

Building Customer Intimacy: How Leaders Can Sharpen Their Customer Focus

Situation

The \$23 billion retailer was experiencing declining sales. Not only were fewer new clients visiting their stores, but return customers were spending less and less each time they visited a store. While they had a great amount of customer and market data, the senior team could not agree on what steps they needed to take based on this data. In addition, there was no consensus on an overall customer strategy. As a result, the company wanted a workshop for their top 20 executives to help them agree on a strategy.

Intervention

The goal of the workshops was to help the top team reach consensus on a strategy and next steps. Consequently, the workshop was designed to be a consulting engagement as well as an educational one. That is, while some theory and best practices had to be given to establish a framework for “what good looked like”, the focus had to be helping them gain alignment on an overall customer intimacy strategy, what their actual data meant, and what actions they needed to take.

Working “live” with real data requires a workshop leader who has both knowledge of the topic as well as outstanding facilitation and consulting skills. As a result, the session was designed to have numerous small group discussions followed by plenary sessions during which the group tried to reach consensus on:

- A customer intimacy strategy
- What opportunities and threats the data presented
- Implications for their company culture
- Which customers to focus on
- Implications for their marketing initiatives (branding, advertising, etc.)
- Next steps

Outcomes

Outcomes included:

- Better alignment on key issues (especially between the field and corporate staff)
- Better understanding and alignment concerning the key insights their data provided
- Realization that there was a significant disconnect between their culture and the image they wanted to portray with their advertising messages