

WINNING CUSTOMERS

A VICTORY GUIDE

James H. Saylor

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FORWARD

This book is part of the VICTORY series. For over 30 years, the pursuit of a simple, easy-to-use, proven, inexpensive management system for any organization has been my focus. MANAGING FOR VICTORY™ is this system. The MANAGING FOR VICTORY™ system includes:

Visioning creates a common focus

Involving everyone establishes a superior organization

Continuously improving achieves excellence

Training, educating, coaching, facilitating, mentoring develops a learning culture

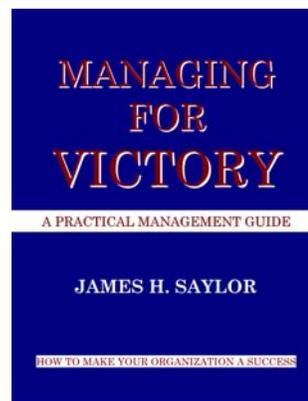
Owning the work fosters empowerment

Recognizing and rewarding builds high performance

Yearning ensures success

Customers drive VICTORY

Progressive Leaders guide VICTORY



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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WINNING CUSTOMERS

CUSTOMERS ARE THE **POWER**.

Customers must drive victory. Customers power purpose, people, process, performance, pride, praise and passion in the organization. The organization's success or failure depends on winning customers. Therefore, it is primary importance to the organization to determine its customer driver or customer drivers. The customer driver is not always obvious. The organization must become intimately knowledgeable of customers to determine its customer driver. Once the organization knows the customer driver, the customer driver must be synthesized into the organization to drive VICTORY.

Since the customer drives the organization, the organization needs to constantly focus on the customer. Customers can make or break an organization. Different customers have unique needs and expectations. Therefore, each customer sets its own requirements for satisfaction. Customers are always customers and they deserve to be treated special. By orienting everyone in the organization with the importance of customers, they can all work toward getting and keeping customers. The key is to listen to the customer to ensure the organization's offering meets the customer's requirements. Finally, the organization should always be aware of customer relationships. Customer considerations include:

Can make or break organization

Unique needs and expectations

Set total customer satisfaction targets

Treat customers as special

Orient everyone in the organization with a customer focus

Make getting and keeping customers the goal

Engage the “voice” of the customer in product/service design

Relate to customers as long-term partners

Customer - Can Make or Break Organization

The primary purpose of any organization is to satisfy the customer.

The customer allows the organization to exist. This is true of every organization (profit or non-profit), company, partnership, sole proprietorship, department, function, group, or team. Without customers and the organization's ability to fulfill customer's needs, there will be no organization. Customers' influences profit. They pay the wages of the organization's employees. The customer brings into being the organizational structure. It is the customer that dictates product quality and service quality. The customer determines inventory. It is the customer that determines on-time delivery. The customer defines performance of the organization. The customer pulls all the organization's processes. The customer defines organizational excellence. Therefore, the customer drives everything for the organization.

Since the customer ultimately makes or breaks the organization, the focus on profit as the primary purpose of an organization is obsolete. As shown in figure 1, the successful organization strives to meet customer expectations through the continuous improvement of processes, people, and product focusing on total customer satisfaction. This promotes the use of best business practices, which leads to excellent organizational systems. This provides total customer satisfaction. The chain reaction starts with customer expectations, with total customer satisfaction the focus of all efforts. This results in a successful organization. The definition of success varies organization by organization. It can mean survival, growth, profits, return on investment, the stockholder dividends, etc. The view of total customer satisfaction applies to both the external and the internal customers. The entire organization must be aimed at satisfying the ultimate user of the product or services. Within the organization, each process pleases the next process in the chain. Everyone works with an internal supplier and customer relationship to improve their process for total customer satisfaction of both internal and external customers.

In summary, customer can make or break the organization. The customer is the reason for the existence of any organization. They expect satisfaction. Customers allow payments. They set quality standards. Customers receive the output of the organization's processes. Therefore, customers drive the organization.

Customer - Can Make or Break Organization **Considerations**

RReason for existence

Expects satisfaction of needs

Allows payments, including wages

Sets product quality and service quality

Obtains output of processes

Needs to be driver of the organization

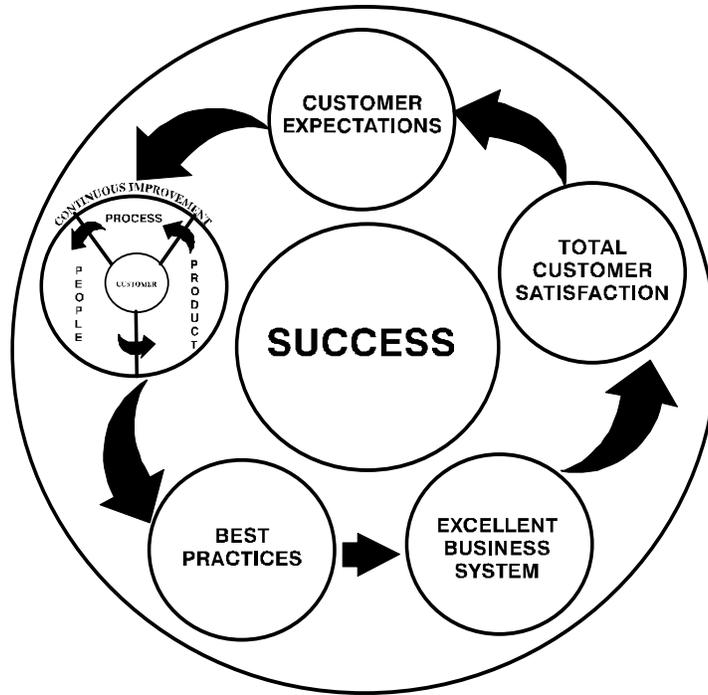


Figure 1 **Chain reaction of success.**

Customer - Unique Needs and Expectations

Customers are a moving target.

Each customer and each organization is different. Therefore, in order to focus on total customer satisfaction, the organization must know customer(s), know itself, know competition and know products/services. By knowing its customers, the organization focuses the development of relationships to keep and gain customers both internal and external. By knowing itself, the organization understands what it can do to satisfy its customers. By knowing the product/service, it allows the organization to position the deliverable to maximize total customer satisfaction. By knowing the competition, targets can be established for gaining advantages in the marketplace.

In addition, the organization queries customers. Further, the organization uses the information and continuously evaluates results. The organization asks “What can we do to satisfying customers?”

Figure 2 shows the customer process. Each customer has unique wants, needs, expectations, desires, requirements and experience. These inputs drive the organization to achieve total customer satisfaction.



Figure 2 **Customer process.**

Customer - Unique Needs and Expectations Considerations

Understand your customer and your organization

Note you and your competitions' offerings

Identify customer drivers

Query customers

Use information

Evaluate results

Customer - Set Total Customer Satisfaction Targets

Customers establish customer satisfaction.

As stated earlier, the target for any organization is total customer satisfaction. Customers are the only ones who can determine total customer satisfaction. In order to know if the customer is satisfied, intense interaction and observation is necessary. Only through interaction, observation, communication, especially listening, and measurement can the organization determine total customer satisfaction. The organization must use every means available to set total customer satisfaction targets.

It is important to keep in mind that the target is total customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction implies fulfilling the customer's needs and expectations, and not just providing the product or service. By going beyond just servicing customers, you will satisfy both yourself and your customers.

Therefore, the organization needs to establish metrics of total customer satisfaction with the customer driving the total satisfaction metrics. The total customer satisfaction

considerations provide a starting point for defining total customer satisfaction metrics. The following are total customer satisfaction considerations:

Service and product quality

Adaptability

Time, speed and responsiveness

Integration with customer's systems

Support

Flexibility

Availability

Consistency

Technology

Involvement of customer

Optimization of business processes

Needs and expectations

Customer - Treat Customers as Special

The customer is always a Very Important Person.

Your customers are customers. Therefore, they deserve to be treated as special. To ensure that the organization is continuing to satisfy the customer, managing the relationship with the customer is crucial. Relationships demand continuous attention. You need to be responsive and respectful to the customer at all times. Ultimately, as in all relationships, communications is the key.

The organization treats customers as special by spending time with the customer. The organization keeps promises. The old adage under-promise and over-deliver goes a long way in making a customer feel special. The organization shows understanding of the customer by empathizing with the customer. In addition, the organization needs to demonstrate caring for the customer by paying personal attention to special needs and expectations. Above all, the customer must be made to feel important. This is where communication, especially listening, is essential. The customer needs to be involved in as many aspects of the product as possible. Support must be available to help the customer with the product or service after it is received. Responsiveness is the key to continuing the relationship. The organization must be able to respond to the needs of the customer in any situation. The following are considerations for treating customers special:

Spend time with your customer

Provide what you promise

Empathize with your customer

Care for your customer

Insure your customer(s) feel important

Attend to your customer

Listen to your customer

Customer - Orient Everyone in the Organization with a Customer Focus

Everyone contributes to total customer satisfaction.

Everyone in the organization must have a customer focus. The organization must focus on customer satisfaction of both internal and external customers. Figure 3 shows the relationships of internal and external customers. Each process is the customer of the next process. These are the internal customers. If each internal customer satisfies the next internal customer while focusing on external customer satisfaction, the ultimate customer -- the external customer -- will be satisfied.

The organization needs to adopt a customer-focused organizational culture. This is a culture where everyone in the organization is driven by customer value. In order to build a customer-focused organizational culture, customers need to be included in internal process planning. In addition, the organization should create opportunities for customer interaction

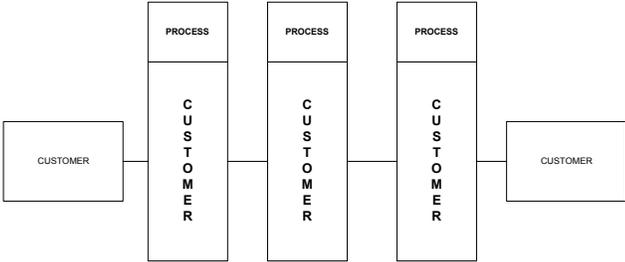


Figure 3 Customer relationships.

Customer - Orient Everyone in Organization with a Customer Focus Considerations

Adopt a customer-focus organizational culture

Include customers in internal process planning

Maximize customer interaction

Customer - Make Getting and Keeping Customers the Goal

Business is getting and keeping customers.

The main goal of any business is getting and keeping customers. This is the essence of any organization. Organizations must get and keep customer to survive and thrive. The following sections provide processes for getting and keeping customers.

Customer - Getting Customers

Create value for your customer.

In order to get customers, you must first have a product or service worth paying for. The organization must provide some benefit to a customer and the benefit must have value to the customer. This requires understanding the customer's needs and expectations, determining how to meet those needs and expectations, and delivering total customer satisfaction. You get customers by:

Viewing deliverables from the customers' standpoint

Aiming for the right customers

Looking to establish organizational excellence

Understanding your customers

Ensuring it is easy for any customer to do business with you

Value - View Deliverables from the Customers' Standpoint

Walk in your customers' shoes

The first step to getting customers is having a deliverable that customers will buy. This starts with understanding the customer's needs and expectations from the customer's standpoint. The identification of customer values requires systematic, thorough, and continuous research. The most important aspect of this process is to listen to the customer. Listening is continually emphasized in this book. Executives, managers and associates must continuously listen to their customers.

It is important to use as many tools and techniques as possible to understand your customers. Some of the most common tools are described in this book. It is essential that in understanding customers, the organization empathize with the customer. You need to walk in the customers' shoes. See, feel, and touch your deliverable as a customer. This includes the total customer experience from sales contact, ordering, delivery, billing, etc.

The organization must know all there is to know about its deliverables to achieve total customer satisfaction. This includes knowing all the aspects of the deliverable. The deliverable is an output of a process that is provided to a

customer (internal/external) and includes product, services, information, etc. The deliverable is all aspects contributing to total customer satisfaction. This can include such items as: product quality, reliability, maintainability, availability, customer service, support services, supply support, support equipment, training, delivery, billing, marketing, value and so on. Again, every one of these elements of the deliverable must focus on customer satisfaction. The product or services may be the best in the marketplace, but it is the entire deliverable that contributes to total customer satisfaction. If the deliverable does not provide total customer satisfaction, the customer will not be satisfied and most likely will go elsewhere to find a deliverable that gives total customer satisfaction.

Total customer satisfaction includes all elements required to satisfy the target customer(s) both internal and external. This can be items such as:

- product quality
- service quality
- value
- performance
- availability
- durability
- aesthetics
- reliability
- maintainability
- consistency
- easy-to-do business with
- doing what is promised
- doing what is expected
- provide value
- low cost
- superior technology
- or any other characteristic that satisfies customers' needs and expectations.

Value - Aim for the Right Customers

Shooting at the wrong target is a waste.

Your deliverables must be targeted for the right customers. Too many organizations try to be all things to all customers. This is a mistake. Some customers want your deliverable but they do not earn you a profit. Some customers really like your deliverable but they cannot buy your deliverable. Some customers favor your competition. Some customers do not need all your elements of total customer satisfaction. You need to identify the customers that can lead to your success.

As stated in the chapter on determining the customer-driver, finding the right customer may be complex for some organizations. You should use the same action process for finding the right customer as the customer driver. Organizations may have many customers; many types of customers and customers may change. Targeting the right customers is different for every organization. In many organizations, the customer-driver may be an ideal customer or customers as determined by the organization.

Value - Look to Establish Organizational Excellence

You need to deliver customers' expectations at manageable cost.

Once you know the customer's expectations, you need to meet those expectations. When you consistently meet customer expectations, you have achieved organizational excellence. The customer defines organizational excellence. The customer tells you everyday whether you are excellent or not. Customers vote everyday by doing business with you or not doing business with you. In addition, you need to constantly measure yourself from the customers' view.

Value - Understand Your Customer

The customer is always the customer.

You may have a deliverable worth paying for. You may have identified the right customers to buy your deliverable. You may have an excellent organization. However, you still need to understand your customer on a daily basis.

Customer needs are not static; they are always changing. Customers may have different needs at different times. Once customer needs are identified, these needs must be continuously monitored to ensure the product and/or service still satisfies them. People have different needs from basic survival needs, such as eating and sleeping, to total fulfillment of one's life goal. Customers satisfy lower-level needs before higher-level ones. A need once satisfied is often no longer a need.

Needs are constantly replaced by other needs due to the changing world environment. Rapidly changing technology, differing tastes, differing economic conditions and rising expectations due to past successes are some of the many factors influencing customer changes.

In addition to the changeability of customers, there are different behavior styles of customers. These styles are typically classified into groups depending on personality patterns. Although a customer may have a predominate style, the style may change based on the situation. All of these issues complicate the process of understanding customers. The action process below provides guidelines to help learn from your customer during any interaction.

Listen

Empathize

Acknowledge

Respond

Negotiate

The process starts with listening to the customer. You should always empathize with the customer's point of view. This should be acknowledged to the customer by showing that you understand their concern, point of view or statement. This can be accomplished by simply agreeing with the customer or restating customer's words in your own words. Once you listen to the customer, you can respond by asking questions to gain more understanding. You must respond and listen until you understand the customer. You may even have to return to showing empathy and acknowledging based on new points. Your response should be aimed at seeking a win-win agreement for both parties. Once you understand the customer, you begin negotiation. You negotiate with the customer until you both agree.

Attend

Gather

Review

Establish

Evaluate

During negotiation, attend to the customer. Look for verbal and non-verbal clues. Gather information by asking questions focused on win-win solutions. Review points of agreement. Establish a win-win resolution. Evaluate and formalize the solution

Value - Ensure That It Is Easy for the Customer to Do Business with You

A smile is not enough.

It has been shown time and again that companies lose customers because they are difficult to do business with. Everyone has a customer experience with too much or complex paperwork; an indifferent or unknowledgeable service worker; getting the runaround when trying to return a product, getting the wrong information when asking for assistance; waiting for approval or holding on the phone. The best way to show that the organization cares is by making it easy to do business with them.

The organization needs to examine their business process and people development. Every business process must be focused on the customer. Business processes must be refined, redesigned, reengineered, and revised from the customer inward.

In today's world, there are many ways to improve business processes to help the organization make it easy to do business with them. The business process must be looked at as a complete system. The organization must examine every customer contact point within the organization from customer service center to warehouse to billing, and every method of contact from face-to-face interaction, telephone, fax, computer systems, internet, ebusiness, and ecommerce. Every customer contact to a business process must aim for total customer satisfaction.

It is not only necessary to have excellent business systems; you need outstanding people to make your organization easy to do business with. Despite the many technological innovations in today's world, people do business with people. Technology can certainly make it easier for people to do business with people, but people make the

difference in every organization. The people in a customer-driven organization must all care about helping customers. They must have a desire to make a difference and constantly grow. These people go beyond being robots. They not only know the “what.” They know the “why” they are doing something.

Customer - Keeping Customers

Show customers you **CARE**.

Many organizations focus most of their efforts on getting customers. The cost is substantially higher getting customers than keeping them. Once an organization has a customer base, the organization needs to spend time and money keeping customers and growing revenue with current customers. The essence of keeping customers is truly caring for your customers. You must care for your customers. Care means you have unconditional acceptance of your customer as your customer. You want to share with your customers. You want to please your customers. You want mutual trust and respect with your customer. You want to have a relationship with your customer. You want your customer to accept you as you accept them. You want your customer to win when you win.

When your organization consists of one person, caring for the customer depends entirely on you. Organizations usually have more than one person. Therefore the challenge is assuring that each person in the organization cares for customers in the same consistent manner as an owner. The following provides guidelines for keeping customers:

Communicate, especially listen

Attend to customer satisfaction

Respect the customer

Encourage long-term constructive relationships

Care - Communicate, Especially Listen

You have two ears and one mouth for a reason.

Communication of the right information is a complex process including many verbal and non-verbal forms. These include: speaking, listening, observing, writing, and reading. Because of this complexity, the information may not be communicated correctly. Even in the simplest communication model with just a sender, message, and receiver, there are many obstacles to effective communication. For communication to be effective the sender must be credible, the message must be clear, and the receiver must interpret it the way the sender intended. For example, if the receiver does not trust the sender, the sender may not be able to communicate with the receiver. Regardless of the message, communication will be ineffective.

Communication gets even more complex if we add reality to the model. Rarely do we have communication with just a sender, message, and receiver. Normally, there are many distractions. We are influenced by our work environment i.e., political pressure, fear. We are thinking about other things going on at home while in the workplace. We have different values, cultures, perceptions, etc. Communication can be improved by the following:

Clarify the message

Observe body language

Maintain everyone's self-esteem

Make your point short and simple

Understand others' points of view

Nurture others' feelings
Involve yourself in the message
Comprehend the message
Attend to the message of others
Talk judiciously
Emphasize listening

Feedback

Because of the possibility of ineffective communication, it is critical to ensure through feedback that the right information is communicated. It is always the responsibility of the sender to ensure effective communication. Feedback involves providing information back to the sender to verify the communication. Feedback can indicate agreement, disagreement, or indifference. Feedback like communication can be verbal and/or non-verbal. Some guidelines on effective feedback follow:

Foster an environment conducive to sharing feedback
Encourage feedback as a matter of routine
Establish guidelines for providing feedback
Discuss all unclear communications, paraphrase and summarize
Be direct with feedback
Ask questions to get a better understanding
Consider "real" feelings of team members
Keep focused on the mission

Listening

Listening is a technique for receiving and understanding information. Listening skills are critical to effective teamwork. Listening is one of our most important communication needs but it is the least developed skill. Effective listening requires an effort to understand the ideas and feelings the other person is trying to communicate. An effective listener hears the content and the emotion behind the message. Expert listening requires active behavior. It requires an effort. It requires attention to the person and the message. An active listener attends to not only what the person is saying, but also to gestures, posture, and vocal qualities. It means actively communicating that you are listening and trying to understand the other person. It requires discipline, concentration, and practice. Effective listening requires the following:

Let others convey their message

Involve yourself in the message

Summarize and paraphrase frequently

Talk only to clarify

Empathize with others' views

Nurture active listening skills

Let the other person convey his or her message without interrupting or forcing your own views. This is accomplished by letting the other person know you are interested in what they are communicating without displaying an opinion or judgment.

Involve yourself in the message by actively listening to what the other person is communicating. Establish and

maintain eye contact. Keep an alert posture. Look for verbal and non-verbal cues.

Summarize and paraphrase frequently to show an understanding of the message. By listening carefully and then rephrasing in your own words the content and feelings of the other person's message, the exact meaning of the message can be determined.

Ask questions to clarify points you do not understand. Points can be clarified by using open-ended questions. This type of question with an answer other than yes or no provides a more detailed explanation.

Understanding the other person's views is essential to effective listening. Set aside your opinions and judgments and place yourself in the other person's place. Show the other person you understand by requesting more information or by sharing a similar feeling or experience you've had and how you think it helps you understand the other person.

Nurture listening skills to improve communication. Listening skills must be practiced daily.

Care - Attend to Customer Satisfaction

Customer Satisfaction is not the same as customer service.

You must pay attention to your customer. If you do not apply your mind during customer interaction, you will lose the customer. You should apply your mind to not only meet your customers' needs and expectations but also even to anticipate customer needs.

You do a disservice to both yourself and your customers if you just give "customer service." For you to keep customers, it is necessary for you to go beyond customer service to total customer satisfaction. The difference is simple. The supplier sets customer service. The customer

defines customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction implies fulfilling the customer's needs and expectations not just by providing the deliverable. By going beyond just servicing customers, you will satisfy both yourself and your customers.

As an example, one company use a Customer Bill of Rights to outline the organization's focus on customer satisfaction

Customer Bill of Rights

Customers deserve and have the right to expect the following:

- ◆ People who care about meeting customer needs
- ◆ Prompt response to inquiries
- ◆ Communication as to availability, shipment or other concerns about an order
- ◆ Quality product and quality service
- ◆ Product just-in-time for their needs
- ◆ Quick and fair resolution of problems
- ◆ Delivery on any and all promises

The best way to systematize attention to customers is by establishing customer-driven metrics and standards for customer satisfaction. What gets measured gets paid attention to and what gets paid attention to gets done.

Care - Respect the Customer

Treat each customer like they would like to be treated.
(Platinum Rule)

Customers want to do business with an organization that respects them. Many organizations take their customers for granted or they dictate to them or they think they are stupid. In short, they do not respect their customers. This is a major

error that could be fatal. With a foundation built on respect, a long-term relationship with customers can be established for mutual benefit.

Everyone in the organization must consider the customer worthy of high regard. In summary, the organization should:

Respond to your customer(s)

Empathize with your customer(s)

Spend time with your customer(s)

Produce for your customer(s)

Encourage your customer(s)

Care for your customer(s)

Talk to your customer(s)

Care - Encourage Long-Term Constructive Relationships

When there is not much difference between your product and the competitor's product, the difference is the relationship.

With a foundation built on respect, a long-term relationship with customers can be established for mutual benefit. Long-term relationships grow from rapport and trust. Establish rapport and building trust with your customers is critical to keep customers and build a winning organization.

Like all relationships, customer relationships require communication, support, and responsiveness. Communication, especially listening, is essential. The customer needs to be involved in as many aspects of the product as possible. Support must be available to help the customer with the product after the product is received.

Responsiveness is the key to continuing the relationship. The organization must be able to respond to the needs of the customer in any situation.

Customer - Engage the “Voice” of the Customer in Product/Service Design

Customers make the product/service.

Customers drive the future of any organization. Therefore, the organization must engage customers in the product/service design. They define quality—total customer satisfaction. In many cases, organizations are missing this simple truth. As a result, these companies are providing the wrong product and services because these organizations have taken the customer out of design and development activities. They focus on pushing the product or service on the customer, rather than the customer pulling a product or service out of the organization. The organization should:

Design in quality as defined by the customer

Require customer or customer voice on design team

Include both external and internal customers

Visualize “perfect” product/service

Evaluate own capabilities

Review the deliverable(s)

Customer - Relate to Customers as a Long-Term Partner

The sale starts the relationship.

Like all relationships, customer relationships require long-term commitment. This commitment is like a marriage. Ultimately, as in all marriages, communication is the key. The sale begins the marriage. How good the marriage depends on how well the relationship is managed by the seller. The relationship determines the extent of the business. Whether there will be continued or expanded business or troubles and divorce, and whether costs or profits increase.

Customer – Relate to Customer as a Long-Term Relationships Considerations

Manage the relationship

Attend to needs and expectations

Respond to changes

Respect the customer

Yearn for communication

ACTION PROCESS

The essence of any organization's existence is winning customers. This is an essential act of any organization. The specific necessities are outlined in the sections that follow.

It is critical that the customer-driven focus statement not only be created but it must be written as a document that guides the organization.

The customer and/or customer's voice must drive all aspects of the organization.

The organization must constantly look for ways to determine customer needs and expectations.

Organizational performance must be measured based on customer expectations through metrics.

The organization must create and normalize customer-driven metrics.

Everything in the organization must be continually reviewed, revised, refined, and revisited to ensure it is meeting customers' expectations.

The winning customers' action process can be summarized by:

Write a customer focus statement

Integrate the customer and/or customer voice into the organization

Name customer needs and expectations

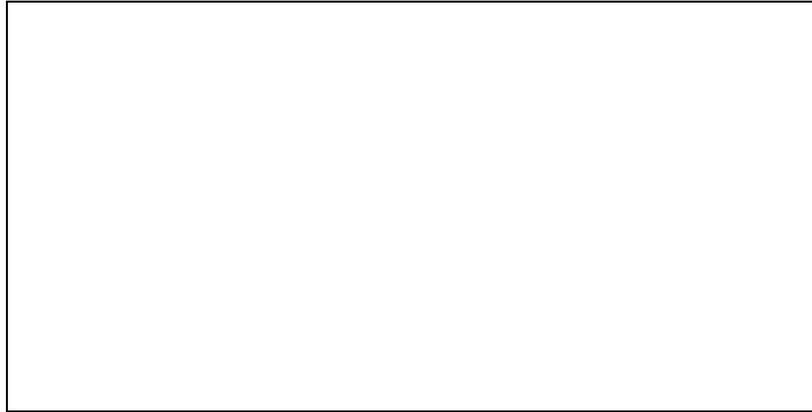
Normalize customer metrics

Evaluate organizational performance based on customer metrics

Revise, refine and revisit continually

Write a customer focus statement

1. Look at your organization and create a view of perfections from your customer's viewpoint.



2. From your view of perfection, write a customer focus statement.

Identify customer-driver(s)

1. The organization must list all customers affected by the organization.

Output/Deliverable(s)	Customers

2. The customer list must be thoroughly analyzed for specific groupings i.e. internal customers, direct customers, indirect customers, end-users, etc.

Customers	Customer Group

3. The organization defines ultimate customer selection criteria. This must be based on success factors. For example, the organization may determine profitability is the selection success factor.

Criteria for Success

- 4. The organization selects the customer(s) most critical for success. The customers meeting the profitability criteria would be selected as critical customers for success.

Customers	Score Based on Criteria

- 5. These customer-drivers become the initial influencers of the organization. My customer driver(s) are:

Name customer needs and expectations

- 1 Complete the following tables to determine customer needs and expectations.

Customer (internal/external)	They depend on me for:

2. Translate customer needs and expectation into an output or deliverable.

Customer needs and expectations	I meet customer needs and expectations by:

Normalize metrics

Complete the following table to establish metrics for each deliverable.

My customers are satisfied when:	I measure this by:

Evaluate organizational performance

Customer Metric	My current performance is:	Met/Not Met

2. Create an Action Plan.

Action	Who	When	Status

