



Customer Insight: Why it Should be a Top Priority for Businesses

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Biography

Andy Campbell is Global Solution Evangelist at FinancialForce (<https://www.financialforce.com/>), where his work involves engaging with executive teams that are undertaking major business transformations and advising customers and partners on cloud adoption.

Prior to FinancialForce, Andy worked at Oracle for over 20 years in a variety of roles, including latterly as Cloud Evangelist, where he led the HR research and thought leadership activity for EMEA.

Andy has over 25 years of technology and business change expertise across industry sectors, including both the public and private sectors, as well as multiple geographies. He has substantial experience of successfully deploying leading edge technology to address significant business problems and opportunities.

Andy is an active blogger and regular conference presenter across EMEA, has an MBA (Nottingham), DMS (Bristol) and BSc (Exeter). He blogs at <https://www.financialforce.com/blog/>

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Abstract

Most companies strive to run a customer-centric business: One that delivers positive customer experiences, provides optimal value, and earns long-term loyalty. Stating that goal is easy but achieving it on a continuous basis is not.

Today, your customers are more self-sufficient – and more in control – than ever before. Subscriptions, renewals, and repeat customers are totally dependent on delivering both immediate value and a differentiating experience, where one not-so-perfect exchange could lead a customer straight to your competitor.

In this article the author discusses how winning businesses will be those that engage customers directly and in a personalized way at every touchpoint in the business, across both the front and back office. But while many organizations claim to be centred around the customer, the customer experience proves otherwise – yet with the right approach all businesses will have a clear path to customer-centricity.

Introduction

It is easy for organizations to say that they want to be customer-centric businesses, striving to obtain long-term customer loyalty by ensuring that customers have a positive experience which provides optimal value. But being able to achieve this goal on a consistent basis is another matter, and most businesses don't have the



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infrastructure in place to effectively deliver this. Indeed, many organizations that have invested in customer centricity initiatives have confined them to a certain function, whereas to be truly successful they need to impact the whole organization.

The recent growth in the services economy, together with the growth in subscriptions that are a key component, has resulted in customers having a greater amount of autonomy and more choice than ever before. As such, businesses must focus on improving customer experience, because one negative experience could result in a customer taking their business to a competitor and one negative rating could be a disaster.



To ensure that customers return, it is vital that organizations deliver a differentiated experience which provides immediate value. Those businesses that succeed will be the ones that are able to effectively interact directly with customers, doing so in a personalized manner at every available opportunity. This should take place across the business, irrespective of whether the engagement takes place in sales, operations or finance. Adding to this, business leaders must strive to have a greater level of involvement in customer-related activities, such as service delivery and post-sales tasks, even if this means adjusting their traditional roles. Doing this will give leaders a greater level of insight when it comes to making decisions that have an impact on the needs of customers, enabling them to deliver a reliable and trustworthy experience across all parts of the business.

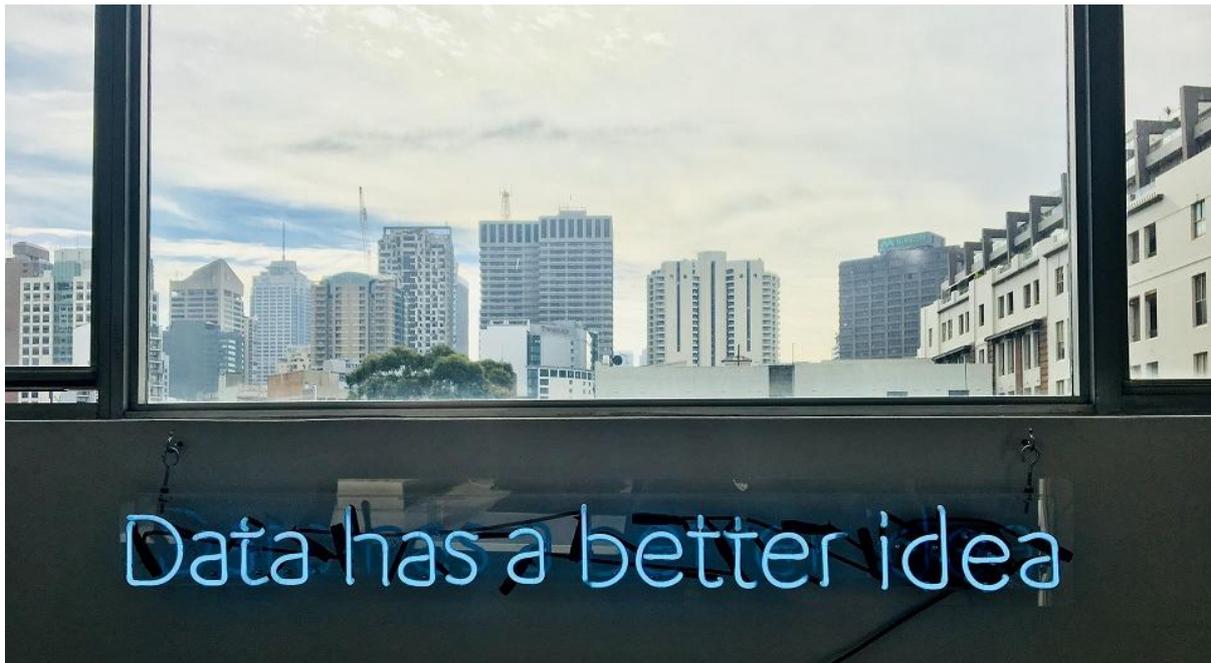
There are three key things that you should do in order to help your business become more customer-centric:

1. Unlocking more customer insights

First, it is imperative that businesses find a solution that is capable of consolidating vital customer information from each point of the customer journey. This gives organizations an alternative view with regards to customer health. Employees can observe the impact that customers have on both



profits and revenue from every available revenue stream – from products to subscriptions to services – through one lens. This tool means that businesses have real-time knowledge of the cost to serve customers, and the lifetime value that they can deliver, in addition to considering the traditional measures of customer management.



2. Breaking down silos

In a number of organizations teams are siloed, operating independently of others and failing to share information effectively. The result of this gap between finance, sales, and customer success, is that vital customer data gets missed. Teams working in this siloed manner impacts decision making and creates friction in the customer experience. For example, organizations are unable to properly evaluate current offerings if product margin data and service margin data live in entirely different applications. Businesses cannot gain a full understanding of what's generating positive or negative results for themselves, as well as for their customers.

By having disparate front and back-office systems, with data in the applications being siloed, organizations are unable to gain full visibility into the entirety of the customer journey. Employees can only see through a tiny opening into the process based on the data that they are able to access.

Here's an example: your sales team builds a relationship with a potential future customer, gathering and sharing information with the customer about your organization's services and what the customer is looking for. Instead of



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then sharing this information with the rest of the onboarding team, it is just kept in the sales team's files. This means that the customer will then be asked the same questions again at each stage of the onboarding process which is not only inefficient but also frustrating for the customer. The impact this siloed approach has on the customer experience is tangible, at its most extreme it could compromise the profitability of the project and even result in the customer pulling out.

Instead, if an organization tears down the silos that exist between departments and uses one dataset across the whole of the business, then it is possible to deliver positive customer experiences and outcomes.

3. Establishing a master customer record

For a business to support customer retention and customer-centricity, it must have the capability to manage the entirety of the customer lifecycle on a single system, eliminating the risk of losing vital insights and data. Organizations should invest in systems that seamlessly connect the front and back-office, unifying data from customers to operations to finance. This allows businesses to achieve a true 360o view, with every customer interaction accessible from one place.

By being able to use this single view, organizations can gain a greater level of understanding when it comes to lifetime value and customer profitability. Employees are able to access an account record, knowing exactly what is taking place, while they can also create positive engagement. With a unified system in place, teams can take advantage of analytics tools, common reporting, and unite around customer success measures, such as usage rates, project status and production adoption figures. This provides insight into future rates of churn, expansion, and renewal enabling businesses to take the correct actions at the appropriate time.

In conclusion – the road to customer-centricity

Through consolidating customer insights, putting an end to internal silos, and creating a single lens across your business, your organization is well on its way to attaining customer-centricity. Customer centricity is a holistic endeavour that requires changes in skills, attitudes, mindsets and even roles. By undertaking this process of change to both the front and back-office processes, businesses can achieve a 360-degree customer view, maximizing customer lifetime value (CLTV) and benefitting the entire business.