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5 Keys to Employee Engagement in Customer Experience Management

by Lynn Hunsaker

Lack of cooperation across organizations is a momentum inhibitor for customer experience management (CEM). Among best-in-class CEM practitioners, top challenges are:

- * Cross-channel CEM.
- * Organization-wide focus on customer service differentiation.
- * Commonly agreed-to metrics.
- * 360-degree view of customers.

All of the recent customer experience studies report broken linkages between:

- * Functions' and business units' goals.
- * Survey results and business results.
- * Multiple voice of customer sources.
- * Data and actions.
- * Incentives and desired behaviors.
- * Views of what customers want.
- * Brand promise and what's delivered.



Nearly half of senior marketers admit that high-profile negative customer experiences have compromised their brands. And currently, 84% of customers will register a complaint or tell others of a bad experience; this tendency is rising from 74% in 2007 and 67% in 2006.

Clearly, profitability is at risk due to lack of cross-organizational cooperation and alignment with customers. Effective employee engagement is at the heart of these issues. While strides have been made, customer-centricity tends to be an elusive aspiration. Only 12% of customers judge their vendors as extremely customer-centric, while 56% of those same vendors think of themselves as extremely customer-centric.

If CEM execution is broken, examine the foundation rather than fill potholes. Tendencies to focus on IT solutions, statistics, simplified metrics, customer acquisition, or isolated opportunities have over-shadowed the realities of people and processes and culture as the most important determinants of customer experience. There are 5 vital components to company-wide employee engagement for significant ongoing customer experience business results:

1) Systems Thinking

- A holistic view of the components of an entity.
- Comprises the components' relationships with each other and with other entities.

2) Change Management

- 4 major steps are necessary before deploying a change: Evaluate, Envision, Analyze, and Plan.
- Stakeholder management is the focus for each of the 7 phases of managing change.

3) Internal Branding







- Living and delivering your brand promise.
- A multi-faceted cultural journey guiding everyone in managing their own impact on CEM.

4) Continual Improvement Practices

- Allow the company to be more nimble, responsive, proactive through organizational learning.
- Simplify complexities and emphasize fact-based decision-making through quality tools.
- Gain fresh perspectives and compelling reasons for change through frequent benchmarking.
- Focus on actionable, predictive metrics.

5) Sustaining the Momentum

- Prevent mis-use of metrics and incentives.
- Energize employees to reach stretch goals through 'recognition 2.0'.
- Require all employees - not just frontline employees - to build customer relationship skills.
- Emphasize product & service quality, as this outweighs any other efforts a business makes to convey trust.

- Analogies 
- Connectivity 
- Framing 
- Patterns 
- Perspective 
- Structure 

These five vital keys can pay excellent dividends in customer experience improvement momentum through superior employee engagement levels that heighten customer-centricity and prevent customer hassles. In a dynamic business environment, there's no realistic end-point to CEM; customer experience improvement is a way of life. As Dr. W. Edwards Deming said, "What everyone in a company does can be reduced to one of two functions: to serve the customer or serve someone who does." As effective employee engagement increases, ownership of customer experience is adopted by employees organization-wide, leading to less waste and higher customer profitability as sustainable differentiators.

Note: Study findings reported above are from Aberdeen Group, Customer Experience Management, August 2008; CMO Council, Customer Affinity, July 2007; CMO Council, Turning Customer Pain Into Competitive Gain, January 2009; Forrester Research, Obstacles to Customer Experience Success, February 2009; Harris Interactive, Customer Experience Impact Report, October 2008; Edelman Trust Barometer, 2009.

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