

## Old Habits Die Hard – 6 Weeks to a New Customer Centric You!

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Well, how's the new year diet going? Still exercising with vigour? Staying off the alcohol? Don't worry, you haven't clicked onto a Weight Watchers website by mistake. Isn't it funny though, how we all set objectives to change one thing without realising that what we really need to change are those habits that lead us to find ourselves in a certain predicament in the first place?

What are habits anyway? One definition is that they are tendencies or practices that have settled in over time. Habits can be good or bad and they affect our behaviour. Depending on how deeply ingrained they are, the time and effort required to overcome the ones we want to change will differ. In the same, gradual and often imperceptible way that we develop habits, organisations can fall into habits too.

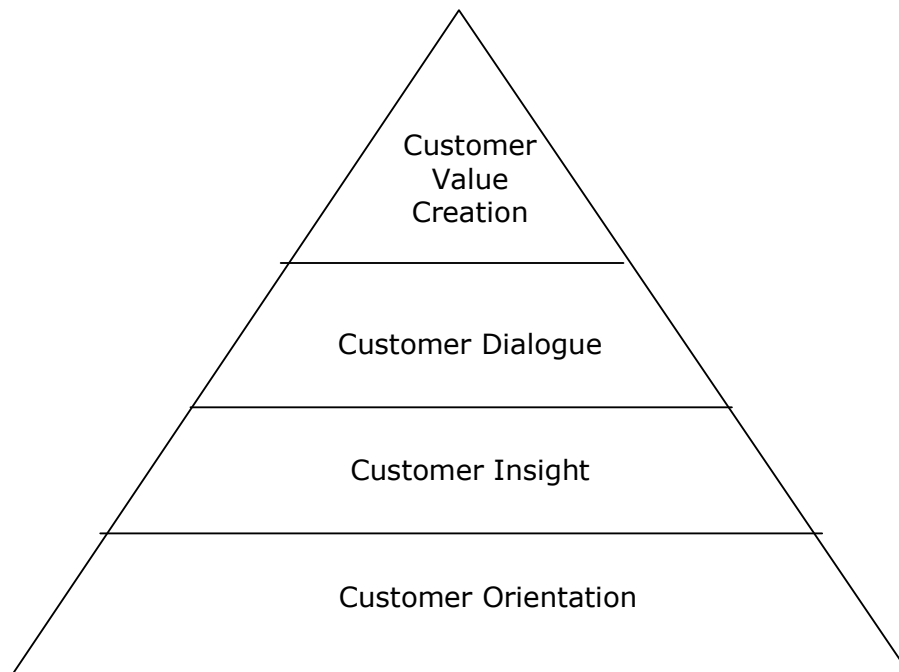
Organisational bad habits include: too many (unproductive) meetings; failure to meet deadlines; failure to measure the impact and effectiveness of what we do (because we never seem to have time to do that before the next project); over-spending budgets (see lack of accountability and measurement); under-spending budgets (see lack of accountability and measurement); poor internal communication; poor response times.... And so the list goes on.

Developing high performing, customer centric organisations requires high performing people and this may mean having to break down not just **their** old habits that result in the wrong types of behaviour, but also those of the organisation itself. If, as experts say, it takes 6 weeks or more to embed new behaviours and break old habits, then what does this mean for organisations?

First of all, like weight loss, it's highly unlikely that with only one intervention, like a fad diet for example, you will sustain the loss over the longer term. Similarly, if you are trying to change deeply ingrained behaviour, a training course, on its own, is unlikely to do the trick. Both can kick start change and have their place, but is there really lasting impact?

Additional interventions might be required. A focus on inputs and outputs, in weight loss terms, means reducing food intake and increasing exercise to use more energy and thus this is a more efficient and effective (sustainable) way of managing your body weight. It takes some time to see the pay-off but after a period of adjustment, the new lifestyle means new habits have been formed. Perhaps therein we can see some analogies to changing an organisation's habits.....

One way to understand this is to consider the core elements that make up customer centricity – a supporting structure of customer orientation and sound customer insight which facilitates relevant and easy dialogue with customers, which in turn provides the capacity to create superior value for customers, which equals committed customers and retention!



**Customer Orientation** implies that the structures, processes and behaviour of staff are underpinned by an appropriate customer focussed culture, reflected by good internal communication and relationships, cross-team working and a performance management system that supports this.

**Customer Insight** is the capacity to gather, analyse, assimilate and disseminate good quality data and information to create customer knowledge across the organisation which leads to a good understanding of their requirements, future intentions, likes, dislikes etc. that inform business direction and ensure satisfaction.

**Customer Dialogue** is how the organisation organises itself to interact with customers to create a two-way flow of communication. Not only the consistency and integration of channels the service processes and marketing communications that are in place, but also the planning and execution of these through campaigns, inbound enquiries and complaints process, etc.

The ability to create **Customer Value** is highly dependent upon the ability of the organisation to leverage its customer insight, harness and measure the effect of its customer interactions and use its "eyes and ears" to innovate in terms of research and development. By having good customer relationships in place, the organisation is more attuned to opportunities that are forged in partnership with its customers and these are the opportunities that create greater engagement and commitment beyond a buyer-seller relationship.

ICD Partnership Ltd has been working now for 6 years (and previously as CRMUK) to develop diagnostic tools, design methodologies and training and support interventions to build the required specialist knowledge, expertise and experience that support the development of customer centric organisations.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in this article, please contact: [liz@icd-partnership.co.uk](mailto:liz@icd-partnership.co.uk)