



Seven Strategies to Streamline Customer- Centric Culture Change

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.

A single, disgruntled employee can sabotage the work of hundreds, even thousands in a single destructive customer interaction. An uninformed policy change can destroy loyalty in a heartbeat. Successful chief customer officers recognize that efforts to improve customer experience are meaningless without a considered effort to change the culture. One company identified that only 6% of a measure of customer centricity was attributable to customer service; the other 94% came from other activities such as ease of deciphering bills, cleanliness and maintenance of company vehicles, and understandability of contracts. Customer centricity is much more than customer service or customer experience. It requires a significant change in attitude and culture across virtually 100% of the company. To be successful, the CCO must systematically inject the customer voice into the strategic decision-making processes, and ensure that customer needs are effectively balanced with business needs across the entire business. Becoming more customer-centric is paramount to success in executing customer strategy, improving customer experience, creating sustainable competitive advantage, and growing profits.

The following are seven strategies for making culture change far less painful:

Obtain executive leadership and support: Executive support for the CCO and cultural change must be constant and visible. Only the CEO has the sphere of influence to mandate change across all facets of the company, and the effective CCO will leverage this Borrowed Authority* to open doors and encourage people to listen. With the executive team, CCOs should create a clear definition of what customer centricity means, how the company plans to implement the concept, and how it will be measured.

Identify desired behaviors and measure their adoption: CCOs must clearly define, articulate, and gain consensus around ideal behaviors of a customer centric organization. Behaviors should be demonstrated from the top down, and those who consistently exhibit desired behaviors should be

recognized and rewarded. Clear and shared expectations and feedback will help employees understand the process and adoption of culture change.

Create direct and indirect incentives: Incentives, both direct and indirect, drive behavior change and can effectively be used to reward employees for embracing customer centricity. Direct incentives may be financial and take the form of a spot or annual performance bonus. Indirect incentives include personal and organizational recognition such as a personal voicemail from the CCO or recognition at a company awards banquet.

Educate and inform: Every new employee training should include a presentation by the CCO, providing clear and consistent expectations of the employee's contribution to customer centricity. Share case studies of employee and client successes on company intranets. Leverage departmental and company-wide meetings to reinforce key messages and content, share feedback on progress toward change goals, and to reward exemplary staff.

Create Allies and Heroes: Share far and wide the successes of the people involved in change efforts, making them "heroes" and examples for the rest of the organization to emulate. Make allies of leadership all the way up to the executive committee. In so doing, the CCO leverages greater Borrowed Authority and greater Earned Authority to continue making changes in other parts of the organization.

Hire for cultural fit: The CCO should define the characteristics of individuals who are most likely to embrace cultural change to gain customer centricity. Hiring managers can include those characteristics as part of the employee evaluation criteria.

Involve customers: Where appropriate, invite customers to tell their story personally or convey their expectations and experience through video or case study. Consider bringing disgruntled customers to meet with key executives, engineers, or support staff. Making the customers real personalizes the customer centricity imperative and leads to much stronger employee commitment.

Conclusion

Customer service and even customer experience are only a small part of becoming customer centric. You need to engage every employee in the business of serving customers. Using these seven strategies will help you as a CCO to overcome resistance to change, create a powerful customer-centric culture, and drive more profitable business results.^{†‡}

*For more information on CCO Authority, visit <http://www.ccocouncil.org/site/three-types-of-cco-authority.aspx>.

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‡This article is excerpted from *The Bingham Advisory: Eight Imperatives for the Chief Customer Officer*, available for free download from the CCO Council website at: <http://www.ccocouncil.org/thebinghamadvisory/>.



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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.



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The Bingham Advisory: Eight Imperatives for the Chief Customer Officer details strategies that enable you to be successful in driving customer centric culture and in creating sustainable competitive advantage, including:

- 6 key challenges to CCO success and the means to overcome them
- 9 metrics that need to be considered for the CCO dashboard
- 7 critical success factors for CCOs
- 7 strategies to support customer centric change, and more

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