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CMOs ... Do You Know Who Your Customer Really Is?



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One of the most significant changes CMOs will face in 2016 and beyond is gaining a new understanding of who their customer truly is. The modern CMO understands — today more than ever — that his or her internal customer is just as important, if not more important than the customer actually involved in the buying process. After all, employees are the ones to leave a first — and a lasting — impression on your customers.

Maybe that's why Richard Branson said ... "If you look after your internal customers you don't have to worry about the external customers."

The fact is, your employee population has become a strategic and critical link in the customer experience. And employees will play a growing and pivotal role in the customer experience as digital and cross-functional touchpoints continue to expand. That's why you must formulate strategies to market "to and through" employees across the enterprise. You must find ways to activate your story across all stakeholders that play a role in the customer journey.

Your customers reside inside and outside of your business.

Just a few years ago, making sure stakeholders (beyond the marketing department) understood the customer and corporate message was a luxury — a nice to have. Today, it is a business imperative. Why? Because now, the customer experience is the battleground on which business is won or lost. Now, the customer experience is made up of so much more than just a new website or campaign. It takes a village to deliver a clear, compelling corporate message throughout the entire customer journey. It takes unwavering commitment (time, resources and investments) to ensure every stakeholder that plays a role in the customer experience is able to bring a consistent story to life.

As the CMO, you own this. You are responsible for developing the comprehensive initiatives that institutionalize the process, culture, mindset and behavioral changes required to ensure your company delivers a clear, compelling and consistent message in the market. This demands a significant shift in the C-suite's view of what marketing actually does. In the past, every marketing resource and dollar was focused on the company's external customer. This will not be the case in the future.

To be successful, you must cultivate awareness and advocacy within the four walls of your business. You must create an army of employees that have deep knowledge of the customer, understand the corporate message and how to activate that story in their daily work activities.

Your "why?" and "what's in it for me?" messaging is more important than ever.

To win over internal and external customers, you will need to evangelize the company's story and motivate stakeholders like never before. The "why" in your message will become more important — more important to your employees and your customers. Persistent marketing initiatives must be deployed to get your audience to embrace the message you are sending. That means a hyper "what's in it for me" messaging strategy will be critical to success — internally and externally. You must get employees to understand how the corporate story is relevant to their role in the organization. You have to get them to see how it makes them better at their job. With customers, you will need to speak to them in their language, from their point of view and convince them that you genuinely understand what it will take for "them" to be more successful — not why your company is successful.

Capturing insight is one thing. Intentional application is another.

There is no doubt that relevant and meaningful customer insights are more critical to the CMO's success than ever before. That insight pertains to all of your customers — employees and the actual buyer of your products, services and solutions. This means you will need to capture a true view of what matters most to employees that work in customer-facing areas of your business. You will also need to capture relevant data around your target buyer, develop accurate customer journey maps and create actionable persona profiles that drive your corporate story and marketing strategy. One data set without the other will not suffice.

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You need a plan for putting customer insights into action.

While everyone is talking about Voice of the Customer (VoC) and Voice of the Employee (VoE) — very few marketing executives have defined intentional processes for putting that knowledge into action. So, while capturing a holistic view of your internal and external customer is a start — it is just that — a start.

You must make sure the data you are after is actionable. You need to capture data that can be used to drive your marketing and messaging strategy. Data that tells you what your internal and external customers really care about. What motivates them? What frustrates them? What makes them buy more? And, what makes them walk away?

Make no mistake about it; deep and meaningful customer insights (internal and external) will drive successful corporate messaging development and delivery strategies in the future. So, if you are a CMO or striving to become one — make sure you not only have a game plan for gathering customer data — but an action plan for how you are going to use it to drive your strategy and story.

More Information:

For more information on how customer insights can improve your corporate strategy and story visit:
www.itsonmessage.com/pov

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