

Everyone Wins When You Put Customers First

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It feels like business is starting to get back to normal again, which means more traveling to meet customers face to face. I certainly welcome it. There is no better way to establish or strengthen relationships with customers than listening firsthand to their insights.



Of course, traveling also means periods of down time to catch up on my reading. Here's a book that recently caught my attention, *Ikigai—The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life*. It singles out the need for everyone to have certain passions that gets us going every day and seize the opportunities ahead.

I was thinking about this point when we got the news that Lumen had been named a Leader in the 2022 Gartner® Magic Quadrant™ for Network Services, Global for the second year in a row. A company's position in the Magic Quadrant depends in part on its Ability to Execute and Completeness of Vision. An effective vision drives passion, and for me, that passion starts with customer centricity. Putting customers first leads to success for everyone, and we can do so if we deliver three things:

Empathy

Steve Jobs once urged enterprises to get so close to their customers “that you tell them what they need well before they realize it themselves.” Empathy provides a critical first step. It allows us to actively guide an enterprise as it considers the wide range of solutions Lumen offers, including cloud services, “smart” networks, unified collaboration, and managed security. It requires us to step into a customer’s “shoes,” to know what they are thinking, to understand the outcomes they wish to reach, and to use that knowledge to anticipate what will get them there. Some of us see the world through other people’s eyes intuitively. For others, it requires training which we are providing to our team and our internal partners. Either way, it’s a commitment we take seriously.

Ease

Our growing usage of data and technology provide us with new ways to make it easier for customers to interact with us. Our goal is to use the power of technology to give customers greater autonomy to manage in real time the network solutions we provide and make purchases when necessary. We closely monitor customer health, find pain points where they exist, and intervene with the right mix of human interactions and digital experiences.

Execution

Our own internal data strongly suggests a customer-first approach is “unlocking” value. We recently asked our customers to tell us how satisfied they were across a wide variety of touchpoints, such as a billing inquiry, a new product installation, or the purchase of a new service. Almost two-thirds of those who answered gave higher scores when we acted in a customer-first manner by listening, learning, and acting on their feedback. Customer Centricity truly works.

These three objectives establish an environment in which **customers want to work with us**, which in turn leads to customer relationships that enjoy “a long and happy life.” Customer centricity is more than a good business strategy. It also offers a way in which everyone wins.

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