

Customer-centric Business Strategies

By Naseem Mariam

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ABSTRACT: Customer Relationship Management is a business strategy. You need to become the customer's trusted agent. Learn how you can do "lead" your customer to trust you.

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"Customer relationship management is a business strategy to select and manage the most valuable customer relationships. CRM requires a customer-centric business philosophy and culture to support effective marketing, sales, and service processes. CRM applications can enable effective customer relationship management, provided that an enterprise has the right leadership, strategy, and culture." -The CRM Primer, <http://www.crmguru.com>

What customers face

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* Media barrage - Customers are confronted with increasing volumes of information, transmitted at increasing rates and coming from a greater number of sources than ever

* Choice - Choice overwhelms most customers, making it difficult for you to gain and sustain their business

* Change - Product life cycles are so short that, in the case of many technology products, by the time the customer makes an informed decision, the basis of the decision may not be valid

* Uncertainty - All this change can be very confusing to customers. Products change quickly, but so do the companies that sell them, how they are sold and who does the selling.
Complexity - Is there a way for people to determine which product offers will produce the optimal utility for their needs?

Distrust & Suspicion

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Distrust and suspicion are more prevalent today than any time in recent history - for good reason. If these issues are not addressed initially, the persuasion process is likely to stall. Distrust and suspicion are emotions that may not be expressed by the customer; therefore you must deliberately overcome their influence.

Regardless of the clarity of the logic of your persuasion, these emotions can trump it! Keep in mind that until you demonstrate otherwise, you and your company have been tarred by the "heightened distrust and suspicion brush".

### Trusted Agent

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Each and every employee of your company should preserve the customer's trust. Experts should counsel the customer on the best choice that he can make. These experts should be trained to think and act always with the customer's well being and good in mind. Your employees become the customers trusted agent. Companies should thus lead their customers to where they want to go but just don't know it yet. This has merit and "leading" is the key to building mutually beneficial and adapting relationships with customers.

How to do the "leading"

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Implement customer-centric business strategies

- \* Which drives redesigning of functional activities;
- \* Which demands re-engineering of work processes;
- \* Which is supported, not driven, by CRM technology

### Step #1: Customer-centric Planning

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- * You plan around customer wants, not company goals.
- * You focus on listening to customers, rather than forcing them to listen to you.

* You relegate promotional marketing communication - including database marketing, e-database marketing, e-database, e-marketing, etc. -- to a secondary role, operating in the shadow of informed, informational dialog with customers

Step #2: Redesigning functional activities

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When you change to more customer-centric business strategies, you have to work differently. Carefully assess the roles of all departments interacting with customers-to see if they're adding value to customers, or adding cost instead. Then figure out how to reconfigure our organization so that everything you do is designed to help customers and nothing you do adds unnecessary cost.

## About the Author

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Naseem Mariam is the editor of "Management that Soars" Newsletter & author of "Project Serenity - How to gain happiness and peace" . Her writings draw life from her 18 years experience managing software projects. Let her guide you towards Faster All Round Success and a Stress Free, Joyous Life. Her free ebook and Newsletter tell You How. Subscribe with mail to projectdioxide@sendfree.com Visit her at <http://www.123projectmanagement.com>

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