

# Don't Blame the Customer



BY GREG SCHINKEL

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*“No amount of “marketing” can push a bad product or service onto a customer and expect to last in the long term.*”

Customers can be demanding, difficult and hard to please. And we should be very thankful that they are a challenge. Many companies succeed and generate excellent profit margins because their customers are disorganized and get themselves into a difficult position where they need your help. If all your customers planned well and were completely organized they would be able to shop around more and your profit margins would be reduced.

You might want to consider banning any negative talk about customers, because without them there would be no paycheques or profits to worry about either.

It is easy for an organization to blame the customer for the problems they face. I hear variations of it in many of the organizations I work with: blame the customer for not buying; blame the customer for not responding to a marketing campaign; blame the customer for too many last minute changes.

**The Customer is Always Right, at Least in Their Own Mind**

You have heard the expression, “the customer is always right.” Now we know that the customer isn’t always right, however it could be said that, “the customer is always right in his/her own mind.”

This distinction is important because right or wrong, when the customer decides to vote with her feet and money, the impact is felt on your organization. Similarly in a “discussion” with my wife Robin I can choose between being “right” and spend quality time on the couch or allow her to be “right” which makes for a cosier bed time.

No amount of “marketing” can push a bad product or service onto a customer and expect to last in the long term. Many organizations think they know better what the customer wants, when in reality the customer isn’t buying it.

**Your Company Exists to Solve Problems**

Customers with high expectations help challenge your organization to achieve more. In fact your organization exists for the sole purpose of solving customer problems of one kind or another, and getting paid to do so. Seek out other customer problems you can solve and your company will grow and profits will increase.

Occasionally there will be customers who you are better off without. The ones that cost you more than you make. Before writing them off, consider how to provide the level of service they expect at a profit or perhaps form an alliance with another organization that might help them.

**Reflection Questions**

Does your organization blame the customer for it’s challenges? Are you an accomplice to this act? How could your organization be more customer-focused and earn record profits?

**Action Items**

- Listen for signs that your organization is blaming the customer for its woes.
- Ask questions that move your organization forward, “How can we win the business and maintain profitability?”
- Stop complaining about customers and start finding ways to make them happy at a profit.
- Instead of saying no to customers and telling them what you can't do, tell them what you can do to help them.
- Remember that the ultimate antidote to having difficult customers is having no customers at all...

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