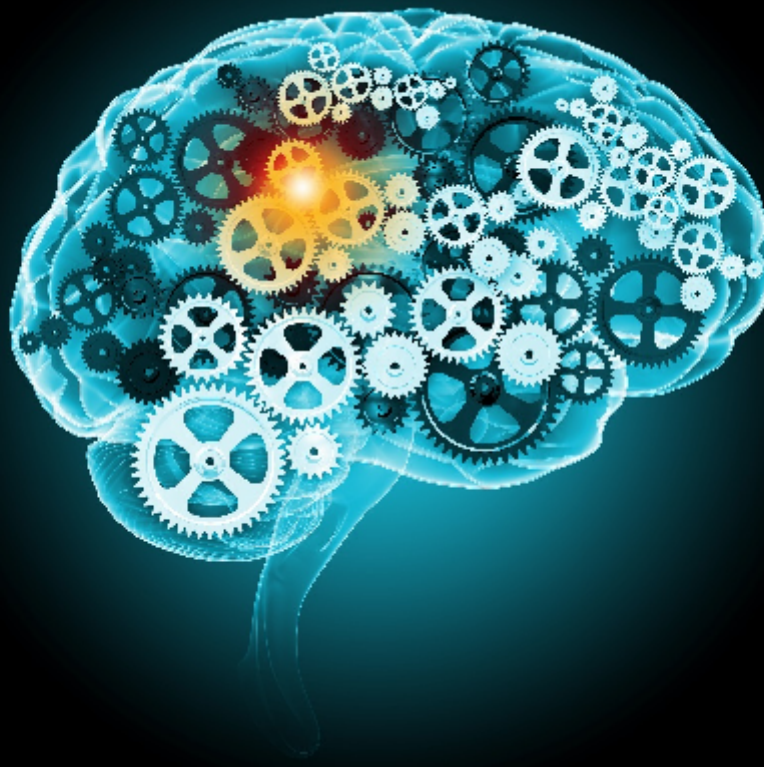


A MILE IN THE CUSTOMER'S SHOES



"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Maya Angelou

One of the myriad corporate jargons, "customer centricity" has recently become more commonly used. While customer focus may previously have been central to just the services and consulting businesses, customer centricity has lately turned into the holy grail of success for any organization. Typically, efforts to achieve outstanding customer satisfaction are driven from the inside and are about what more we can offer; rarely does anyone take a step back and ask, "... but what does the customer really want?" We develop the best products and strive for continuous innovation— but does the customer really want what we offer? Wouldn't it be better to first understand the customer and know what aspect of product innovation will offer them a competitive edge for their business?

Here's a scenario to consider: Imagine you're on your way to your favourite restaurant and on the way, your car gets a flat tire. Fortunately, you're able to change the tire and get back on the road relatively quickly. However, you arrive at the restaurant late and must wait for a table to open up because you've already missed your reservation time.

No matter how delicious the restaurant's food is, you'll most likely be in an annoyed mood. So, what changed during this visit? The restaurant and its service was exceptional as usual, but it was your experience prior to reaching the restaurant that ruined your evening.

Now, imagine if the restaurant's host had actually inquired with concern about your delay, seated you right away, provided you a complimentary refreshing beverage, and even offered to call a

mechanic to check your car.

Would your experience be any better compared to the previous scenario? Absolutely! Did it cost the restaurant anything to extend this gesture? No. The restaurant's culture of customer centricity made this possible. By anticipating your needs and ensuring your dining experience was a good one, the restaurant has also ensured that you will come back, making it a satisfying resolution for them as well.

Being empathetic to the customer is crucial to customer satisfaction. The customer feels valued and this goes a long way in building and maintaining a trusted relationship.