

Gauge Your Guest Focus With This Simple Test

Editor's Note: During our August focus on Guest Experiences, we are honored to have some of the best voices in the world of Customer Experience provide guest posts for the Vision Room. As you read the content below, simply think "Guest" in terms of the "customer" the author is talking about - and you will benefit from the knowledge and expertise of some great minds.

A potential client called for help. His plea was, "We are so NOT customer-focused, and we need to be!" He then shared what may be one of the most crystal-clear examples of the difference between a company that is customer focused and one that isn't.

By the way, the name of the company has been "changed to protect the innocent," as they say. We'll refer to them as Company X.

Two brand new identical buildings were built, side by side. One was a well-known bank. The other was Company X. In front of each building was a parking lot with about 30 spaces, while across the street were much larger parking lots. The parking spaces in front of the bank building had a sign that read: Visitor Parking. The parking spaces in front of Company X's building didn't.

The bank employees parked across the street and walked over. Company X's employees insisted that they get to park close to their building. The first ones there that day got the best spaces.

My client – wow, I'm already referring to him as my client – confided that he wanted the visitors to be able to park in the closer spots without crossing the street, but he said you would have thought I'd taken away their "first-born child." Obviously, a slight exaggeration, but you get the point.

While it's not that inconvenient to walk across the street from the parking lot to the building, not giving the closer parking spots to customers sends a message – not to the customers, who may or may not notice, but to the employees. The message is linked to the culture and values that employees grow to know and understand about the company they work for. If the employees won't let their customers park in the spaces most convenient to the entrance, what other "anti-customer" decisions are being made? What other unfriendly processes do they have? And, that's where our discussion really started to take off.

We had a tough discussion about his people. Some people would embrace and be excited about a new [customer-focused culture](#), although he confided in me that many would not. I shared that the cost of keeping employees who aren't in alignment with a company's vision can be financially detrimental to the company. And achieving alignment is a big project. We also talked about the various processes and procedures that could be changed. I could write a small book about that discussion.

Whether you're [customer-focused](#) or not, this exercise is helpful. **Identify all the touchpoints your customers have with your people and your organization's processes. Where is the potential for friction?** Is it easy for your customers or not? For example, when they visit your website, are there self-service options available to them? And if those self-service options fail, is there an easy way for them to reach a human? Rate these touchpoints and interactions one of three ways: company focused, customer focused, or neutral. That will give you an idea of whether your policies and procedures are more focused on what's easiest and best for your company or what's easiest and best for your customer? If you aren't focused like a laser on your customers, then you are at risk of losing them to a competitor who is.

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