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## Customer Centricity Means Customer Centric

by Lynn Hunsaker

Organizations that are centered around their customers know that it's not a part-time role. To truly be customer-centric, everyone company-wide needs to have a deep understanding of the customer's world. And beyond this sharp awareness, everyone needs to be constant in their personal alignment with the customer's world, exemplified by their decision-making and behaviors. Here are some great examples of companies whose customers agree are doing a superior job at being customer-centric.



At Amazon.com, founder Jeff Bezos once started an executive meeting by announcing that an empty chair at the table represented “the customer”. Throughout the meeting, the executives were compelled to include the customer in their thought process, and to consider their comments’ implications on the customer, as if “he/she” were present. This practice became a habit at Amazon, part of their corporate culture. CTO Werner Vogels explains: “It’s very important to have a culture where everybody understands what the core values of the company are. New starters are often surprised at how important focusing on the customer is to us and how good Amazon is at doing that. ... We often have meetings where we start off with a ‘customer voice’ — a success story, even sometimes a negative story, of a customer’s experience of buying on Amazon — and use those stories to drive our services to become better. ... We want to be the most customer-centric company on the planet.” What better way to transform your culture to truly customer-centric ways of thinking and doing, than to invite your customer to attend all your discussions?



At USAA, which provides insurance solely to military families, customer-centricity is built by stepping into their customers’ boots – during new-hire orientation, employees strap-on a military helmet, 65 pound backpack and flk vest, to build empathy for customers. They read real letters from troops in Iraq, eat a military MRE “meal ready to eat”, and supervisors call them troops and use military time. As a result, USAA has a long history of topping industry lists for best customer service.

At Zappos, employees are encouraged to do differentiate themselves with customers by doing something a little unconventional and innovative. Their aim is to have an emotional impact on the customer and be viewed as delivering above-average or Wow service. Work teams participate in the company blog and YouTube videos, and they engage in fun activities outside the workplace on a regular basis as well.

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