

# **SIGMA**

## **Leadership Series**



**Great Leaders  
Focus on  
Customers**



## GREAT LEADERS FOCUS ON CUSTOMERS

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**Happy customers are your biggest advocates and can become your most successful sales team.**

**– Lisa Masiello**

In today's global market, there is a growing need to keep customers satisfied and understand their expectations. Customers often expect high quality products and services at fair prices and tend to have many options to choose from. Failing to meet customers' needs can be extremely costly for an organization, as when customers are dissatisfied, the organization may provide additional services or products to attempt to regain their trust.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the costs of rework and additional time spent on an unhappy client, there is also the cost of losing potential customers via word-of-mouth. Leaders in all organizations should build their customer skills to create a culture of client-focused work, and to give their organization a competitive edge.

Building customer skills involves demonstrating a service-oriented approach, remaining open to feedback, and maintaining positive, trusting, and productive relationships in order to meet the needs and expectations of internal and external customers. Individuals with a keen customer focus are major assets for their team, and employers are therefore likely to look for this trait when hiring or promoting.

To assess your current customer focus, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I balance innovation with customer experience?
- Am I listening to client concerns?
- Do I understand who my clients are and what they are looking for?
- Am I encouraging excellent customer service throughout the organization?
- Am I addressing a gap in the market not currently serving customer needs?

### Improve Your Customer Focus

**Remember your why:** As businesses grow or operations unfold, it can be easy to get caught up in our day-to-day tasks and forget why we do what we do. Try and bring the customer back into focus by reminding yourself and others of the main purpose and goals of your organization. Think of each task, no matter how small, as a steppingstone towards accomplishing your mission and vision. It may also be helpful to focus on the needs of the customers themselves rather than your product or service.<sup>2</sup>

**Balance familiarity with surprise:** When interacting with customers, try to balance delivering familiar products and services with a novel, interesting twist.<sup>3</sup> The goal is to be consistent enough for customers to know what to expect from you, but innovative enough to fill gaps left by competitors. This approach requires listening carefully to customer needs and responding creatively to what you hear.

**Customer service starts at the top:** A dedication to service is not only the responsibility of those interacting with customers directly – try to think of yourself as an important piece of a larger puzzle. Leaders that are concerned with customer needs and model excellent customer service behaviors are likely to create a top-down culture of focusing on customers by encouraging others in the organization to do the same.<sup>4</sup> Leaders who demonstrate good customer service behaviors serve as models to others, encouraging employees at all levels of the organization to listen to customer needs and think of new ways to support others.

## Start Doing These 3 Things Now to Focus on Customers Better

The following steps can enhance your customer focus:

- 1. Practice active listening with customers.** It is hard to know whether your customers are satisfied if you don't ask for their feedback. Customer feedback can provide employees with an opportunity to address concerns while simultaneously enhancing the products and services that are performing well. Taking on an active listening role to customer feedback will help you to better understand customers' needs and expectations.<sup>5</sup> This can be achieved by asking follow-up questions to clients or having a conversation with a colleague in a client-facing role. Active listening skills do not only benefit customers – a dedication to helping others can also enhance interactions within the workplace, fostering positive working relationships and team harmony.
- 2. Focus on existing customers.** Rather than pouring all your energy into attracting new clients, focus on building and maintaining trust with the customers you already have. This is important because it is less costly to invest in current customers than to spend the time and resources required to recruit new ones.<sup>5</sup> You can show dedication to ongoing customers by checking in on their recent experiences with your company or rewarding customer loyalty with perks, discounts, or exclusive offers. This will not only help you to better meet the needs of your current clientele, but also to facilitate positive reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations that can help bring in new clients in the future.
- 3. It's okay to admit when you're wrong.** Sometimes mistakes happen and a customer's experience may be negatively impacted. When mistakes occur, the best way to move forward is to regain the customer's trust by admitting mistakes and offering a solution to the problem. A sincere, timely apology can go a long way by showing customers that you are willing to take accountability and are committed to getting it right in the future.<sup>6</sup>

## Resources



[Popsicle moments: Finding a new flavor of customer service](#)



[Earn Customer Loyalty Without Losing Your Shirt](#)



Develop your ability to prioritize by taking advantage of SIGMA's coaching services.

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SIGMA Assessment Systems, Inc.

Email: [support@SigmaHR.com](mailto:support@SigmaHR.com)

Call: 800-265-1285

## References

<sup>1</sup> Kendall, S.D. (2007). Customer Service from the Customer's Perspective. In Folgi Lawrence (Eds.) *Customer Service Delivery: Research and Best Practices*. J-B SIOP Professional Practice Series. John Wiley and Sons.

<sup>2</sup> Morin, M. (2018). *Building sustainable relationships that bring brands and people closer together* [Video]. TED Conferences. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hp0Q8Z5Isz4>

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, D. (2018). *The four-letter code to selling anything* [Video]. TED Conferences. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pY7EjqD3QA>

<sup>4</sup> Schwartz, T. (2010). What happens when you really meet people's needs. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2010/09/what-happens-when-you-really-m-2>

<sup>5</sup> Sharabi M. (2015). *Customer Focus*. in Su Mi Dahlgaard-Park (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Quality and the Service Economy*. Sage Pub. pp. 114-118.

<sup>6</sup> Qualtrics. (2021). 19 tips to improve your customer service skills. Retrieved from <https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/customer/service-tips-skills/>