

Our customers say they're satisfied, so why do we need to do anything else?

In a recent survey by AC Nielsen, 65-85% of customers who say they are satisfied are actually looking for something better and will not think twice about switching to a competitor.

The problem with 'business as usual' today, is that this ideal state no longer exists. Today's market is characterized by great organisations who customers choose to buy from, and the rest. The rest however are being driven to adopt lower and lower cost models to survive. As the power of information technology grows, all players in a market will have access to far more information. Thus, totally new business models will emerge in which even players from outside the industry are able to vastly change the basis of competition in a market.

In a world where competition is growing stronger by the day, driving down revenues and margin, reducing win ratios, whilst concurrently increasing the effective cost of sale, the need for a genuinely high performance sales team has never been so critical to any organisation's future as it is today.

So what differentiates a high performance sales team from any other?

The first and most important differentiator is organisational approach, or 'culture'. Does the organisation recognise the need for sales improvement, and is it ready to embrace the changes required to ensure its future success in the new world?

The second key differentiator that sets high performance teams apart from any others is their ability to understand what is really important to their customers. This requires a significant mind set change and a willingness to adapt, as what may be thought of as important today by the sales team, and what customers really want, may be some considerable distance apart.

Bridging this gap frequently requires different knowledge and a different way of operating. The required changes can be significant personally and organisationally. Not all organisations, nor all sales teams are ready for change of this magnitude, nor are they all capable of implementing it. Those that can and do, however, will be the winners.

So what are these differences?

In many cases the answer is deceptively simple. Identify what is truly important to your customers; build offerings to meet these real requirements; deliver the right offerings to the right people in the customer, in a way that is appropriate for them. So if it is this easy, why is everyone not doing it? Most organisations invest in the wrong activities, identify inappropriate information, and build their

futures on what they think is important, not what their customers think is important. . ICDL call these organisations 'Inside-out'.

Inside-out organisations sit in their offices, analyse their offering and invest time, energy and resource in trying to identify how they can 'beat the competition', and where they can sell more of their products or services. They do not invest in understanding the customer's needs and continuously adjusting their offering to achieve best fit. The result is generally seen as follows:

- Unreliable Sales Forecasts
- Poor Customer Service
- Focus on Cost Cutting
- Highly Competitive
- Blame Culture
- Take no Risks

ICDL call high performance organisations 'Outside-In'.

Outside-in organisations go out and stand in the shoes of their ultimate end users, look back at them and their competition and ask themselves, "standing here, looking back, what do I need to do to make my organisation, our offering and our partners seem more valuable to this end user than our competitors"?

This thinking drives remarkable change throughout the organisation, and through this, changes the perception of the end user. The results are clear:

- Take 'Customer' Risks
- Reliable Sales Forecasts
- Focus on Customer Needs
- Everyone Focused on 'Customer'
- Strong Orientation on 'Partnership'

Indeed the ability of any sales team to become a high performance sales team is predicated on the organisation to which they belong having a high performance mind set.

Businesses today need to make their customer's challenges their own!

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