



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO  
**CUSTOMER  
CENTRICITY**

[business.critizr.com](https://business.critizr.com)



“Customer centric” has become quite the buzzword lately, though not everyone seems convinced. It’s true that some companies have taken it to the extreme or treated it more like a trendy concept than a real approach to doing business. This idea nevertheless remains a priority for a large number of companies that have understood what’s at stake.

While many directors consider their companies to be customer centric, there’s often a significant gap between perception and what customers actually experience. For example, 80% of companies think they’re providing top-notch customer service, while only 8% of customers agree.

Are you ready to transition to a real customer-centric strategy? Why not get on the same page with your customers and move all your indicators to green?

To help you plan your switch, Critizr for Business has written the ultimate guide to following a customer-centred approach. Read on for down-to-earth advice, best practices, statistics, and concrete examples from companies. Now is the time to become truly customer centric. Get your company on the right track today.

FIRST PART

# CONCEPT

“Customer centricity” is so trendy right now that you’ve doubtless heard someone mention it before. While most companies claim to be customer centric, the reality is often far from the truth. Being customer centric doesn’t just mean focusing on your customer portfolio or customer service offer. Because the term is too often reduced to a cliché, we thought it important to take a closer look at the original concept.



## A REAL COMPANY CULTURE

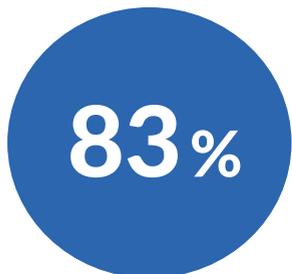
Improving customer focus is a comprehensive process that involves **putting customers at the centre of every decision the brand makes**. The idea isn't that "the customer is important", but that "the customer is at the heart of our concerns and all our actions must reflect that fact".

**This thought process affects the entire organisation** and not just the departments that are traditionally customer centred, such as the customer service and after-sales service departments. A customer-centric strategy profoundly changes a company's culture and must be understood and accepted by each and every employee.

## THE CUSTOMER, NOT THE PRODUCT, IS THE PRIORITY

Customer centricity is the opposite of product centricity, an approach that has always governed brands' decisions. Instead of trying to create the best product, customer centricity seeks to develop the best solution for the customer. Instead of constantly trying to invent new products, this model works to continuously optimise the customer experience.

While it might seem like a minor change on the surface, this approach profoundly alters the way companies shape their strategies. Some brands, including Decathlon, even go so far as to include customers in the product development process. This is a fantastic idea!



### Customer centricity, strategic priority.

83 % of companies cite customer centricity as a strategic priority. However, the actual number of businesses that pursue this goal is far less...



## A CONCEPT THAT RELIES ON KNOWING THE CUSTOMER BETTER

Switching to a customer-centric model requires knowing your customers better. After all, how can you meet the needs of a customer you don't really know? How can you improve their experience if you don't actually know what they think?

**Customer knowledge forms the foundation of customer centricity.** In order to prioritise your actions, you need to identify your “best customers”. While it's important to take all your customers into account, your most loyal customers must be a special priority.

## BASED ON EMPATHISING WITH AND LISTENING TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

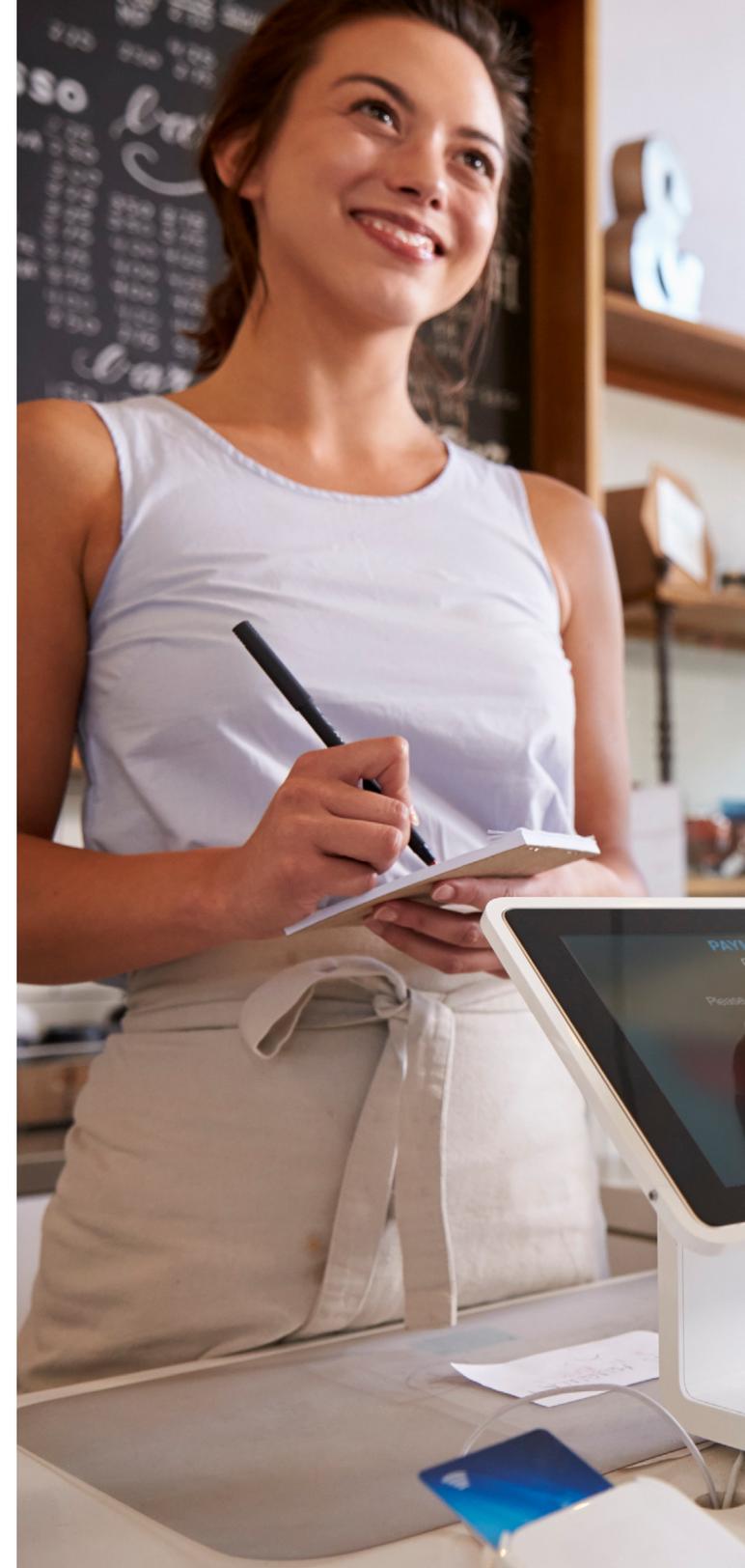
Customer centricity is closely tied to empathising with and listening to your customers. You have to truly understand **the emotions that cause customers to act** and put yourself in their shoes when they experience problems.

The goal is to make customer relationships more fluid and human and offer a pathway that's more in line with their expectations. You must also balance this with making a profit, which is the ultimate purpose of your company.



« The customer relationship service should not be a separate department. Instead, it should permeate the entire company. »

Tony Hsieh, Co-Founder of Zappos



SECOND PART

# STAKES

These days, markets are saturated and highly competitive, and customers are increasingly demanding and volatile. Buyers tend to compare products and companies before deciding where to spend their money and are less and less sensitive to advertising. They prefer to read recommendations from their peers, including friends and family, as well as online customer feedback. Against this backdrop, customer centricity plays an even more important role when it comes to addressing these various issues.





## IMPROVING CUSTOMER KNOWLEDGE

Because it requires companies to have a closer relationship with their customers, adopting a customer-centric policy goes hand in hand with improving customer knowledge. Having a more complete understanding of your customers' needs means offering successful products. By actively listening to customers, you'll be able to **identify new needs** and growth opportunities that you weren't aware of previously.

## IMPROVING AND PERSONALISING YOUR CX

The increase in both competition and the number of products on offer have created challenges for companies and given consumers more choice. One of the goals of a customer-first strategy is to know what your customers like and dislike in order to take corrective action.

Eliminating sources of dissatisfaction will allow you to offer a **unique and engaging customer experience**. By optimising a customer's experience with your company, you can encourage repeat business and develop the loyalty of customers who are increasingly fickle.

60%

### Customer centricity's profitable !

60% of customer-centric companies are more profitable than those that aren't according to a study by Deloitte & Touche.



## The Decathlon example

Through its internal motto, “Happy athletes are my job”, Decathlon conveys a strong company culture. **Customer service is every employee’s bread and butter.** Decathlon doesn’t define itself as being “customer centric” but “user centric”, meaning the final user of the product is the company’s prime focus.

The user must enjoy the product, and the product has to meet the customer’s needs exactly. To meet these goals, Decathlon **actively listens to its customers by collecting feedback often.** This feedback lets the company improve products and create new ones on a daily basis. Customers sometimes even help with the product design process directly!

## BUILDING YOUR BRAND IMAGE

A great way to help your brand stand out from the competition is to ensure that purchasing a product in your store is a unique experience. Creating a close-knit relationship with your customers, personalising interactions, and involving customers in your company’s business are essential to making that happen. By developing a strong company culture, you can build your brand image and help your company stand out from the competition.

## FORGING TIES AND BOOSTING ENGAGEMENT

Implementing a customer-centric policy at every level of the company lets you establish a close-knit and trust-based relationship with your customers. We find that a unique and optimised customer experience **makes customers more engaged.** Nowadays, recommendations and word-of-mouth are the number-one way to acquire new customers. Why not harness these channels for your company? Get your customers engaged, and turn your best ones into brand ambassadors!

## OPTIMISING YOUR NETWORK PERFORMANCE

To become customer centric, you’ll need to every employee—from your headquarters office to your sales room teams—involved in the project. It’s win-win strategy that helps employees rediscover the original purpose of their job, increase their skills, and **feel valued by the customer satisfaction they generate.** Customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction are closely linked. Engaging your teams will promote customer engagement and optimise your store network’s performance.

THIRD PART

# BEST PRACTICES

While many are interested in adopting a customer-centric approach, the changes it requires can often discourage decision-makers, despite the anticipated benefits. It's true that switching to a customer-centric model in a large company means changing your processes and organisation. It's an ambitious undertaking that must take place over the long term. However, the benefits are well worth the effort. Let's look at concrete ways you can switch your business to a customer-centric model.



## CREATE A CUSTOMER FEEDBACK STRATEGY

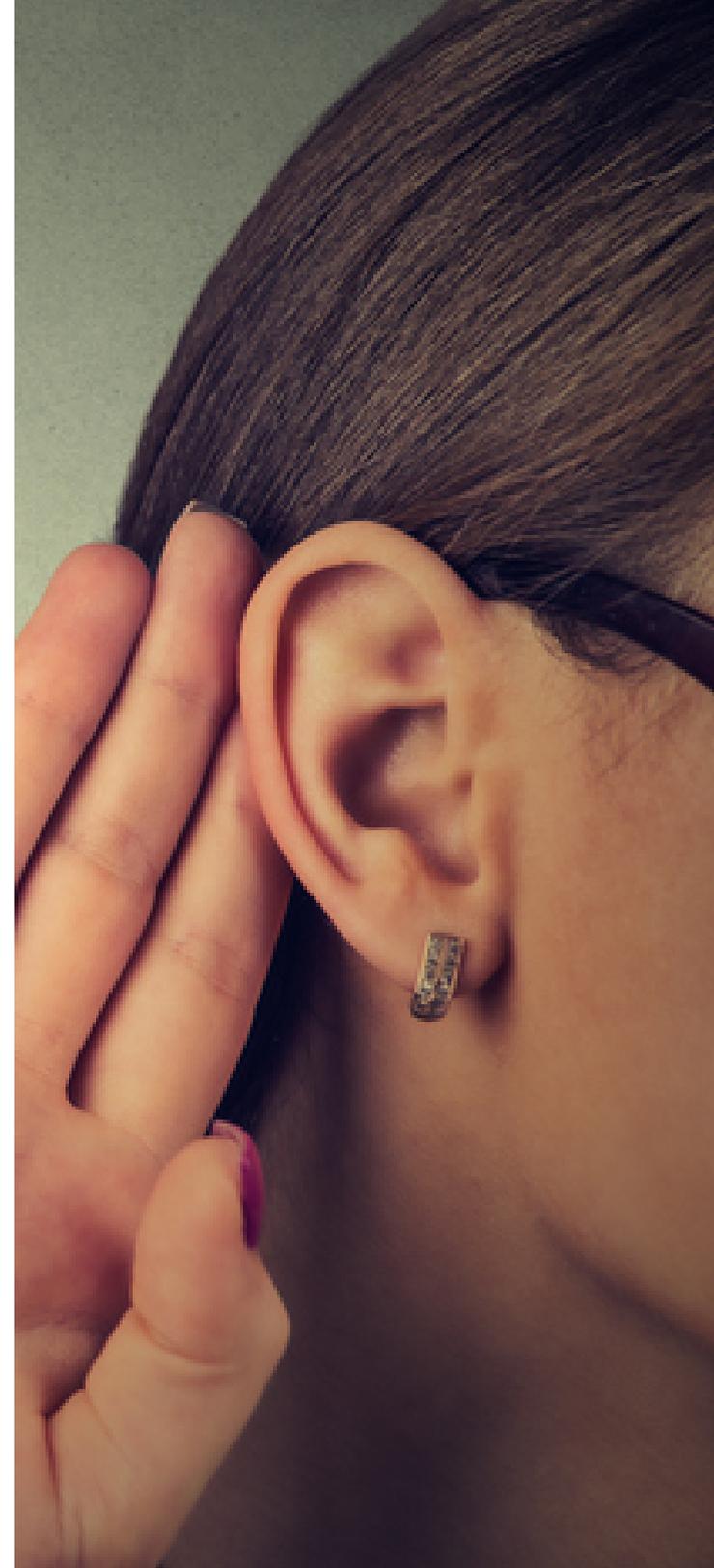
As we explained above, knowing your customers forms the basis of a customer-centric model. In order to know which direction you should take, you need to start by asking those who are the most affected by your decision—your customers. Implement a wide-ranging customer feedback strategy to get as many responses as possible. “Scores”, which let you track customer satisfaction metrics like NPS and CSAT, are just as important to collect as testimonials. This information will **give you an overall understanding of your customer experience** and help you identify your customers’ actual needs. It’s a solid foundation for the rest of your transformation.

## MOBILISING YOUR EMPLOYEES

While adopting a customer-centric culture gets your employees involved over the long term and on a fundamental level, you should also target your procedures by mobilising your employees on a daily basis. A successful customer-centric strategy can only be implemented if your teams are properly trained and supported.

Start by explaining the process to your employees by pointing out that your primary goal is to help them reach their objectives and increase their skills. As part of your action plans, coach all of your teams by organising regular training sessions. Helping them to progress will significantly improve your customer experience. Customer satisfaction can also become an important evaluation tool and be shared with various team members. You can implement a rewards system to encourage them to satisfy their customers.

Be transparent in your approach by **sharing customer feedback with all of your employees**. You can even task your sales floor teams with directly responding to comments that involve them. This is an excellent way to hold your employees accountable to the challenges associated with customer relationships and establish close-knit ties. Finally, don’t forget to congratulate them when the feedback is positive. There’s nothing more satisfying than hearing a compliment from your customers!



## BUILDING A CUSTOMER-ORIENTED COMPANY CULTURE

To become customer centric, your customer-oriented culture **must affect every level of your company**. Sharing customer feedback, especially when it's positive, and horizontal management techniques are often the keys to implementing a customer-oriented culture internally. However, it's up to a company's top leaders to set the tone. Management must live out their company's customer-focused policy and incorporate it into a business plan. One example is Orange's strategic plan, Essentiels 2020, which is centred on the customer experience.

Your customer focus must be especially apparent in your HR processes. New recruitment campaigns should seek out applicants with great customer service skills who share commonalities with your customers. Who can sell a bike better than a fellow die-hard athlete? Such salespeople will be better able to put themselves in their customers' shoes and be empathetic.

## CREATING A CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OPTIMISATION STRATEGY

Optimising the customer experience is a vast concept. Your optimisation efforts have to involve every point of contact with the customer, both online and offline. With the advent of multichannel marketing, you'll need to completely overhaul your purchasing circuit to offer a seamless pathway and a flawless experience between online and offline processes. Customer feedback is **your best tool** in your quest for excellence. You should incorporate compliments, questions, problems, and suggestions into your action plans on a regular basis.

Some companies, including Leroy Merlin, PSA, and FNAC, have even created a service that's dedication to optimisation—customer experience management. A customer's experience with your company can and must be continuously improved. With on-demand feedback, you can act in real time and remedy the situation whenever you need to.



## Closing the NPS loop: a customer-centric strategy ?

The Net Promoter Score, or NPS, is a customer satisfaction indicator often used by large companies. NPS is more than a simple metric. It can be used to implement a continuous learning and improvement process called “closing the NPS loop”.

This loop is formed by two virtuous circles at headquarters and on the sales floor. It starts when management writes action plans based on customer feedback and then trains sales teams to carry them out. NPS is a fantastic tool when adopting a customer-centric policy!

[DISCOVER THE SYSTEM](#)



## The Zappos exemple

Zappos, an American e-commerce company specialised in shoe sales, earns over one billion dollars in sales annually. The company was purchased by Amazon in 2009 and epitomises the customer-centric model thanks in large part to its company culture, which prioritises customer service. **At Zappos, customer satisfaction impacts every employee at the company**, from the salesperson who interfaces with the customer to the buyers and accountants. Why? A buyer who negotiates a good price for the product will be able to offer customers an even lower price point. Because price is one of the factors of customer satisfaction, the buyer will have played a key role in making the consumer happy. To motivate all its employees, Zappos instituted a rewards system that allowed staff to earn a customer satisfaction bonus. This is one of the many practices that have made Zappos a major player in its market.

FOURTH PART

# RIGHT APPROACH

For a customer-centric strategy to be successful, it's important that all teams understand and accept the policy. While it's important to set customer satisfaction goals, employees shouldn't feel like they're being policed or forced into line. Instead, they should be supported and coached. To avoid creating "customer phobia" and to maintain a productive and consistent approach, follow our advice!





## TRANSPARENCY & COMMUNICATION: WORDS TO LIVE BY

“It’s always the same. My customers only talk to me when there’s a problem.” Employees affected by this kind of customer phobia think customers are typically unhappy and very difficult to satisfy. As a result, staff avoid speaking to customers in the store so they won’t have to handle a dissatisfied customer.

**Transparency and communication are the best ways** to address this fear. Positive feedback and survey results should be shared with all employees. Post-purchase surveys include a high rate of positive comments. These results aren’t just for the executive committee!

The employees who interface with customers on a daily basis should be able to use them as well. Post the results in the break room or share them using your internal communication channels. Another great communications tool is **an internal customer relationship awards ceremony** to recognise your top employees.

Recognition-based management is especially relevant when the reward is based on the customer! Awards ceremonies emphasise simple but important precepts on a daily basis, including the idea that customers also speak up when they’re happy. By building up your employees’ confidence, you can take customer satisfaction off its pedestal and encourage everyone in the company to reach out to customers.



## A DISSATISFIED CUSTOMER IS AN OPPORTUNITY

It's also important to communicate an essential message to your teams—an unhappy customer is not the end of the world! Despite your best efforts, there will always be a proportion of unhappy customers (however small). Through 96% of dissatisfied customers don't inform companies about their experience, the remaining 4% who do provide businesses with a great opportunity to correct the issue.

Indeed, an unhappy customer who speaks up is **first and foremost a chance to make it right**. That's how your teams should think about it. By choosing to speak up, the customer gives you the opportunity to improve something that isn't working and to call him or her back to find a solution together. Unhappy customers can quickly turn into satisfied ones once someone listens to their complaint and offers them a fair solution.

Your employees shouldn't dread a poor review. Instead, they should think of it as an opportunity to transform an unhappy customer into a promoter. While love stories might not always end with "happily ever after", the best stories in customer relationships tend to start poorly and end on a high note!

### Amazon's customer obsession

Amazon sets the standard when it comes to customer centricity. CEO Jeff Bezos leaves one chair empty at every strategic meeting for "the most important person in the room, the customer". This is a strong symbol that clearly demonstrates the American giant's obsession with its customers.



## The Flunch example

Flunch, France's leading self-serve restaurant, adopted a customer-centric model. As a sign of the entire company's involvement, the brand doesn't have a customer service department. The restaurant's managers and employees respond to customers' comments directly. This practice lets the company establish a constructive, personal dialogue. By collecting a large amount of customer feedback, Flunch identified new ways to improve its customer experience. The vast majority of comments are positive and are used to acknowledge the hard work of the company's internal teams on a daily basis.

[DOWNLOAD](#)

## DON'T JUST FOCUS ON YOUR SCORE

Another type of customer phobia occurs when employees only think about their customer satisfaction scores and not the reason behind the number. This can sometimes happen when bonuses are awarded based on an employee's customer satisfaction score. This side effect is called "**promoter begging**". Employees forcefully ask customers for a good review, and customers quickly catch on to the fact that the employee is just working for a bonus. This turns the customer into the judge for the employee's salary, but that's not their role.

Don't forget that a customer feedback **system should serve the customer first and foremost**—not the company. A customer satisfaction survey is supposed to improve the customer's experience and provide insights regarding their expectations. Using it to determine your employees' salary can result in dangerous side effects. To prevent this from happening, we recommend not basing everything on the score provided by the customer and **incorporating a relational aspect** into your evaluation method. For example, a store manager that gets a low NPS score but calls back every detractor can still receive his or her full bonus. This approach is much more in line with a customer-centric strategy.



« **With a large part of positive feedback, customer listening is a great tool for valuing our teams** »

Olivier Descamps, CEO of Flunch

# Conclusion

Now you know everything you need to know! Customer centricity is a trendy business term has real implications for your company. It is a bold approach that can grant a real competitive advantage to those who apply it correctly. Are you ready to get on board? Well, now's the time to develop your customer relationship skills!

You have no time to spare, and your competitors are already hard at work. Amazon, the customer-centric king, is entering the retail market, where it will make quite the impact. In order to weather the coming storm, you'll need to win over the decision-makers in your company, who might mistrust customer centricity and prefer following a short-term strategy. A good start would be to forward them this e-book!

## DOWNLOAD OUR FLUNCH CASE STUDY

Learn about how Critizr for Business is helping Flunch become customer centric by creating multiple customer feedback channels. The brand collects a large amount of feedback, and restaurant staff respond to customer inquiries on a daily basis.

[DOWNLOAD](#)



# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CUSTOMER CENTRICITY

"Customer centricity" ... it is not only a trendy Anglo-Saxon term, it is also and above all a strategic approach with high stakes. Because we can read anything and everything on the subject, we have chosen to elaborate this guide of the customer centricity: promised, not only big concepts but also best practices, statistics, cases studies ... This is the moment to become customer centric. Take action!

