



The Customer is the strategy

Customers have more choices than ever before in products and services. Information about your company is easily and in large quantities available, even nowadays out of reach of the control of your marketing department. Where on line and mobile recommendations, criticism and reviews are everywhere and plainly present, building rapport with the Customer was never more important and more complex. Today's Customer will not hesitate to walk away from an established company relationship that is not able to meet their needs. So focus on the primary driver for business is increasingly more important.

Using brand, advertising and Customer Experience to create an illusion of Customer centricity, while in reality trying to create a competitive advantage through management, organizational efficiency and standardization. Thinking to evolve to a more Customer centric organization, results in disillusionment and Customer churn. Where metrics like service satisfaction, disguise a cost focus for a Customer centric focus.

Why not focus on the most important asset of a company: the Customer? After all, the -paying-customer is the driving force for a sustainable lasting organization.

Customers are the source of real growth

"Customer experience is about much more than providing a pleasant feeling in a call center, It is a fundamental dimension of how a company competes." [Pine. 2015]

It is no longer sufficient to compete on price, ad-ons and care free service. Today Customers want more, and they want to be recognized as valuable with the organizations they deal with. On line and mobile recommendations, criticism and reviews are easily expressed or read, building rapport with the Customer was never more important for a profitable business. Gaining and preserving Customer loyalty never was as hard as it is today.

As markets mature faster and faster, following the increasing speed of innovation and ever increasing availability of technological possibilities, the real differentiator for long lasting growth for competing in current markets, is to obtain Customer loyalty. The mechanisms are well known; loyal Customers increase referral rates, increase cross selling, eases Customer acquisition and decreasing Customer churn. Only if you know exactly what Customers value in your product, service and Customer support you will be able to sustain a viable relationship.

In the past we have seen the model of stakeholder value; maximization the interests of all stakeholders as the highest objective. It is appealing to please all the stakeholders, customers, employees, shareholders, and the community, however in practice this approach leads to conflicting interests and a lack of the right organizational focus.

The Customer is the real driving force behind any sustainable company. Let me be clear: your most important Customers are not always those customers that generate the most revenue but those that can unlock the most value in your business on the long turn.

To anchor this Customer centric culture in company culture, businesses should develop non-ambiguous, meaningful principles to guide every decision. Reaching management focus, management style, employee focus up to investment decisions to guide the complete organization into the Customer centric culture.



About the author

Michiel van Omme, always challenging Customer service delivery, performance quality and connecting brand to Customer service execution. Active in Customer service for over 12 years in different roles.

Co-founder of Customer Touch in 2015 as next step in a life long journey to aid Customer service mature.

See it their way

From the Customer's perspective only 8% of the companies are Customer centric. While these organizations rate themselves up to 80% in delivering excellent Customer experiences. [Bain & Company 2005] Even in today's world, it is like the Customers and management live in a complete other universe. Especially remarkable knowing, management and employees are Customers themselves and should experience Customer focus of the different organizations in every day life themselves. Executives don't decide how Customer-centric their companies are; Customers do. Providing good Customer experiences is a win-win for both Customers and companies.

Almost all organizations perform some sort of satisfaction or NPS survey. However useful for guidance of day to day operational service execution, they provide zero insight into your Customers and what they appreciate in your organization or your product. Simplifying an apparent Customer centric operation towards a touch-point evaluation of the last service interaction. These metrics provide ample insight in the drivers for doing business with your organization. Moreover in practice these metrics dismiss non-customer interacting departments for the Customer's experience.

Although most methods provide insight in touch-point performance, the perspective they provide is still from inside out: they never do challenge your organization from the Customers perspective as it is interaction based information. In every day use and in case of malfunctioning with on line -non company- resources, most of the Customer interactions are simply not visible to the organization. More over the remaining direct interactions are company designed touch-point resulting from a company of designed process. Focus on the Customers perspective, originating from the Customer job, including the hidden behavioral drivers is the only way to provide a Customer centric driving force throughout your organization.

Or isn't it?

There are a lot of ways to obtain these necessary insights, but be aware, only the combination of different data sources and especially designed Customer conversation methods will be the start for obtaining a more or less complete right perspective. It is a resource exhausting exercise but for improving, is it not necessary to have this complete and exhausting overview of the Customer's landscape.

Customer focus illusion or reality?

It would be awesome if all of your Customers told you when they had success using your product or service. More often than not, they will not tell you when they are able to do the job they hired your product for. Your Customer expects your product or service to work, no more than one of the basic functionalities asked. A working product or service is a minimal expectation of your Customer. Why would he or she tell you, you did the job you are selling?

Your Customer strategy needs to be working actively to understand the conditions that are necessary for success of the job the Customer is trying to fulfill.

And as time progress, how many organizations keep up with the job the Customer is trying to fulfill? It is were competition arises: competitors invent new services, new service delivery methods, supplementary service inventions or with re-evaluating the Customer job, a redesign of the core service. Or even increased government regulations. All resulting in attention of your Customer base.

Service interactions give valuable insights in those situations your product or service does not deliver. We think can be a primary first source for improvement and Customer focus; eliminating service failures, optimizing product or service use. Although organizations need more than the service touch-point satisfaction to improve. This is the easy part of the story, if done right.

Customer insight happens daily. Every time the Customer touches the brand it is an opportunity to learn. Design interactions and actions in a way that generates listening and learning from every contact with the Customer. And then organize around sharing, discussing, learning and acting on this input. [Helge Tennø 2015]

First of all, all departments should be connected to service failures. Every department has to be accountable for their own service delivery failures. Front line feedback must become a source for the organization, assessing need for improvement and proposing Customer and front line solutions.

Second, be aware, traditionally, employees are trained to think in terms of products, focus on Customer value has to be taught and contentiously reinforced by management.

Third, acknowledgment of employee feedback for Customer centric improvement certainly is not obvious to most managers and employees. Focus on feedback processes and feedback management is eminent. Keep managers focused on retrieving feedback and keep the number of feedback systems to a bare minimum.

Make the brand promise also the service promise. Your brand is on trail when your product or service does not deliver. Your Customers expect consistent brand values even when your product is failing, so repair -service- processes should be in line with your brand promise. Your Customer service – employees, processes and department- should be saturated with your brand values. Strengthen your brand experience, even in less perfect times makes an even beter lasting connection.

A translation of Customer centric strategy into quality service execution and delivery perfection for every member of the organization is necessary. The best organizations develop the capabilities to do it again and again for every single Customer as businesses are simply made of conversations of Customers with the organization.



Need inspiration?

Tired of the lacking commitment in improving service delivery, the slow development of fact based Customer service solutions and the continuing boundary struggle of marketing and Customer service, Customer Touch was founded in 2015 by Erwin Koenis, Bas Luppés en Michiel van Omme in an attempt to enlighten the Customer service landscape. We contribute to make the world of service delivery a better place by evoking the talent and passion omnipresent in every corporation.

Customer Touch challenges your company's service delivery execution, resulting in an increased performance your Customer and company. Using our OCC4U methodology in your existing Customer contact operation, together we create fact based actionable insights for service-improving business-cases, and new service delivery activities. Improvement aligned with the soul of the organization. In our "Custainer-LAB", a controlled environment, we can experiment with service delivery, channel strategies and for strengthening your brand foundations; optimization value and using the proof and lessons learned in the Custainer trials.

Combined with more than 40 years of experience in Customer service and marketing, the consultants of Customer Touch use an evolution (/development) oriented approach for improving your operation. Using our unique observe-sense-evolve (OSE) method, we help companies validate and develop tailor fit solutions to the modern day challenges of Customer service and marketing.

Customer Touch is known for

- Custainer concept
- Brand to service optimization
- Talent management by "circle of talent"

Interested in the way "we" or one of "our concepts" can amplify your company's performance, lets challenge each other at a lunch or coffee date. Feel free to contact us, without any obligation.

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