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Customer Centricity starts with a Vision

By Caroline Schlipf

A vision explains, where the company wants a certain group of people to be, because of the company's services. In my point of view, customer centricity starts exactly here.

If a company wants to dedicate itself entirely to the customer, it makes sense to anchor it in the vision. Why? Because from the vision you derive a mission, a guiding principle, and a self-conception for dealing with customers that is shared with all employees in the company. If the group of people that should benefit from your service do not appear in the vision they will likely not be in the center of attention in many parts of a company.

To create a customer centric vision, we should ask ourselves some initial questions like...

- "What purpose do we serve in the lives of our customers?"
- "What would our customers life look like if we succeed in what we are doing?"
- "Where do we want to go as a company?"

I suggest not to be too specific but also not too generic - it is a bit of a balancing act. What helps is to draw a picture on how you envision the future for the people you serve or how your companies' contribution to the future will look like. We all understand, that leading a business means to grow value for you and your financial stakeholders, so this clearly does not make you unique. What does make you unique is the individual contribution to your customers life: making it more

comfortable, less troubled, supporting them to achieve their goals and aspirations, etc. So, think of it as your "WHY", your purpose in the golden circle (Simon Sinek).

To check my hypothesis, that companies with a customer-oriented vision are indeed more customer centric, I picked vision statements of large corporations. Some seem very vague, dedicated to society in general or financial stakeholders or even not dedicated to anybody, just stating something about their own greatness. But some companies are focusing on the customer and the benefit they create for them.

How customer oriented are these companies? Is there any relationship between their customer centricity and their vision statement?

I would say YES!

The below companies were rated as one of the 100 most customer centric companies in 2019 (Forbes.com). Compared to others they show how people benefit in their everyday life.

- To provide our customers with the most effective solutions to help them best manage their financial futures, while creating long lasting value for all stakeholders. (ING Bank)
- To be the most customer-centric company in the world, where customers can find and discover everything they want to buy online, and which strives to offer the lowest possible prices to its customers. (AMAZON)
- LinkedIn aims to create economic opportunities for all members of the global labor market by developing its career network. (LinkedIn)
- We believe beauty is for each person to define and ours to celebrate. Together, we support and encourage bold choices in beauty -and in life. Our purpose is to inspire fearlessness. (SEPHORA)
- Make work life simpler, more pleasant, and more productive. (SLACK)

Other companies, not specifically rated as very customer centric, have visions which focus on their aspirations, competitive position, or general contribution to society.

- To be the world's leading producer and provider of entertainment and information. (DISNEY)

- A World of proven talent where we are. Delivering breakthrough innovations. Giving our customers a unique competitive edge. Enabling societies to master their most vital challenges. Creating sustainable value. (SIEMENS)
- As a technology leader with inventive talent and the highest standards of quality, we are shaping tomorrow's mobility - for a world that will be cleaner, safer and smarter. (SCHAEFFLER)
- We envision a future of zero crashes, zero emissions and zero congestion, and we have committed ourselves to leading the way toward this future. (GE)
- Shaping mobility – for generations to come. (VW)
- Become one of the leading players in our business areas worldwide and contribute to comfortable home and living environment by expanding new business fields. (PANASONIC)
- We create chemistry for a sustainable future. (BASF)

Would you like to make your company more customer-oriented? Start by developing a vision with your customers in mind!