

Customer-Centricity as a Business Mission

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Customers

While it is a widely spread board-room buzzword, the reality is that it is not as widely applied. Customer-centricity is easier said than done.

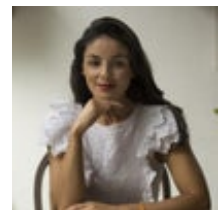


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Customer-centricity often gets mistaken for customer experience and to explain the difference in simple terms; to deliver exceptional customer experiences you first need to be a customer-centric business. In other words, how much your company is customer-centric or willing to become so, is the result of the delivery of your customer experience.



A growing number of companies, in Europe and beyond, are focussing on providing positive experiences for their customers across all stages of the customer journey with the goal of creating returning customers for the long term. This includes to map, analyse, fix, plan, organise, educate, measure, etc. But the main requirement is the need for a customer-centric approach across the business which must be transformed into a strategic initiative.

What constitutes a true customer-driven organisation?

A true customer-driven organisation is committed to go the extra mile to serve its customer and makes sure that they are pleased with the experience of being a customer of that brand. Over years of research and after interviewing a number of senior executives to be featured in my book, my opinion of customer-centricity is that it answers three main questions:

Are you a humanised company, ready to add value in the life of your customers?

This question reasons the “why” and it is the motivation by which a brand finds its mission and its reason for being alive, but also the motivation with which a brand becomes more human in the delivery of its customer experiences by using an empathic human touch and sustainable corporate responsibility. The “why” is also aligned with the customer expectations that your company will be able to fulfill in accordance with what is expected by your customer and builds brand-consumer trust.

Do you have the necessary technology in place to afford your customer the best possible experience?

This question reasons the “how” and therefore how customer-centric companies use the technology as part of delivering their customer experiences with the main goal of finding new ways to make customers’ lives easier and better. It is impossible to become a customer-centric organisation without knowing the customer and the best way to do so is via the data collected on them. Data analysis allows you to better predict future trends and outcomes and provide personalised customer experiences based on your customer expectations. But technology is also about automation - automation of what can be automated — in order to give your employees the time they need to create deeper customer relationships on a human level.

Is your board willing to advocate a holistic customer-centricity culture?

This question reasons the “who”. Successful customer-centricity is led by a strong company culture and a strong company culture is made by the people working inside the organisation. In a very interesting [article](#) written by Denise Lee Yohn for the Harvard Business Review, Denise shares that the biggest barrier to customer-centricity is the lack of a customer-centric organisational culture. Most companies remain product-centric or profit-driven, or customer-centricity remains a priority only for certain departments, such as marketing.

Leaders should lead the way to customer-centricity by advocating a cultural mindset that is shared across the company and by every employee. Companies today need engaged employees that create engaging experiences which create engaged customers.

These questions and answers are the cornerstones of a successful customer-centric approach and ensure that the main areas of your organisation are aligned to put customers and their needs first. It requires a 360 degree transformation of your company where the main goal is putting the customer at the centre of every decision-making process. Forrester research states that, to succeed, customer-centricity should be embedded in the way you do business and therefore customers must be made the focal point of your business strategy and operations.

While this is not a simple task that can be achieved overnight, it can be only pursued by organisations that commit the necessary time, effort and resources. Successful customer-centric companies are seeing the benefits of adopting a customer-centric strategy: stronger employee and customer loyalty, lower cost and higher revenues.

The bottom line.

Of course, customer-centricity is also about having a good product or service in place but by focussing too much on the product or on the profits it's risky and it's easy to lose the balance. Customer-centricity is the way the company decides to live which impacts everything from the employee experience to the customer experience. Truly customer-centric companies live and breathe their customers and find innovative and sustainable ways to make a difference in the world. Products and profits come and go but it is your customer that matters — it is your customer that stays.



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