



Strategy

fusing creativity and intelligence

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## Customers

### The Emerging Customer

The rules are changing. The bar of excellence is constantly being raised and the driving force behind it all is the customer. How well do you know your customers? Do you know what your customers want and expect from you? Do you have a customer-focus strategy in place? Are you willing to provide complete end-to-end quality customer service (QCS)? Does your organization have the attitude that customers are a necessary evil to your business? Is your organization's QCS solely based on employees answering the telephone with a pleasant voice? Easy access to information has made customers more sophisticated and knowledgeable. It's a new day and the customer is leading the way.

### What do you think they want?

What do customers really want? The fundamental desires are rooted in 5 key areas: access, experience, price, product and service. These areas are integrated to ultimately offer the best quality at the lowest price as soon as possible. Some strategists state that it is unfeasible for a business to try to be the best in every area and instead should only focus on being the best in one area. While focusing on being the best in one area, a business should consistently make incremental improvements in the other four areas. Being the best in one area and terribly lacking in others will not provide the sustainability needed in a competitive market if the

### What do they really want?

The more sophisticated and loyal customers seek something a little more than access, experience, price, product and service. They are seeking **value!** This is not only value in the product but, but the "value of the experience". It is focusing on the *context* (the delivery) of the transaction as well as the *content*, the actual product or service. It is the total experience, end-to-end, that a customer has with your organization. That experience encompasses the ease of locating quality and consistent information, ease of completing a transaction, the customer service provided at each point of the transaction, and values such as honesty, respect, dignity, and fairness.

In a customer-centric organization the "value of the experience" is not only a concern for external customers but also for internal customers as well. It becomes integrated into the organizational culture based on the premise of a TSC concept called **Delivery of Expectations (DOE)**. DOE is a two tier strategy: Tier 1: Delivering to others what we expect for ourselves. Tier 2: Constantly raising our bar of expectations. The organizational culture will become self-energized towards delivering prompt, quality and friendly service in and out of the organization.

### Why bother?

Customer Service is one of the most requested topics for prominent speakers. If your organization is not requesting a speaker on the topic, then it must be your competitors.

Technology is making the ideal of "any time, any where" access to information a reality which has transformed the business processes and leveraged the playing field. It has created global competition for your organization even if you are not a global business. The Internet allows customers to quickly compare products and prices all across the world with the click of a mouse. Price, product and access, though still important, are not solid differentiators and businesses that competed on this level are forced to revamp their strategy. The level of experience needed and expected by the customer is directly related to the complexity of the product or service being provided. Employees who come in direct contact with customers should be fairly knowledgeable about the company's product line. Service on the other hand will always be judged regardless of the importance of the other four areas and it is always the ultimate differentiator.

StrategicSite, LLC (SIS) specializes in process strategic management consulting. We provide direction in formulating enterprise, department, or team level strategies and business models. We assist our clients in defining their ideal market(s), and to align resources, processes and actions that will deliver value to their stakeholders.

In order to keep customers loyal you have to develop an end-to-end customer-centric strategy. In a high-tech environment it is essential to concentrate on delivering high-touch service. Though it is a simple concept it is by no means easy. Only a few (Nordstrom, Home Depot, Wal-Mart) have mastered the concepts of delivering end-to-end quality customer service. It has to be a top-down-inside-out strategy from the executive offices to the new recruits. Customer service has to be more than being reactive to customer complaints. It has to be a proactive strategy which enhances the "customer's experience" before, during and after the transaction.

If you are not preparing your organization to become a customer-focused business, then you are preparing for its demise. Customer focused leadership develops a customer-centric organization by creating a total quality management mindset as the foundation for a successful organization and sustainable competitive edge. Each customer transaction leads to the next one and no transaction is isolated. The series of transactions develop into on-going relationship and as with any relationship it has to be nurtured. The customer's image of your business is a variable and is only as good as the most recent transaction. If your business is not focusing on your customers, then another business will surely do the honors.

### **Types of Customers**

- External: Spending money with you
- Internal: Co-Workers, Team Members
- Paternal/Maternal: Boss
- Fraternal: Member of your network (Individuals not in the other categories)

### **Customer Progression**

- Suspect
- Prospect
- Customer
- Client
- Advocate
- Confidant

### **Quality Improvement**

- Commitment to Excellence
- Continuous Process Improvement
- Create an environment for progress for the entire organization
- Vision
- Organizational commitment

### **Essence of Customer Service**

- Meeting customer needs
- Solving customer problems
- Anticipating customer on-going wants and needs
- Exceeding customer expectations
- An organizational mindset!!!!

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