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Everybody Has a Customer

by Lynn Hunsaker

Is there any job that doesn't have a customer? If you work directly with paying customers, you obviously impact customer experience.

If you don't work directly with paying customers:

- (1) Eventually, the job you do *ripples* to those employees who do work directly with customers — don't drop the baton!
- (2) Inside your company, the job you do has *internal* customers — figure out how to make their experience excellent!



What everyone in a company does can be reduced to one of two functions: to serve the customer or serve someone who does. (Dr. W. Edwards Deming) Think of the purpose of your job — why is it worthwhile for the company to fund your position? To answer this, big-picture thinking is needed. Ultimately, what you do in your job must be important in some way to the needs of paying customers. Your answer is the beginning of customer-centric thinking.

Customer-centric employees always keep in mind their purpose from the perspective of paying customers. First and foremost, what do you do that is in *their* best interest? What could you do that might better serve paying customers' best interests? Companies with higher than average customer satisfaction and retention also have higher profit. Of course that's important for job security, budgets and promotions.

Secondly, what might you do better to make smooth hand-offs to your internal customers? And thirdly, what's in the best interest of your work group and yourself? This order of priorities is extremely important. Most employees think they are customer-centric, while their customers strongly disagree. It's easy to be ethnocentric about customer-centricity! Ethnocentrism is the tendency to look at the world primarily from the perspective of one's own culture. When priorities get out of order, your work becomes self-serving. And that does not pay-off in the long-run.

There's no escaping the reality — you do personally have customers! Beyond the impact to your boss and co-workers, your job has far-reaching effects on paying customers. What goes around comes around, and you'll reap higher-than-average business results by doing all you can to be customer-centric with the right priorities.

Find out how to customize these tips to your situation; contact the author lynn.hunsaker@clearaction.biz.