

# Creating a Customer-Centric Business

At our CEO Retreat 2018, attendees discussed how to use technology in a way that builds closer relationships with customers

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For many leadership teams, there is a sense of getting back to basics in terms of understanding what customers want. **Guillaume Bacuvier**, CEO of Dunnhumby, revealed how the data science specialist has had to re-evaluate its own approach to delivering the best service.

He explained: "A market-leading company is able to set the terms of what it sells, but sometimes, especially

when you are in a monopoly situation, it is easy to lose track of how the market is changing. That is essentially the mistake that Dunnhumby made – we stopped listening to our customers."

According to **Guillaume**: "It is easy to suddenly find yourself too expensive and too demanding in a market that you no longer recognise... You need to talk to your customers and prospects and find out how they want to work with you;

you need to find out if you are becoming too painful to work with, no matter how good the product that you offer is."

To stay close to customers, he argued, it's often necessary to reassess key performance indicators: "Most organisations are not organised around customers – some businesses will organise themselves around customer segments, but not that many. Therefore, the way that people think; the way that people >



delegate; and the way they measure themselves are typically based around KPIs that are either financial or functional, but not around customer satisfaction,” he said.

**Susanna Dinnage**, Global President of Animal Planet at Discovery, discussed how technology is changing the rules of engagement: “We have a global business and it can be difficult to agree metrics. With television, you used to be able to get accurate feedback from customers simply by looking at overnight viewing figures, but that has become only part of the story.

“[Today], more people watch programmes on-demand, on catch-up, over longer periods of time and often on connected devices. We have to learn to let go of some of our long-standing metrics, or at least re-calibrate them.”

In a highly competitive landscape, there can be no shortcuts when seeking to build loyalty. “You have to offer quality, appeal and exclusivity to customers. People also want more control, more information and easy access,” she added.

Another common theme to emerge was that executives and board-level directors need to be at ease with uncertainty, whether this is due to the rapidly evolving relationship with customers or other business challenges.

**Rachel Barton**, Customer and Digital Strategy Lead and Managing Director of Accenture Strategy, said: “Successful leaders today see themselves as facilitators; they flatten hierarchies and present themselves as a peer to their colleagues. They are more comfortable with ambiguity and more open to experimentation.

“This lends itself very well to navigating some of the challenges posed by technological trends.”

For **Rachel**, these types of leaders will have the mindset to find points of convergence between different problems and then join them up. “Through the use of disruptive innovation, we will suddenly start to have more people-centric businesses,” she added.

## Higher Purpose

When building healthy customer relationships, businesses need to reflect on more than the quality of what they are offering, as **Guillaume** explained: “To be customer-centric is not necessarily always about the product that you sell, but about making sure it is sold in a way that customers like.”

According to **Matthew Blagg**, CEO of Criticleye, companies also need to realise that success is not entirely dependent on selling: “There is certainly a challenge to use new technology in a way that gets businesses closer to their customers, but this goes hand-in-hand with developing a proven sense of integrity in what you do, day-in and day-out,” he said.

“Fundamentally, if you want to create high performance, stakeholders need to trust you and that comes from the tone set by those at the top of the organisation. Without trust, you’ll be criticised externally and have discontent and dysfunction sown from within.”

**Susanna** agreed on the importance of appreciating an organisation’s wider social impact: “Viewers want to know what your higher purpose is; what your

ethics are as a business. There is an assumption that a brand like ours is out there making a difference on behalf of its customer base, and they are holding us to account on that.”

It was a point that **Rachel** made in her keynote speech, as she posited one version of the future where businesses utilised technology solely for the pursuit of profit, and another where artificial intelligence, robotics, 3D printing and other forms of disruptive tech were used to promote a higher good, such as reducing illness and promoting equality.

“We need to extend business-led problems and solutions in a much more far-reaching way, so we are tackling the societal changes that we know we are going to have to face,” she said. ■

To read a longer interview with Rachel, [click here](#)

To find out more about how Criticleye supports and inspires senior leaders to succeed, please [click here](#)

Featuring Commentary From:



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