



How to Create a Customer-Focused Company

Although personal recognition is inexpensive and easy to give, surveys show fewer than 40% of managers use this top motivator effectively.

By Mac McIntire

Several years ago I had the opportunity to sit around a table in a hotel room discussing customer service with several of the leading service gurus in the country. It was an amazing experience.

With me in the room were John Humphrey, chairman and CEO of The Forum Corporation; Don Munson, executive vice president of Lennox Industries; Craig Johnson, president of Frito Lay; Bob Oatley, executive vice president of American Airlines; and P.J. Boatwright, editor of Fortune Magazine.

Our five-hour exchange was free-flowing and intense. The discussion revolved around a premise espoused by Peter Drucker, who declared, *“There is only one valid definition of a business purpose — to create a customer.”*

We agreed that those companies that truly are customer focused are those who align their organization and employees in a manner that leads to a *predictable* positive experience for their customers. Customer focused companies ensure their main objective is to provide their customers with experiences over time that lead customers to view the company as the supplier of choice. Successful companies are those who build customer loyal by consistently delivering on their promise in order to create customer confidence and trust in the company’s products and services.

During our discussion we outlined three essential organizational ingredients that should be at the heart of every customer service effort:

Build Relationships Between Your Company and Your Customers

- Avoid the downward spiral that follows complacency with your current success.
- Work at retaining existing customers and developing new ones.
- Find numerous ways to “connect” with your customers to receive their feedback.
- Pay attention to the “little things” in your service quality.
- Focus on “reliability” versus “tangibles” (see my article called *Five Things Customers Want*)

Manage Your Employees Well

- Place a high value on your employees. Recognize them as the best source for new ideas.
- Set customer-focused standards of performance. Personalize your service.
- Select and train your people well.
- Ask for employee feedback. Listen and respond to what they say.

Run Your Company Effectively

- Gear everything toward customer expectations.

- Align the entire company to serve your customers effectively.
- Make sure all parts of your organization act in harmony and with consistency of purpose in serving your customers.
- Walk the talk. Model the way.

Over the years 20 years *Innovative Management Group* has created effective roadmaps, tools, methods and models to help businesses become more customer-focused. We show companies how to create an organizational culture that centers on the four inter-related goals of being customer-focused, market-driven, business-oriented and team-centered. Those companies who unify their workforce behind these four goals create greater customer loyalty and superior brand equity. \$

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