



Key Characteristics of the Successful CCO

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.

CEOs and Boards of Directors often feel daunted when it comes time to hire a CCO, there is a lack of a standard definition of the roles and responsibilities of the CCO and key characteristics of successful CCOs are still emerging.

The CCO is the company's change agent and spends most of his or her efforts "selling" customer centricity. The ability to influence both internal and external stakeholders is the single most important characteristic of the CCO. The CCO must be able to convince others that changes being proposed will positively affect the success of the company.

Skills

Above all else, the CCO must have leadership skills, including the ability to influence others. With limited resources and some skepticism it is critical that the CCO be action oriented, have analytic skills to evaluate data, make conclusions and turn them into programs. Negotiating agreement on initiatives requires good listening skills; solutions must be collaboratively developed in order to ensure buy-in across the organization. The CCO's advocacy for the consumer must be unwavering. Putting the customer front and center while balancing fiscal responsibility will keep the CCO focused on their mission.

Experience

When asked what experience a CCO should possess, one of the most successful CCOs stated that her broad understanding of business, especially operations, is her greatest asset. It gives her credibility and the ability to identify opportunities for customer improvements. Often organizations promote the "head of customer service" into the CCO role and while that individual may know customer service it is only a small part of creating a customer centric organization.

A white silhouette of a lighthouse with a beam of light shining from its lantern room, set against a blue background with a yellow and orange curved graphic element.

Personality and “Fit”

A critical criterion for CCOs is personality and how it fits within the culture or the desired culture of the organization. At the executive level of the corporation, CCOs must be able to leave their egos at the door. Collaboration with colleagues and department heads and the ability to influence them will be critical to success. Strong-arming or using positional or borrowed authority will marginalize even the best-formed programs. This collaborative approach must be balanced with the ability to project a strong presence and authority. The reality is that until the CCO is able to “demonstrate value” there are skeptics who will constantly challenge the role of CCO. A CCO must be “thick skinned,” able to de-personalize the skepticism, and defend a position that may not be popular or have negative short-term financial implications. For example, if a product release is known to have significant flaws, the CCO must be willing to delay the release even though it may result in a negative cash flow.

CCOs, CEOs and Boards of Directors must carefully consider the characteristics of the successful CCO. Without incorporating the characteristics discussed above the potential for hiring the right person diminishes.



About CURTIS N. BINGHAM

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About THE CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER COUNCIL

The Chief Customer Officer Council is the first of its kind; a member-led peer-advisory network offering unparalleled insight into the critical issues facing CCOs. It was created to provide a safe environment where CCOs can share ideas, concerns, and build best practices that will help them, their companies, and especially their customers succeed. The Council includes CCOs from diverse industries, purposefully cross-pollinated with the most forward-thinking companies, large and small. For more information, visit www.ccocouncil.org, email info@ccocouncil.org or call 978-226-8675.



Are You Experimenting at Your Customer's Expense? – In this article by Curtis N. Bingham, you'll learn seven ways to drive more profitable customer behavior, while minimizing the risk of negative consequences for your customers and their loyalty to your brand.

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