

Developing A Customer Focus

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Dave likes to share the story of when he worked for an organization that had a remarkable track record. Each year they reviewed their progress and found that they had done just a little bit better than the year before. So for the next year, they set their goals a little bit higher and marched forward, striving to achieve them. At the end of the year, they had again achieved just a little bit more than their goals. They proudly presented the statistics to their executives, who beamed proudly at the results.

They sound pretty successful, don't they? However, as Dave puts it, "It's too bad that the customers hated us so much!"

Setting goals is a process that every organization does, but far too few, do it well. Without consideration of the economy, plans for internal changes, or any real understanding of what the customer needs, department managers are asked to define their team's goals for the next year. Then they drive their people to meet these goals so that they get a good review, an increase in salary, and maybe even a bonus.

Not only does the above scenario ignore the direction that should be set by the top executives, it also misses the single most important reason you are in business.....the customer. So, while you are out doing the victory dance for meeting your objectives, the customer is sticking sharp pins into a voodoo doll that bears a remarkable resemblance to you.

Let's cut right to the chase here. When you create departmental objectives based on last year's accomplishments, the only thing you are really thinking about is getting the task complete so that you can check it off your list. You're not thinking about customer satisfaction, or how you are going to improve quality, or even major initiatives that you know (or don't know) are coming your way. You're thinking about getting the boss off your back.

And why not? The exercise above is just that, an exercise.

So, how should objectives really be set?

By focusing, first and foremost, on your customers and what they want. Not what you think they want....but what they really want. Hopefully this starts at the very top of your company and moves to lower levels. But if not, you still have the opportunity to talk directly to your customers and determine exactly what they want and need from you. Agree with them on what goals need to be set and get their buy in.

Once you know what your customers want and need from you, you can measure your true performance and your true ability to meet the customers needs. And meeting the needs of your customers, whether internal or external, is really what business is all about.

Focus on your customer. Learn their needs. Learn what they want and expect from you. When you do these things, setting goals and objectives is not just an exercise; it's an exercise in achieving excellence.

An engaged and energized workforce leads to higher productivity, reduced costs, improved customer service, and increased profitability. Employee engagement happens when your Corporate Culture, Leadership Style, and Employee Expectations are in synch.

The Fusion Program from ECI Learning Systems is designed to align these 3 concepts in your organization – engaging your employees and creating positive energy that will propel your company to new heights.

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