

CUSTOMER MANIA!

It's Never Too Late to Build a Customer-Focused Company

KEN BLANCHARD, JIM BALLARD and FRED FINCH

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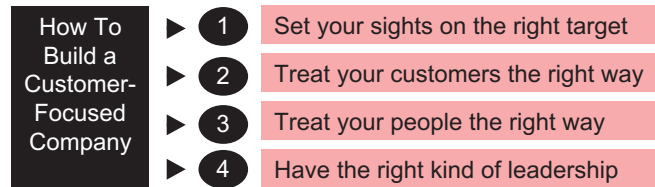
The Web site for this book is at www.kenblanchard.com.

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MAIN IDEA

To succeed in business today, you have to provide consistently great customer service. In other words, unless you have a unified, people-first, customer-oriented culture, it will be difficult to build your business going forward.

Fortunately, any company large or small can achieve this. The steps are simple to describe but challenging to implement fully:



Note that you can't build a customer-focused company by emphasizing the results that you want to achieve. This is the equivalent of putting the cart before the horse. When you focus on results, getting people to do the right thing will be an effort – people will have to be convinced that's the right way to go. A much more effective idea is to concentrate on building your people first, and then they will just naturally take care of the customer in the ways you prefer. Get your people acting with passion and commitment and everything else will just naturally fall into place. With astute management, you'll even be able to create a self-perpetuating cycle where the work feeds the energy of the people involved, which in turn means the work gets done better, leading to increased levels of energy in the future and so on.

"If you want to get passion from people, make them number one. That's the secret, right there. When you take the steps to building a customer-focused company, you make people better than they are. Suddenly, your team is more interested in the enterprise; more giving of their discretionary time, ideas and effort. Suddenly they're more talented. Over the years, I have found that leaders in great organizations, large or small, know how to build a customer-focused company the right way. They do that by leading at a higher level and focusing people's attention on more than making money. They understand the power of a people-first, performance-driven culture and intuitively practice these four steps."

– Ken Blanchard, Jim Ballard and Fred Finch

Step #1 – Set your sights on the right target Page 2

If you set a goal of making more money, your customers and your people become a means to an end at best. A better idea is to set a triple bottom line target – view profits as the applause your organization gets for taking good care of your customers and for creating a highly motivating environment for your people. You don't have to choose between people and results, but organize yourself to achieve both. Your ultimate aim should be:

1. To become the provider of choice – because you've created raving fans for what you offer.
2. The employer of choice – because your people are free to become customer maniacs.
3. The investment of choice – because your profits are both strong and sustainable.

Step #2 – Treat your customers the right way Page 3

Instead of viewing customers as an unwanted distraction, all your organization's energy needs to be focused on creating a customer mania culture. Don't try and create satisfied customers. Instead, your aim should be to turn customers into raving fans. Put together a heritage library of stories of people who went the extra mile to create customers who want to brag about what you do to others. Never forget the customer writes everyone's paycheck, and is the reason for your existence. Treat them accordingly.

Step #3 – Treat your people the right way Pages 4 - 5

Never talk about your people as being "hired hands". Nor should you ever even contemplate getting rid of people during tough economic times. Rather you should acknowledge that without enthused and motivated people, you have nothing. It's impossible to treat your people poorly and then expect them to create raving fans of your customers. Instead, you need to empower your people and encourage them to think and act like business owners. Never lose sight of the fact that when your people leave work at the end of each day, so does your entire business operation.

Step #4 – Have the right kind of leadership Page 6

Most leaders like to take all the credit when things go well and apportion blame elsewhere whenever things are going poorly. This is the opposite mind-set to what you want. Instead, you should acknowledge that you as a leader are only as good as the people you work with. Instead of viewing yourself at the top of the heap, move mentally to the bottom of the hierarchy where you can act as a cheerleader and provide support. Replace an accumulation mind-set with a generosity mind-set. Focus more on serving and less on accumulation and above all, do everything you can to make your organization's people successful. Never lose sight of the fact that if your people win, your organization wins.

Case Study – Yum! Brands Pages 7 - 8

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