



Can You Prove Your Value in Two Years?

by Curtis N. Bingham

**CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER
COUNCIL**



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Curtis Bingham is the recognized authority on chief customer officers and the first to promote this role as a catalyst for competitive advantage. He is the creator of the CCO Roadmap, a groundbreaking work containing 100+ critical strategies essential for customer centricity. As an international speaker, author, and consultant, Curtis is passionate about creating customer strategy to sustainably grow revenue, profit, and loyalty.

Universally, when CCOs land on the ground in a company they realize that they need to be as productive as possible as soon as possible. Your role might look a little different from the next CCO's, but the expectation is that you will achieve a deep understanding of what drives customer success and build or rebuild customer relationships accordingly. Our research shows it takes a *minimum* of two years to see positive results relative to the bottom line. If two years is the benchmark to prove your impact, then one thing is clear: you won't get there without a personal mission to focus your efforts on a few—not many—strategic areas.


Those who are succeeding at this monumental task have razor-sharp clarity about two things: they must own the interpretation of customer data and the voice of the customer, and they must correlate their role with revenue regardless of company size. We might even say they go beyond delivering value; they want to know that the customer is *gaining* value above and beyond an initial transaction. How can you achieve this kind of visible, communicable, and proven impact in such a short space of time?

Focus Your Process

It may go without saying, but achieving a deep understanding of customers and proving your value with data must fit into the context of a process. If a methodology is not in place, choose one that maps out what your strategic customer relationships look like and guides how you manage that lifecycle. It's likely that you are designing your own role and team or reinventing a sales and support organization, which is even more reason to have a road map. The right methodology allows you to efficiently organize how relationships all along their journey with you are managed and helps identify what experience is necessary for a customer-centric team to execute upon those relationships. In other words, process prevents you from flying blind, and from stretching beyond what you or your team members are capable of.

Recommendation: *Don't fly blind. Take a map with you.*

Focus Your Metrics



Metrics are imperative, but also where the greatest fine-tuning and drilling down is needed. Metrics are the most powerful tool for empowering transformation along the customer relationship path; they inform how and what you communicate and provide a visible framework of success relevant to the bottom line. However, a lack of focus when it comes to data leads nowhere, as even experienced CCOs have painfully learned.

Peter Quinn, CCO for Infor (formerly Lawson), admits he spent too much time in his first years analyzing data across the board and feeding it back to the organization. “This time around I need to do more upfront segmentation,” he says, “and make sure I identify the critical areas of the new business and engage quickly. I’m getting away from trying to help everyone. We can’t boil the ocean. The only sensible thing to do is to focus on building trustworthy data, directly explain that to high impact areas of the business and then ensure we deliver action rather than get into a cycle of analysis.”

Do less and focus more; probably a mantra that is universally applicable to all of us.

Good quality data can be achieved with the more obvious customer satisfaction surveys and Net Promoter Score, but your company mission as well as its process methodology will help to inform other appropriate picks. Use metrics to understand how customer-centric your relationship managers are. Conduct customer segmentation studies and measure those attributes against financial metrics to identify areas of greatest impact. Your data needs to be solid; it is the framework for everything you want to achieve. If you are able to drill that data down and articulate it well, you will earn the authority necessary to connect you to success and to bring other people on board.

Recommendation: Make sure your data paints a picture that leads to deeper understanding.


Focus on Employee Success

Since the borrowed or positional authority of a CCO only lasts so long, employees need to be connected to customer loyalty in a way that goes beyond monetary reward. They, too, need the standing ovation of a job well done. Competition can also be used to drive an organization toward the customer-centric approach, as Peter Quinn found when he instituted KPI metrics to do stack ranking of business units. Don’t leave it up to HR to figure out how to broadcast employee success stories; do it yourself, building your own authority in the process.

Recommendation: Use the power of praise to inspire and sustain employee engagement.

Focus on Customer Success

Across the board, CCOs report that making progress and customer successes visible—internally and externally—has been critical to their own personal success. Aside from possibly becoming a favorite part of your job, telling those stories will give you the most mileage per effort. The impact of stories on



culture has been well researched, and they can be told in multiple ways outside and across an organization.

Jennifer Maul at Vendavo made a strategic decision to focus on customer success and make that progress visible to the customers. She found the largest impact was felt when Vendavo publicly recognized people throughout the organization whose buy-in was essential to make customer success or turnaround happen. “Make a big, big deal out of it, and people will want to connect to it. You want that for your clients, and to model that approach.”

“At the end of the day, nothing speaks more loudly than a great track record and excellent execution.”

When your borrowed authority starts to wane you will need to be identified with the success of transformation, and if you have been the voice of the customer all along it will not be difficult for others to recognize the value of your role.

Recommendation: *Become the Voice and Chief Storyteller of the Customer.*

Conclusion

Deeper understanding is achieved by a focused process and even more focused metrics. Ultimately, your understanding of the context you are in gives you the ability to speak the same language as those you need to influence. It causes you to become empathic when people have issues, and better able to effect change. Ultimately, that is the level of trust you want to achieve as a result of all your hard work.*

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About CURTIS N. BINGHAM

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About THE CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER COUNCIL

The CCO Council is a powerful and intimate gathering of the world's leading customer executives from widely diverse industries. The Council helps executives achieve objectives faster and more easily by leveraging best practices. It helps validate and refine strategies and initiatives to avoid experimenting at customer expense. Membership is by invitation only, and purposefully cross-pollinated with the most forward-thinking companies, large and small, so as to help customer executives deliver solid, customer-centric business results. For more information, email info@ccocouncil.org or call 978-226-8675.



Powerful Influence on Customer Centricity – Authority is the currency of the C-Suite. Greater Authority means greater ability to influence the organization to take a desired action. So how do you increase your authority and better use the authority that's been granted to you? How can you build stronger relationships and demonstrate and communicate results? In this **Bingham Advisory**, you'll not only learn about the three types of chief customer officer authority: Positional, Borrowed and Earned, you'll also learn five ways to borrow and four ways to earn greater authority, with specific examples of each.

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