

Transformation: From Customer Service to Customer Focus

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Two decades ago, everyone began talking about 'customer service' because, frankly, things had gotten pretty bad. Either we didn't think excellence in service was important, or we were so wrapped up in the service process that we'd forgotten what the end game was all about--- that of satisfied, happy, loyal customers.

Enter the 2000 shift of focus from simply giving good customer service to understanding the more powerful and profitable position of customer focus. Picture the interdependent circles of your organization as links in a circular chain with a single purpose: satisfied, happy, loyal, referral bearing customers. In our global village, our customer's success is our success. Customer focus and partnerships and alliances are now inexorably bound together,

There are three interdependent parts of true customer focus:

First: *Customer Servicing.* This is the operations part, doing the task well.

Second: *Customer Relations.* This is the human part, the one-on-one actions.

Third: *Customer Development.* This is the sales and retention part that brings true satisfaction to every transaction.

Your internal customers come first:

Don't forget that an organization's first customer is its own people, your internal customers. Until they know you care about their needs and recognize them for their individual contribution, they'll never effectively serve others well. Which of course means that your message of service excellence will never get to your external customers.

The speed of change, the development of partnerships and alliances and concentration on customer focus. These are the three major drivers that confront us as we rush toward the next millennium. We can be driven, pushed, pulled, and hustled along against our will. Or we can understand and embrace them, plan strategically for their affects on our organizations and literally jump out in front of our marketplace as pace setters.. The choice is ours.