customer, a good portion of them contain discounts for friends and family of the customer, but no discounts or promotional offers for the current customer himself.

Netflix has effective online customer service in providing several ways for customers to have their inquiries answered. In regards to service problems, the company responds very quickly to customers and looks to make sure they are better off than before their problems occurred.

Netflix is doing very well on social networking sites, especially compared to its competitors. It's effectively engaging its audience on both Facebook and Twitter by soliciting follower response on many updates. Netflix also has a very large audience on both sites, so its updates are able to reach more people. Surprisingly, there are many negative complaints about Netflix posted not only on its own blog, but also on other web sites and forums.

Overall, Netflix has a comprehensive web site and has engaged in various web marketing activities that are clearly benefiting the company, but there is still a need for improvement in various areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Netflix should use our Marketing Action Plan (MAP), which is designed to send current customers (who subscribe to either of the 4 lowest unlimited subscription plans) a promotional e-mail that offers 1 month of the next highest subscription plan (e.g., from \$9.99/month for 1 DVD out at-a-time to \$14.99/month for 2 DVDs out at-a-time) at no extra charge.
- Netflix should reformat its web site, making the "Contact Us" and "About Us" sections, along with other important company information, available at the top of the page and not all the way at the bottom.
- Netflix should allow prospects to sign up for Netflix e-mails without having to become a subscriber/customer.
- Netflix should increase its cross-promotion with gaming consoles that can stream Netflix instantly (Microsoft's Xbox 360, Sony's Playstation 3, and Nintendo's Wii).
- Netflix should review the comments posted under its own blog and attend to customer complaints. In addition, Netflix should review negative posts on other web sites (such as www.complaintsboard.com), listen to what people are saying and attend to them individually.
- Netflix should continue to develop its strong presence on Twitter and Facebook and interact/engage with its followers.
- Netflix should offer promotions to its followers through Twitter and Facebook. For example, stating "Retweet this and automatically be entered to win a free Netflix subscription for a year."
- Netflix should offer customers an e-mail address and/or its physical address, in addition to the toll-free number the company provides.
- Netflix should upgrade its Privacy Policy so that it does not send a customer's email address/personal information out to its "marketing partners" (3rd party affiliates).

APPENDIX A

Smash Test: In the screen shot below, the logos and other identifying information for Netflix have been removed from the web site. The main aspect of the site that would aid in the firm passing the "smash test" is the red color that is present throughout the site. Thus, if one was at a web site looking to rent movies, he or she should know that they are at Netflix's web site because of the red color that is associated with Netflix.

