ClearAction grows profit
by centering your business
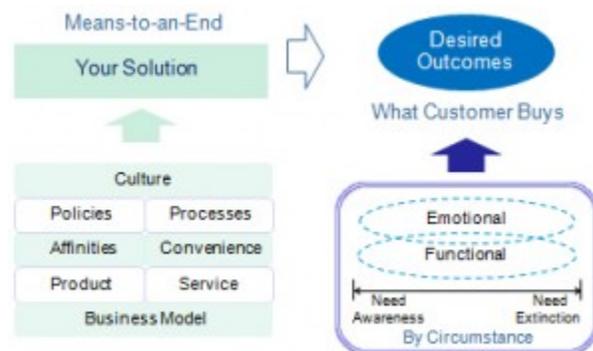on customers

ClearActionCX.com
+1 408 687 9700 tel

Why Satisfaction Surveys Aren't Customer-Centric
by Lynn Hunsaker

What's the difference between the way customers volunteer feedback versus the way they're requested to give feedback? One revolves around *outcomes in the customer's world*, whereas the other revolves around customer satisfaction *enablers in the company's world*. True customer-centricity requires primary focus and decision motivations be centered on the customer's world, rather than the company's.

What Are "Outcomes" in the Customer's World?
The concept of *customers' desired outcomes throughout the customer experience* originated in innovation literature when Clayton Christensen wrote his book, *The Innovator's Dilemma*, explaining that customers "hire" a product or service to get something done for them. When we understand the circumstances motivating the customer to hire a product or service, then we gain insight into the customer's *jobs-to-be-done*.

A great way to identify customers' desired outcomes throughout the customer experience is to scan customer-generated inputs on your brand category. Good sources of customer-generated inputs include contact center and sales call logs and social media. Ethnography, or observation research, is also instrumental in understanding outcomes in the customer's world. What value does your organization place on these *customer outcomes* sources relative to your formal research that is typically organized from a *customer satisfaction enabler* viewpoint? Why not consider revising formal research to focus on customer outcomes rather than enablers?

By really understanding customers' jobs-to-be done, constraints, work-arounds, hassles, and other elements of their world, new insights emerge for superior alignment with customers. Adopt the customers' jargon — don't make them adopt yours. Cater to the customers' world — don't make them cater to yours. Your jargon and world are *customer satisfaction enablers*, or a means-to-an-end toward customers' desired outcomes. The outcomes are the direct link to re-purchase behavior and propensity to recommend a brand. In the end, it's only the outcomes that matter.

Outcomes-Viewpoint Builds Customer-Centricity
What's the value of heightened sensitivity to jobs-to-be-done? Ironically, it's segmentation by circumstance-based jobs-to-be-done (rather than by demographics and psychographics) that yields creative breakthroughs and more meaningful value to customers. Christensen cites numerous examples of companies that have plodded along without much momentum in innovation, revenue and customer loyalty — until they shifted their paradigm to concentrate on

improving the customers' outcomes. Customer-centric companies proactively seek to improve customers' outcomes across all elements of the customer experience spectrum by innovating products, services, business models, policies, processes and behaviors. It's a paradigm shift for companies to quit concentrating on product and service features (customer satisfaction enablers; secondary focus), and to instead concentrate on helping the customer get a job done faster, more conveniently, and less expensively than before (customers' desired outcomes; primary focus).

The Milkshake Example

My favorite story about the value of *customers' desired outcomes* is from Clayton Christensen's subsequent book, *The Innovator's Solution*. He describes a fast-food business with a great reputation for milkshakes. As a customer-focused business, they monitored customer opinions and acted on customer feedback for continual improvement. Customer panels guided the introduction of thicker, richer, and cheaper versions (customer satisfaction enablers) … but without significant up-tick in business results. New research was begun to focus on the customers' jobs-to-be-done when they 'hired' a milkshake. The researchers chronicled everything about milkshake purchases during a full day at the restaurant: time of day, whether the customer was alone or with others, what else the customer bought with the milkshake, take-out or eat-in, etc. Surprisingly, about half the milkshakes were purchased as single-item take-out orders in the morning.

The researchers returned to ask morning customers what they were trying to get done when they bought the milkshakes, and what alternatives they used when they had to get the same job done. They discovered that most of the morning purchasers had a similar job-to-be-done: make a long commute more interesting! They weren't yet hungry, but they knew they would be by the time they arrived at their destination, unless they ate something along the way. They faced similar constraints: they were in a hurry, dressed in business clothes, and had only one free hand. Alternatives they considered (the business' true competitors — not just other milkshake businesses) were typically inferior relative to these constraints: bagels cause crumbs and sticky fingers, bananas get eaten too fast, breakfast sandwiches cause greasy fingers and get cold fast, and hunger pangs would quickly return with pastries. Considering the customer's world, the milkshake was pretty good at getting the job done: it satisfied hunger for the right amount of time and could be eaten with one hand, with minimal mess, and more slowly, to make the long commute more interesting (customers' desired outcomes).

The researchers also found that milkshake purchases at other times of the day were typically for children, along with purchase of a full meal. The parents were usually exhausted and wanted to feel like a loving parent by giving their child a treat. However, the milkshake was not a superior alternative for this job-to-be-done. Parents waited impatiently after they finished their own meal as the children struggled to consume the milkshake through the thin straw, often discarding the milkshake half-full.

Christensen says: "When researchers asked customers who have multiple jobs in their lives what attributes of the milkshake they should improve upon, and when the researchers then averaged consumer responses in the same demographic or psychographic segment, it led to a one-size-fits-none product" that wasn't ideal for any of the jobs that customers were trying to get done. In this example, creative breakthroughs (product, service, business model, policies, processes) were achieved for each of these *circumstance-based* jobs-to-be-done, providing more meaningful value to customers.

Map Desired Outcomes to Enablers

Thorough mapping of customers' desired outcomes to internal customer satisfaction enablers

OptimizeCX@ClearActionCX.com

allows outside-in thinking and behaviors. Once the mapping is verified, ongoing customer sentiment monitoring can be focused on the customer's world rather than the company's world. The translation to customer satisfaction enablers can occur within the company, through drill-down to root causes. Once root causes are verified, progress in resolving them can be predictive of what will occur in the customer's world. Foster true customer-centricity by setting up your customer satisfaction enablers to revolve around outcomes in the customer's world.

Let's discuss how to customize this to your situation; contact us at OptimizeCX@ClearActionCX.com