

Customer-Centered Approach Helps Organizations Achieve Goals

To encourage people to conserve and protect our natural resources, we must develop an approach that puts the target audience member in the center of our strategies. Social marketers call this a customer-centered mindset.

Often, organizations become trapped in an organization-centered mindset, with a selling or product focus. Traits of an organization-centered mindset include:

- Seeing your organization's mission as inherently good.
- Viewing the customer as the problem, and assuming their lack of action results from ignorance or lack of motivation.
- Equating marketing to communications.
- Limiting the role of marketing research.
- Treating customers as a mass.
- Ignoring competition.

Organizations centered around the customer possess traits almost directly opposite. Customer centered organizations recognize customers and their objectives. The traits of a customer-centered mindset include:

- **See your organization's mission as causing behavior change by meeting the target audience's needs and wants.** Customer-centered organization's identify a behavior change they want to achieve, and design their programs to meet the needs of the target audience.
- **See the customer as someone with unique perceptions, needs and wants, to which you must adapt.** Customer-centered organizations understand why their audiences do things, and they understand customers' perceptions of the costs and benefits of taking desired actions.
- **See marketing as more than communications.** Customer-centered organizations incorporate many elements, along with communications, into their marketing program.
- **Rely on marketing research.** Customer-centered organizations understand their target audiences, and the barriers that stop them from taking desired actions. They track information to monitor program success and identify needed corrections. Additionally, they evaluate program success by long-term behavior change, not by educational objectives, such as information learned or attitudes changed.
- **Group customers in segments.** Customer-centered organizations group customers based on their needs and wants, and the type of marketing program to which they will respond.
- **See competition everywhere and as never ending.** Customer-centered organizations understand for every behavior they propose, one or more alternative behaviors beckons the customer. They learn what the target audience finds appealing and unappealing about the change they propose, and the competing behaviors.

For more information on social marketing, see the source of the article, "*Marketing Social Change*" by Alan Andreasen.