



The Customer's Opinion is the Only One that Counts

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Corporations in their ever-increasing quest to distance themselves from the competition have, over the years, relied on many strategies, tactics, and management formulas to help them achieve success. Recently organizations have embraced new structural forms designed to reduce costs while simultaneously maximizing flexibility and responsiveness to customer demands.

In this quest, leaders have lost their focus and attempted to "buy" their way out of their problems by pursuing the latest and greatest "magic pill," such as a one day team building, installing expensive computer programs, or quickly implementing a new process that will cure all the ills of the company before tomorrow at 5pm. They say "we don't have time to fix it right," we just need to patch it so we can get past this hurdle and then we will come back later to fix it right. I can tell you from experience, the vast majority of companies who said they will "come back later to fix it right" are currently negotiating with bankruptcy attorneys and trying to restructure debt with their bankers. It's time to get past the fancy *distractions* that measure, quantify, and calculate every internal and external organizational objective and focus once again on the only person that counts—the *customer*.

It hardly matters how many sales calls the sales force makes. What matters is the amount of new business that's generated. The number of calls the service people answer each day is irrelevant compared to how many customers' concerns were effectively resolved. The amount of financial reports generated is unimportant, unless they can be pragmatically used to improve the results next quarter. In essence, abandon any quality movement or program which does not have an impact on the customer. If the customer doesn't feel it, it shouldn't be part of your focus.