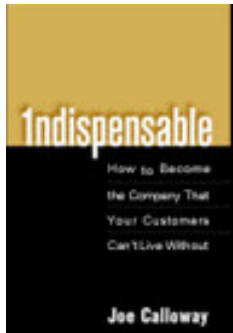


joeCalloway

building the customer connection



Ideas from *Indispensable — How To Become The Company That Your Customers Can't Live Without*

CREATE AND SUSTAIN MOMENTUM Most companies talk about going to that next level, have meetings about it, fill flip charts with ideas on how to get there, then go back to working on whatever they were doing before and life goes on as usual. It would be like you looking at brochures about Las Vegas and telling all your friends that you're going, but never buying a plane ticket. Companies do the same thing. To Create And Sustain Momentum means deciding to go, assigning the responsibility for the trip to the right people, and then taking the action necessary to make it happen. Simple. Excruciatingly simple. And most companies can't or won't do it. It's a mystery, isn't it? But just because it's simple doesn't mean it's easy. It's the sustaining of the momentum that requires the day in and day out communication and reinforcement of the vision.

DEVELOP HABITUAL DEPENDABILITY Consistency of performance is the brand builder. Inconsistency of performance is THE brand killer. One tip-off that a company is in trouble is if customers find themselves going on a scavenger hunt for the good employee. Why is it that so many well intentioned companies can't consistently deliver quality products, service, and experiences? Old saying: Vision without execution is a hallucination. Here's the key: repeatable process. This is the missing link between intention and reality. With a repeatable process, you can achieve the brand strength that comes only from consistency. If I asked you to name the employees in your company who will always give me a compelling customer experience, unless you answer "all of them," you're in trouble.

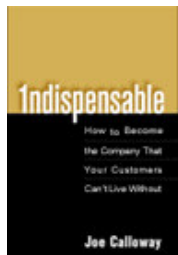
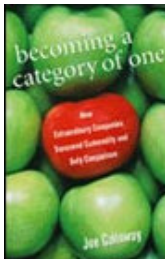
BIG PICTURE OUTCOME Mediocre companies are transaction focused. Indispensable companies, and everyone in them, are focused on creating positive outcomes for their customers. It's a matter of every employee being fully present in the sense of total engagement far beyond the immediate delivery of a product or service. Big Picture Outcome requires that you embrace a customer-centric philosophy that drives everything you do. Instead of looking at your product or service at the transactional level, focusing on such things as saving your client money, or ease of use, or quality, take a Big Picture Outcome view. Think in terms of how your product or service can help your customer achieve his or her overall long-term goals. Of course, you'll have to do the work of understanding what that customer's long term goals are, and that's work that most people aren't willing to do. But there's your competitive edge. In my business there is no higher

compliment or indicator of customer satisfaction than to have him say “You get us. More than anyone we deal with, you understand who we are, what we’re about, and what we’re trying to do here.” The more you look at what you do in terms of creating a Big Picture Outcome for your customers, the more you’ll develop differentiators beyond providing what customers expect from any supplier.

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CONTINUOUS CONNECTION This Driver is simple, powerful, and requires vigilance. Continuous Connection means that you maintain contact with your customers on an ongoing basis in such a way that strengthens your relationship. The same holds true for connecting with employees. Constant communication is the watchword for indispensable companies. Make contact early and often. Continuous Connection is the driver that indispensable companies use to avoid taking good customers for granted. You have to build in a process that constantly forces you to ask the question “What have we done for them lately?” Neglect is a terrible mistake to make in business, and yet without a system in place to assure continuous connection, what you thought was a locked-in customer can suddenly become the topic of a “I can’t believe they left us” post mortem conversation after they’ve taken their business to a competitor.

ENGAGE, ENCHANT, AND ENTHRALL This driver is the opposite of rocket science. This is magic. Only truly successful companies that understand how business really works believe in the magic of being able to Engage, Enchant, and Enthrall customers. But, of course, that’s what makes them successful. The mediocre and the struggling don’t have the talent to create magic. More likely what they don’t have is the creativity or the vision to pull it off. All they know is to do it by the numbers. One of my favorite examples of this Driver was an information technology consulting firm I worked with that declared that “it is our professional responsibility to be absolutely delightful.” The idea is to wrap your product with an experience that compels customer loyalty. It’s as true in the business-to-business arena as it is when you buy a cup of coffee from your favorite diner. In an intensely competitive market, your ultimate tiebreaker is to be able to Engage, Enchant, and Enthrall your customer.



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