

# Sales Training Article: Being Customer-Centric

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Many organizations believe in having sellers become more “customer-centric” as the end game. They fail to see the bigger picture in recognizing that existing silos and practices stand in the way of getting clear views of customer requirements. Companies are slowly reaching the conclusion that being customer-centric requires an enterprise-wide approach with underpinnings baked into their cultures rather than just bolted onto sales.

Consider how powerful it could be to have members of your sales, service and support staff with the most direct contact with your customers serve as the “eyes and ears” of your organization. The CCS® framework can serve as a foundation to provide:

- A standard set of terms to improve communication by salespeople with their peers as well as to other departments.
- A clear definition of the interface between Sales and Marketing.
- A more structured way to provide input to Product Development for existing as well as future offerings.

The most important component of being customer-centric is aligning offerings more closely with customer needs. The silos of Product Development, Product Marketing, Marketing and Sales Silos can create internal friction that undermines initiatives and efforts to be customer-centric. If Product Development can rely upon input from people in the field to learn about new buyer requirements, the voice of the customer can serve as their guide. The focus shifts from one of trying to create offerings, to first identifying outcomes buyers want to achieve, understanding the reasons they can’t achieve them today, and creating capabilities that address those reasons.

This approach puts customers first and can provide significant market advantages to organizations that develop offerings in this way. Traditionally, companies employ “push” approaches to launch new products. They create what they think buyers need and begin trying to sell them. Customer-centric organizations’ offerings can experience market “pulls” if they are built to address buyer needs.

As offerings should be built around customer needs, an organization’s infrastructure should be built around optimizing the customer experience with your offerings for all staff members that have contact with customers. CustomerCentric Selling® can provide an overall framework to facilitate a common lens to view customer and market requirements.

If it were easy, everyone would be doing it. Organizations that figure it out can make the way they interface with buyers a sustainable competitive advantage.