

Editorial

Javier Bajer

Want a customer-centric culture? Don't ask your customers

It puzzles me when product or service designers, after weeks of surveys and focus groups, finally unveil their “customer insights”. Their findings are almost always predictable. And, let's be honest, these tend to do little more than just state the obvious.

Most presentations to the board will read something like “42% of our customers will recommend us [...] and that's 3 points higher than last year!” – probably next to a green arrow pointing up – followed by a list of “pain points”, some finger pointing and a proposed list of actions for next Q. The Ask-Task-Repeat ritual can go on forever.

If this method of designing value for customers did actually work, by now we would be enjoying excellent products and services, everywhere. The truth is that we've been asking customers for their *opinions* for decades, so why do we celebrate it when only half of our customers say they would recommend us to their friends? Just before you say it, the fact that your competitor's NPS is lower than yours does not mean that your customers are happy with you.

Don't take me wrong. Of course, it is useful to know your customers' opinions about your products or services. But opinions do not contain the cues we need to design better experiences. When traditional companies asked Walkman users for their opinions, they came up with the Fast Forward + Play function, which would skip a song. When Apple truly understood how people wanted to listen to music, they created the playlist, and the iPod and a whole lot of other products.

Customer-centric cultures understand customers beyond their opinions. They don't limit their insights to the narrow window of a survey, only looking at each interaction the customer has with the organisation. They feel what customers feel, which gets them an enormous competitive advantage over the rest of the market, not just improving what they do, but positively transforming the lives of those they serve.

Enjoy this issue of Strategic HR Review!

Warmly,

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