

SIGMA

Leadership Series



**Great Leaders
Focus on
Customers**



GREAT LEADERS **FOCUS ON CUSTOMERS**

“ **Happy customers are your biggest advocates and can become your most successful sales team.**

— Lisa Masiello

In today's global market, there is a growing need to keep customers satisfied and understand their expectations. Customers often expect high-quality products and services at fair prices and tend to have many options to choose from. Failing to meet customers' needs can be costly. When dissatisfaction occurs, organizations often provide make-good services or products to regain trust.¹ Beyond rework and the extra time spent with an unhappy customer, there is also the cost of losing potential customers via word of mouth. Leaders in all organizations should build their customer skills to create a culture of client-focused work, and to give their organization a competitive edge.

Building **Client-Customer Focus** involves demonstrating a service-oriented approach, remaining open to feedback, and maintaining positive, trusting, and productive relationships to meet the needs and expectations of internal and external customers. Individuals with a keen customer focus are major assets for their team, and employers are therefore likely to look for this trait when hiring or promoting.

Are You Focused on the Customer?

To assess your current customer focus, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I balance innovation with customer experience?
- Am I listening to client concerns?
- Do I understand who my clients are and what they are looking for?
- Am I encouraging excellent customer service throughout the organization?
- Am I addressing unmet customer needs in the market?

Improve Your Customer Focus

Remember your why. As organizations grow and operations unfold, it can be easy to get caught up in our day-to-day tasks and forget why we do what we do. Try to bring the customer back into focus by reminding yourself and others of the main purpose and goals of your organization. Think of each task, no matter how small, as a steppingstone toward accomplishing your mission

and vision. It may also be helpful to focus on the needs of the customers themselves rather than your product or service.²

Balance familiarity with surprise. When interacting with customers, try to balance delivering familiar products and services with a novel, interesting twist.³ The goal is to be consistent enough for customers to know what to expect from you, but innovative enough to fill gaps left by competitors. This approach requires listening carefully to customer needs and responding creatively to what you hear.

Customer service starts at the top. A dedication to service is not only the responsibility of those interacting with customers directly — try to think of yourself as an important piece of a larger puzzle. Leaders who are concerned with customer needs and model excellent customer service behaviors are likely to create a top-down culture of focusing on customers by encouraging others in the organization to do the same.⁴ Leaders who demonstrate good customer service behaviors serve as models to others, encouraging employees at all levels of the organization to listen to customer needs and think of new ways to support others.

Start Doing These 3 Things Now to Focus on Customers Better

The following steps can enhance your customer focus:

1. **Practice active listening with customers.** It is hard to know whether your customers are satisfied if you don't ask for their feedback. Customer feedback can provide employees with an opportunity to address concerns while simultaneously enhancing the products and services that are performing well. Listening actively to customer feedback will help you to better understand customers' needs and expectations.⁵ This can be achieved by asking follow-up questions to clients or having a conversation with a colleague in a client-facing role. Active listening skills do not only benefit customers — a dedication to helping others can also enhance interactions within the workplace, fostering positive working relationships and team harmony.
2. **Focus on existing customers.** Rather than pouring all your energy into attracting new clients, focus on building and maintaining trust with the customers you already have. This is important because it is less costly to invest in current customers than to spend the time and resources required to recruit new ones.⁵ You can show dedication to ongoing customers by checking in on their recent experiences with your organization or rewarding customer loyalty with perks, discounts, or exclusive offers. This will not only help you to better meet the needs of your current clientele, but also to facilitate positive reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations that can help bring in new clients in the future.
3. **It's OK to admit when you're wrong.** Sometimes mistakes happen and a customer's experience may be negatively impacted. When mistakes occur, the best way to move forward is to regain the customer's trust by admitting mistakes and offering a solution

to the problem. A sincere, timely apology can go a long way by showing customers that you are willing to take accountability and are committed to getting it right in the future.⁶

Assess Client-Customer Focus With the LSP-R®

The [Leadership Skills Profile – Revised® \(LSP-R\)](#) is a personality-based leadership assessment that measures 50 core competencies, including Client-Customer Focus. The assessment can be administered online in 25 minutes, and comes with an automatically generated Focus Report, including scores, personalized feedback, and templates for creating competency-based leadership development plans (view a [sample Focus Report](#)).

LSP-R® Free Trial

See how you score on CLIENT-CUSTOMER FOCUS.

Experience the LSP-R for yourself and see how you score on Client/Customer Focus. Receive customized feedback and templates for creating a personalized action plan. Take 25 minutes and experience the impact that data-driven personality insights can have.

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[Earn Customer Loyalty Without Losing Your Shirt](#)



Develop leadership competencies with SIGMA's one-hour, high-impact [Leadership Development Workshops](#), led by our experienced coaches.

References

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⁴ Schwartz, T. (2010). What happens when you really meet people's needs. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2010/09/what-happens-when-you-really-m-2>

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