



Powerful Marketing Minutes
50 Ways to Develop Market Leadership
in the 21st Century

Book Excerpt
Chapter 2

The Customer Is King

We live in a world of change. As a matter of fact, the rate of change today is faster, and affects a larger portion of the earth's population, than at any other time in history. And, as some pundits like to repeat, "the only thing constant in our lives is change."

Tomorrow's world will require marketing-driven approaches to generate the level of success known as market leadership. My personal market-driven philosophy is "*if it touches the customer, it's a marketing issue*"TM."

Anything that touches your customers.....that impacts your customers or your prospects.....should be considered a marketing issue for your entire organisation. This marketing philosophy has led me to develop five customer-driven marketing strategies. Let me share the first one with you.

I call it the **golden rule of marketing: the customer is king.**

No, the customer is not always right. But the customer is still the customer, at all times. And as marketers, it is imperative that we fully understand and appreciate the needs of each and every one of our customers.

Thus, it is mandatory that everyone in the organisation who has contact with customers and prospects be taught how to investigate customer wants and needs. And, they need to be able to *fully understand and appreciate* these needs.

Then, your company needs to determine how it can best serve the needs of these customers profitably, efficiently, and consistently.

Bear in mind, of course, that it will be our customers who are the judges of how well your organisations satisfy their requirements. Our internal measures don't really matter, unless we are using the same measurement yardsticks as our customers.

I recall when I first joined a major international retail bank. On the first week on the job I was invited to a party, in celebration of the fact that the bank had just exceeded its own goals on the issuance of ATM cards to new account holders. The bank had achieved a 94% level of issuing these cards within seven days of new account openings for the previous month. It was the first time the team has surpassed the goal of 92%.

“Wonderful,” I thought. “We are willing to set a goal that leaves 8% of our customers less than satisfied.” However, not wanting to dampen the spirits of the team, I kept my initial thoughts to myself.

Later I enquired whether we had ever asked customers if seven days was satisfactory in their minds. Unfortunately, the reply I got was “no.” Hence, I made sure that in our next regular customer satisfaction survey we included a question on “how many days should it take for you to receive your ATM card after you open up a new account with us?”

As I recall, something like 85% of the respondents selected either three days or four days in response to this question. Hence, not only were we will to live with a statistical service measurement that said it was okay to not satisfy 8% of our new customers.....we didn't have a clue (until the research findings) that in fact we were actually disappointing the large majority of customers by using a measurement criteria that was not in tune with their own thinking.

Please remember, while the customer may not always be right, he or she is still the customer.

And in their hands lie the future fate of your businesses.

Key Point: *our customers are the judges of how well our organizations satisfy their requirements. Internal measures don't really matter, unless we are using the same measurement yardsticks as our customers.*

Discussion Topics: *ask your senior managers to brainstorm and develop a list of the things your organization tracks in relationship to customer satisfaction.*

When was the last time you checked these measurement yardsticks against the requirements of your customers? If it's been awhile, you might make it a high priority to conduct a Customer Satisfaction Survey with your existing clients and ask them how you're doing in relationship to their needs.

This Chapter is excerpted from Powerful Marketing Minutes by Steven Howard.

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