FOREWORD

I'm discussing customer experience with friends. What is a good customer experience for them?

'It is easy' – says one without hesitation. *'Take any electronic gadget – it has to be so easy that you don't need to start googling for advice – or ask friends, when you take it in use.'*

'It just works' – says another, referring to online services. Services need to work smoothly, so that you don't need to worry about functionality, reliability or speed.

Then we talk about travel, hotels and restaurants. *'You feel like a guest. You can see that they are happy that you are there. You can see that employees are proud of their work.'*

'I appreciate seeing that people are good at what they do. It creates trust to see that people are experts in their area. Anywhere – in retail, at hospitals, airports, service points, absolutely anywhere.'

Somebody's laptop has just crashed. For her, the experience is reliability – or the lack of it – and anxiety about potentially lost documents. On top of that, worries about getting it fixed – where, how long it will take, how to cope in the meantime.

It is feelings and emotions that drive these experiences. When we talk about customer experience, the human and emotional side of us often wins over the rational.

In his book 'The Ten Principles of Great Customer Experiences' Matt Watkinson explains what is important to customers. His list includes e.g. great customer experiences reflecting the customer's identity and satisfying higher objectives, being effortless and stress free, indulging the senses and considering emotions.

Delivering great customer experiences requires a lot from a company. The outcome – a product or service or any experience in an encounter with the company, is a result of the way the company works, of its processes, practices, and of the attitudes and behaviors of

its leaders and employees. Delivering delightful customer experiences requires a lot of work, commitment and dedication of resources on different levels.

During the last ten years, new job roles for managing customer experience have evolved. A lot of knowledge and expertise has emerged from the work of the first practitioners – and there are many thought leaders who willingly share their expertise through blogs, seminars and other forums.

This book is about making customer focus an everyday habit throughout a company. It explains the activities that happen behind the scenes and enable delivering great experiences. The target audience includes leaders, customer experience professionals and all who have customer experience on their agenda.

Ideas from experts are present along with links to their materials – but most of the content is based on experience gained in practical work and projects aiming at increased customer focus. Some of the projects have been successful, some not so successful, but all of them have provided valuable lessons. All people who have been interviewed for the sections '*Seen in Practice'* are experts in hands-on work related to customer experience.

I hope that the insights presented in this book will give ideas and inspiration to readers and help them proceed smoothly with their customer experience initiatives and related tasks.

1.

CREATING A CUSTOMER CENTRIC COMPANY CULTURE

The company culture is the sum of the behaviors, values and attitudes of its leaders and employees. In a customer centric culture, focus on customers is a characteristic seen in the way of working throughout the company.

This chapter talks about the importance of customer centricity and introduces five focus areas for customer experience initiatives.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE – WHY IT MATTERS

More and more, customer experience, or CX, is seen as a crucial precondition for business success. Customers of the 21st century are empowered in many ways. Through internet, everybody has access to information. Everything happens fast wherever the customer is. Mobility makes a lot of such things possible that we could earlier only dream about. Everybody can have their word as it is so easy to express opinions through social media. An opinion can start a snowball effect and messages spread like wildfire – negative ones usually much faster than positive.

What does this mean for companies?

They need to be on alert. Unethical behavior, environmental breaches – sometimes irritating only one customer – can start a massive wave of word-of-mouth criticism and ruin a company's brand reputation almost overnight.

Many research studies tell how CX leaders show better results in growth and stock performance than those who lag behind in CX.[1] Customer Experience – positive or negative – may have a huge impact on company financials. This comes from simple things. Happy customers become loyal customers, and they bring in more money: they buy more, pay a higher price, repurchase, tell their friends, complain less and use less care services. Loyal customers are willing to share their own knowledge and experience, and they may give valuable input to a company's development activities.

In this environment it is more important than ever to use all possible channels to listen to customers, understand what they expect, what they think and how they act. And even more important, companies need to utilize that understanding for creating success in business.

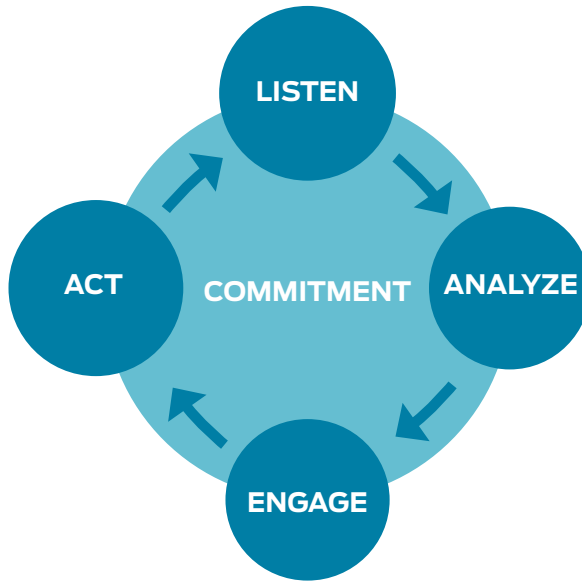# WHAT DOES A CUSTOMER CENTRIC CULTURE LOOK LIKE?

In a company with a customer centric culture, CX permeates through all core business functions. The customer centric attitude starts from the leaders, who set the CX priorities that cascade to all levels of the company.

Customer centricity is a key element of the company strategy and values and drives practical actions. It is seen in the employees' behavior and in the way they are recruited and rewarded. It is how the company communicates both internally and externally, how products and services are designed and developed. It is the attitude of everybody. And the outcome is judged by the customer.

CX is a key element of...

REWARDING

COMMUNICATIONS

INSIGHTS

DEVELOPMENT

RESOURCES

STRATEGY

VALUES

DESIGN

BEHAVIOR

METRICS

PROCESSES

ACTIONS

RECRUITMENT

A MODEL FOR SYSTEMATIC CUSTOMER CENTRIC PRACTICES

Talking about customer focus is nothing new. *'Customer focus,'* *'customer orientation'* and *'customer centricity'* have been high on leadership agendas and company presentations for decades. Most companies have customer related topics at the core of their strategies and values. Most companies, in fact, consider themselves customer centric.

Yet at the same time, customers continue to have a different view of reality. Their perceptions of companies' attitudes towards them can be quite the opposite. For customers, customer centricity means practical actions that are seen in everyday interactions – how the company personnel behaves, how they treat customers, what kind of service is provided, how well products meet expectations, how well a company succeeds in delighting and surprising customers.