

WHERE CUSTOMERS AND CULTURE COLLIDE

The success or failure
of customer experience
comes down to
organizational culture.

By Felicity McRobb

If your organization consistently struggles with customer experience and satisfaction, it is probably as much of an indictment of your organizational culture as your employees, products or services.

Simply put, culture is whatever is reinforced and rewarded within the organization. It creates the context that shapes the perceptions, thinking and actions of employees. It therefore influences everything, including customer experience. The way employees relate to customers—how they act with them, how they talk about them in strategy meetings—emanates from organizational culture.

Think of your culture as an ongoing network of conversations. In customer-centric organizations, the customer is the key driver of every conversation. To get insight into how organized around the customer your company truly is, listen to which conversations employees are most engaged in.

As you put your ear to the ground, do not confuse being customer-centric with customer-focused. It is easy to think they are one and the same, but there is a major perspective shift between the two.

Companies that are customer-focused do talk a lot about their customers, but their conversations tend to be based on demographics and statistics. Their point of view stems from the outside looking in, and conversations include statements like, “We have this customer. We have that customer. This is what we are doing for this customer.” They talk about loyalty programs, the number of product implementations, online traffic and footfall.

Customer-centric organizations, on the other hand, have a profound understanding of the customer beyond demographics or statistics. They understand the world through the eyes of the customer. They talk about how the customer thinks, what they do, their daily schedules, how they use social media, their wants, their challenges.

Customer-focused organizations tend to be more concerned with the sell or maximized return, while customer-centric organizations are more concerned with fulfilling a need and delivering value today—and in the future.

The latter perspective makes all the difference. Customer-centric wins every time. It leads to deeper, long-lasting relationships that are ultimately more profitable for the organization.

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