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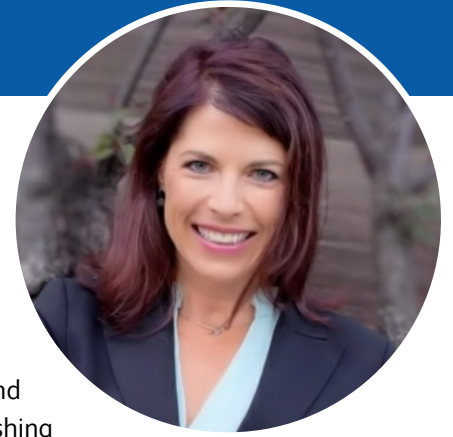
# *How to Improve Customer Satisfaction and Profitability Using a People-Centric Approach*

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*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

### Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at [Sara@LaForestConsulting.com](mailto:Sara@LaForestConsulting.com) or via [LinkedIn](#).

## Improving Performance

## Navigating Transitions

## Accelerating Results

Does a leader need to be the smartest person in the company to achieve growth and customer satisfaction? No.

In fact, being the smartest person in the company can actually impede growth. Some leaders just can't get over "themselves." Yet unfortunately when you suggest that they could be the problem, it's often met with one of the following responses:

- Confusion (i.e. you talking to me?)
- Dismissive (i.e. you have no idea what you're talking about)
- Shock (i.e. how dare you talk to me that way)
- Anger (i.e. you're out of here)

After all, they are the smartest person in the company. They know the problems, they know what needs to be done, and they will do it.

***We have a (perhaps unwelcome) secret to share...***

No one is that smart. No one can do it all exceptionally well - alone (at least for long.) And talented employees want to contribute and show their talent.

The greatest risk in this self-delusional thinking is that your brightest employees will actually be the ones that bring you out of the recession stronger. Limit their chance to do so-- dim their opportunity-- and your great employees will leave. The remaining employees will do just what they are told, and not much more. And the replacement employees will be less talented.

Whom does this adversely affect outside of the leader and your employees? Your customer! Who benefits? Your competition!

It is essential for leaders to understand that customer service is the lifeblood of their business. (Yes we are aware that cash is king and without positive cash flow the business ceases to exist. Without satisfied customers, however there is no cash. And without satisfied and engaged employees there are no customers – satisfied or not!)

So let's see take a critical look at what the most successful corporations, organizations and companies are doing different.

***Why Nordstrom, Zappos, Apple and Netflix Rank High in Customer Satisfaction.***

Are the companies listed above perfect?  
Of course not.

Are they serious competitors?  
Absolutely.

How are they differentiating their customer service from others in their industry?

They are using an employee-centric approach to heighten their customer service. The premise of "The Service-Profit Chain" (first developed at Harvard University by James L Heskett) speaks to this approach.

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It's premise is simple...

Highly satisfied customers drive growth and profitability. Highly equipped and satisfied employees will better satisfy customers to drive that growth. In other words, employees with the skills and power to really serve their customer have an increased employee satisfaction, productivity and loyalty. This in turn leads directly to increased service to the customer, meaning greater customer satisfaction and loyalty, which of course, leads to greater revenue. Most simply stated, satisfied employees are a critical contributor to customer satisfaction!

We see this as an *employee driven profit model* – and it's "*people centric*", which to us is the heart of your business.

**Results Our Clients Are Achieving Using A People-Centric Model**

One healthcare software consulting company survived the recession relatively unscathed. Another grew over 38% percent during the heart of the recession.

How?

By providing personalized and highly focused customer service.

As small businesses re-surface post-recession and look to differentiate themselves and grow, improving customer service through a people-centric approach will be an important strategy to adopt.

So, when leaders start to think about growth- they should start first with their customers. They need to look at how they can provide value. And, they need to realize that it's their employees that are the golden egg.

The conclusion is inescapable... Prepare and support your employees to provide outstanding service and your customers will reward your efforts.