

Pillar 3 - Customer Experience Mastery

By [Charles Bennett](#), issued by [The Focus Group](#)

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Obsess over the customer in everything you do.

It has been some weeks since I talked about the Pillars of Customer Experience Mastery. Today it is high time I talked about the third.



To remind ourselves of the first ones we discussed:

Pillar 1 - Develop the Person NOT the business

Pillar 2 - Focus on capability to dramatically accelerate CEM change

Today we are going to talk about:

Pillar 3 - Obsess over the customer in everything you do

Understanding customer obsession as a definition

A number of months ago I had the opportunity to review customer service at Disney and found pretty consistently that the top performers were those who had a genuine service obsession. It's exactly the same with customer experience but we have to be careful to explain exactly what we mean by obsession in this context.

To greater or lesser degree, the concept of obsession is everywhere. At a personal agenda level, there are plenty of people in business obsessed with winning - whatever their definition of winning happens to be. There are plenty of people obsessed with doing a great job. The whole mantra behind Lean Six Sigma is an obsession with quality.

There are plenty of salespeople obsessed with making that key sale.

I am not talking about that type of obsession. This is an obsession with the result, an obsession with either the *how* or the result.

Customer obsession goes further than this - in fact massively further. It gets into the very culture of the organisation. It creates the basis of *why* the company exists.

If the *why* is effectively created then *what* and *how* momentum is maintained. If your *why* is not defined over and above obtaining the result - in other words there is no driving belief then over time people will tire of maintaining focus on the *what* and *how*.

How does customer obsession manifest itself?

If you are able to make customer obsession into your culture, your belief as to why you exist, then "customer obsessed" will create a series of enduring behaviours:

- Customer obsessed will place the successful customer outcome ahead of short-term and possibly medium-term profits.
- Customer obsessed means you give customers advice that is in their best interest, ahead of your own, even if that

advice means a resulting decision that business goes to a competitor.

- Customer obsessed means looking at everything you do in an organisation - every function, every person, every process - and asking how it can be changed to better align to the customer.
- Customer obsessed means putting your customers' needs ahead of your own. It means being prepared to go the extra mile in everything you do.
- Customer obsession means being prepared to think differently to find ideas, innovate even, that will deliver better products, services, outcomes and experience, even if those ideas exist outside your own core competency.

Now - how many companies do you know that actually have customer obsession so well engrained in to their culture that you see these behaviours across everything they do on a constant basis?

Not many, are there?

What would happen to a company that actually succeeded in delivering a customer obsession culture?

It's really simple - that company would go to the top of their markets *and* stay there.

There is only one problem - the cost and time of delivering that culture means today most companies would not be allowed to pursue that culture meaningfully. The drive for maximum profit every single quarter would prevent that.

Best example of customer obsession today

The best example of a today company that followed this mantra was Amazon. Amazon until recently was massively understood. Amazon never made earnings per share a priority and for years the analysts believed that the Amazon model was broken. Amazon made customer obsession a driving mantra and that meant short-term sacrifice in profit.

Traditional thinking says that unless you make profit a leading driver you will never create significant value. How wrong they were. In fact over 2015 surprisingly good profits have been in the news for Amazon on a number of occasions.

It is a brave leader that actually takes customer obsession to the centre of what they do. Most talk about it and tack it on the side.

How brave a leader are you or how brave is your leadership?

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Yours sincerely,

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charles Bennett is Chairing the Customer Experience World Johannesburg and London Conferences in 2016.

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