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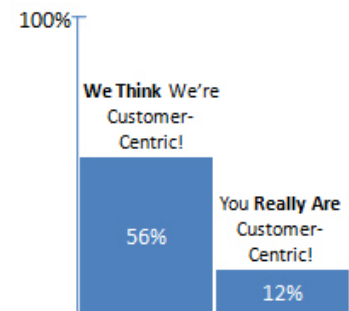
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Internal Branding is Central to Customer Experience Management

by Lynn Hunsaker

Why is it that only 12% of customers judge specific leading suppliers as extremely customer-centric, while 56% of those same suppliers define themselves as such? ¹ Possibly because of the way we tend to narrowly define customer experience in the first place, and our human nature to view customer-centricity from our own - rather than the customer's - perspective.



It Takes a Village!

Customer experience is broad - it represents the prospect's journey from realization of a need until the need no longer exists. As such, widespread involvement throughout an organization is essential. Recent studies report broken linkages between functions' and business units' goals, data and actions, incentives and desired behaviors, and survey results and business results. 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. If execution is broken, examine the foundation rather than fill potholes.

What is Internal Branding?

Internal branding is a multi-faceted cultural journey guiding everyone company-wide in managing their personal impact on customer experience. It fosters outside-in, or customer-centric thinking and behavior among employees and executives alike. If reality is to meet or exceed customer expectations, then whatever has been promised to customers - through all forms of media and interactions - must be lived throughout the organization.

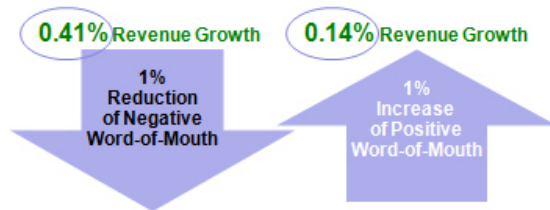
Engage Employees

Firms with high employee engagement levels have 12% higher customer advocacy, 18% higher productivity, and 12% higher profitability.² Internal branding goes beyond internal ad campaigns and employee loyalty efforts - to engaging everyone in the organization in consistently delivering the brand promise. Consistent emphasis in simple ways is a defining factor in nurturing a customer-centric culture.

1. Build passion for the brand promise
2. Make the customer experience vision prominent
3. Weave the vision into existing business processes
4. Be vigilant about primary (customer-centric) and secondary (self-serving) motives
5. Stream relevant customer sentiment data to all employees



6. Embrace warning signals
7. Manage timely & quality handoffs
8. Nurture a learning organization
9. Scrutinize metrics & incentives for balance



Manage CEM Holistically

Internal branding is essential to long-term customer experience results. Reducing negative word-of-mouth by 1% results in 300% revenue growth over increasing positive word-of-mouth by 1%.³ Experiential marketing, references, CRM and loyalty programs certainly have their place in customer experience management, but

customer-centricity - as measured by customers - continues to be an elusive goal without strong internal branding.

Notes:

¹-CMO Council: Customer Affinity study

²-Gallup, Building Engagement in This Economic Crisis, February 2009

³-London School of Economics: Advocacy Dives Growth study

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