

## Building a customer-centric culture – Top tips for employee buy-in



To deliver the great customer experiences that foster brand loyalty and increase profitability, businesses need to embrace a customer-centric culture across their enterprise. Research often shows that **positive customer experiences trump price**, and satisfied customers are more likely to maintain a long-term relationship with a company, and recommend it to family and friends. As a result, customer-centric businesses benefit from higher rates of retention and acquisition.

So how do you transform your company culture? While it may take time to build buy-in and change processes across an entire business, the most successful initiatives start at the top. With executive sponsorship to drive customer-centric changes, employees can better understand the big picture impact of delivering great customer experiences. Then, like any **effective change management** effort, the business can focus on a variety of strategic approaches that support employees toward adopting more customer-focused behaviors and processes.

### 5 strategies for motivating employees to be customer-centric

#### 1 Communications

Communications are crucial to **building buy in** for initiatives focused on transforming your company culture. Employees need to understand what’s happening, what’s expected of them, and how they can play an important role in driving measurable success. Engage team members from across the organization (whether they’re in sales and customer service, or IT and operations) with communications across multiple channels that highlight ways to put the customer first. Team brainstorm sessions or videos on your company intranet can be effective in reaching team members. Think about the work environment as well - eye-catching posters with customer-focused themes can help promote an ambient awareness that motivates employees.

#### 2 Training

Make it easy for employees to learn how to deliver exceptional experiences through a variety of everyday moments and “moments that matter” with customers. Team-building events, **workshops, and communication tools** are great ways to help employees understand what a customer-centric experience really looks like and how it can strengthen relationships and build brand loyalty.

*Forrester® Research recently reported that in many companies “even though parts of their organizations wanted to be customer-centric, employees lacked a shared understanding of the intended experience they were supposed to deliver.”*

“Market Overview: Where To Get Help With Culture Transformation”  
August 11, 2014 Forrester Research, Inc.

#### 3 Rewards

Incentives such as raises, promotions, and bonuses can motivate team members to go the extra mile for customers. However, rewards don’t have to be monetary to be effective. Celebrations and awards can recognize employees who deliver outstanding customer experiences. Rewarding customer-centric behaviors can be a powerful way to “move the needle” especially for businesses that are very process-oriented in which employees may be used to focusing on functional responsibilities, more than the people they’re serving. Yet by shifting focus to the customer, employees may see they can have a real impact on satisfaction, retention, and profitability, which reward the company as a whole.



#### 4 Rituals and routines

Rituals and routines also help reinforce customer focus across an organization. Encourage your teams to share success stories about their engagement with customers, and role-play to gain empathy on how customers experience your company at various touch points. At Ritz-Carlton Hotels, for instance, employees have 15-minute meetings, or “daily lineups,” during which team members share the positive guest experiences they delivered the day before. It’s an effective way to build customer-centric momentum and continuously highlight best practices that other employees can adopt.

#### 5 Hiring

As you evolve the customer-centric culture across your company, you’ll gain a clear idea of what an ideal customer-focused employee looks like, so you can hire the right people. When you post job descriptions, clearly convey how and why customer experience is a key focus in your company. Create interview questions and screening tools that help identify candidates with desirable behaviors and traits. For current employees who may prefer non-customer-facing roles, consider shifting their positions to something better suited to their personality and skills. During onboarding, familiarize new employees on what it means to be customer-centric in your organization, and support them with training and communication tools, as noted earlier.

For most companies, your customer experience IS your employees, directly or indirectly —so it’s simply good business sense to invest in building a customer-centric culture. To drive that transformation across an enterprise, well-communicated change efforts can empower your employees to take an active role in growing the business, and encourage a company-wide commitment to a common goal. As a result, your business will most likely increase efficiencies and build stronger, lasting customer relationships, which can translate into greater profitability.

#### Let’s Talk

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