

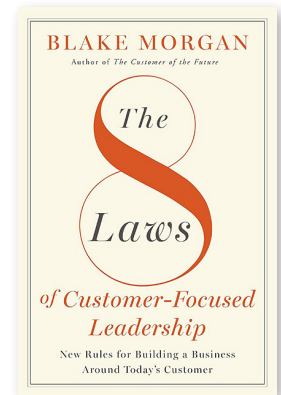


Executive Book Summaries[®]

The 8 Laws of Customer-Focused Leadership

New Rules for Building a Business
Around Today's Customer

by **Blake Morgan**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

The 8 Laws of Customer-Focused Leadership examines how organizations must reorganize leadership priorities around customer experience in an environment shaped by technological transparency and rising customer expectations. The central problem addressed is how companies sustain differentiation when products and services become commoditized and competitive advantage shifts to the quality of customer experience. Morgan argues that effective leadership must place customer needs at the center of decision-making, embedding accountability and responsiveness throughout the organization. This approach requires leaders to model behaviors that align employees with customer-focused outcomes while reducing internal complexity that hinders service delivery.

The book advances a structured framework of eight laws that define customer-focused leadership as an ongoing organizational discipline rather than a discrete initiative. It emphasizes balancing short- and long-term priorities, maintaining strategic consistency, engaging employees as central drivers of experience, and adapting to future trends such as artificial intelligence. Morgan also highlights the importance of measurement systems that reflect actual customer expectations and reinforce accountability across teams. The work positions customer experience as a unifying principle that shapes culture, operations, and strategy, requiring continuous reinforcement to remain effective in dynamic market conditions.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY

- Establish a customer experience mindset using accountability and feedback
- Balance short-term results with long-term customer value creation
- Execute a consistent strategy with clear goals and daily improvements
- Anticipate future trends while maintaining human-centered service

Introduction

The treasure chest that great leaders seek today is a customer focus that leads to unimaginable treasure: strong relationships, loyal customers, innovation, engagement, and, yes, better revenue. Finding that treasure requires taking an enthusiastic journey toward customer-centric leadership with a total focus on customer experience.

The path to a customer-centric company is paved with leadership. A leader is nothing without a group of followers, but a leader is granted that title because other people choose to follow them. If the employees do not trust or respect the leader, the leader is simply a manager. And without trusting employees, you cannot build a customer-centric company.

By knowing the rules of customer-focused leadership, working on them in yourself, and setting an example to impart them to others, you will transform yourself into the kind of leader organizations need the most right now.

CHAPTER 1

The Rise of the Customer-Focused Leader

Over the past ten years, we've seen an explosion of businesses caring about customers. Corporate employee titles with the word customer exploded worldwide. What changed? Simply put, technology drove this new era of accountability and focus on the customer.

As customers, we all have a great amount of power because we have access to an incredible amount of information. There's no hiding. Today, we know what is happening everywhere, and we know quickly. We're all watching one another all the time. Employers are watching employees, employees are watching employers, employees are watching customers, and customers are watching employees and employers.

With all that watching, we've entered a new period of extreme accountability. Whether you like it or not, we are all accountable to the customer. The customer has the power. Your product or service is a commodity; if it hasn't become one yet, it's only a matter of time. Even if you have a new product idea, someone will come along and make it better or different and sell more than you.

The Customer Experience Advantage

Today, the only way to differentiate your brand is through customer experience (CX). To become a beloved brand, you

must live and breathe it and interpret what that means for your company because no two are alike. It requires a mastery of the basics—but it's more than that. Great customer experience is created when it is part of your brand. In fact, it *is* the brand.

If the brand is the experience, the product itself isn't the only matter of importance. The complete experience around the product, the psychology of the customer, and the customer's perception of your brand matter a great deal. So how do you create this customer-centric culture?

As a leader, it starts with you. You can inspire greatness in employees only by modeling the behavior and setting the groundwork to drive the behaviors that lead to customer-focused outcomes. You can work to reduce back-end complexity so employees are free to focus on their roles and not the messiness of a poorly run company.

When leaders relentlessly pursue an amazing customer experience based on the eight laws that follow, even as the world and customers evolve, they spread that excitement and focus to the rest of their employees. And that's when the magic happens.

CHAPTER 2

The Current State of Customer Experience

If customer experience could boil down to one word, it would be *accountability*. This accountability comes from the mindset of the individual. When your company has the customer experience mindset, you have teams of people who all have the mindset of accountability, and when you have achieved that, you are unstoppable.

Every individual mindset is affected by the culture of the company, and that culture is created by the leaders. If you want to learn about everything that's going well and not well inside a company, you can get a sense of that by looking at the customer experience.

If the customer experience is incredible, it's likely the leaders of that company have adopted a customer experience mindset throughout the company.

What Is a Customer-Centric Leader?

A customer-centric leader places the needs, aspirations, and experiences of customers at the core of every decision, ensuring that organizational strategies not only drive business growth but also cultivate authentic relationships and lasting value for the people they serve.

A customer-centric leader places customer needs at the core of every decision.



As the world and markets evolve, every business has become a commodity. Today, brands compete on experience more than price or product. And building a great experience and the customer experience mindset starts by understanding the modern customer.

Who Is the Modern Customer?

Customer demands and preferences are constantly changing, but perhaps never more than during and after the pandemic. Customers do not want to go back to the way things were, but companies are not rising to the occasion. The modern customer is

- experience-driven
- informed
- has diverse needs and craves personalization
- seeking convenience
- concerned about sustainability
- not married to any particular brand
- connected
- security- and privacy-conscious

CHAPTER 3

Law 1: Create a Customer Experience Mindset

Customer experience is the great leveling field of our time. Any small group can build an experience that people hate, reconstruct it with a better experience for the customer, and be the new big fish. No company, no matter how big or old it is, is safe from being disrupted.

Being a customer-centric leader means you feel extreme ownership over your work. You make the decision every day to be better than average; you choose to balance short-term goals with long-term strategies. 72% of business executives say they understand what it feels like to be one of their customers, but only 35% of consumers say that companies understand them well. The customer-centric leader works arduously to understand their customers and create experiences based on actual feedback about what customers would like to see and experience.

The Energy for Influencing Change

If you have the energy for influencing change, you will never be without a leadership opportunity. Sometimes long-standing rules and practices, especially in the contact center, must be thrown out. To be bold, you must have the energy for influencing change. If you don't have the energy, you better start working on developing your energy levels and your appetite for change.

The following eight steps stand out as critical ways to create the customer experience mindset for yourself. These eight steps can give you a big boost with your own leadership, to truly become a customer-centric leader and embody the customer-focused mindset.

1. **Flip burgers next to employees.** The customer experience mindset means you are an in-the-trenches kind of leader. You are not above the work you ask others to do.
2. **Give no excuses.** The customer experience mindset is when a leader decides to be accountable. While the problem might not be your fault, and you cannot control the behavior of others, you are accountable for always doing your best in that moment.
3. **Commit to excellence.** While perfection is not possible in modern life, aspiring for zero defects or unforced errors is. A commitment to excellence is simply the act of always doing your best.
4. **See feedback as a chance for growth.** Feedback should not be seen as a pain because the company must change, but as a chance to improve.
5. **Don't take yourself too seriously.** The customer experience mindset doesn't take itself too seriously. That means that when a leader messes up, they can admit it. Ego does not get in the way.
6. **Believe employees are the path.** A customer-focused mindset is laser focused on what is happening with employees. The employee is the path to the customer.
7. **Know that everything you do matters.** Creating a mindset for excellence starts with you. You show up every day for everyone in your life with honor, respect, grace, and gratitude.
8. **Have a life outside of work.** When you're a leader,

no one is going to take care of you. That is why *you* must take care of *you*, so you have the energy to give to others.

CHAPTER 4

Law 2: Exceed Long-Term Profit Expectations

Short-termism is a real problem for leaders, and it prevents them from making the customer-centric choice every time. Leaders are in a constant state of balancing two pursuits at one time. This is the essence of the customer-focused leader: this leader is always thinking about what is happening with customers today while also considering all the opportunities for tomorrow.

Companies with a long-term orientation are rewarded with a lower cost of capital, which allows them to afford more innovation—a virtuous cycle. Profit today is increasingly a reward for long-term focus on disruption and innovation.

Customer Experience in Action

When David Cote took charge as CEO of Honeywell International, no one expected him to succeed in turning the company around.

Over the next several years, with David's short- and long-term vision, Honeywell did the seemingly impossible—stabilizing the company and progressing on a number of fronts simultaneously.

His approach to customer experience was straightforward:

1. Truly understand what the customer values
2. Develop metrics that correspond to something the customer values
3. Figure out which processes drive the metric and map them
4. Constantly go back and survey again and again

Leaders have to think about many moving parts in running a company, but the part that is not always as defined or clear is the one with the word “customer” in it. It's easy to forget about the customer's experience when there are so many problems to solve. So who owns it? Essentially, everyone.

And yet, customer experience most often lives in the contact center where leaders often do not have the resources to paint the story of why and how much it matters to the bottom line of the business.

Creating a Short- and Long-Term Vision Statement

The leaders I interview who succeed with customer experience know that profits can be a little further in the distance when they do the right thing up front and invest in customer experience. Facing the stress head-on, rather than allowing dysfunction to perpetuate and get worse, makes for a stronger leader and a stronger company. The leader must focus on the vision and come up with a strategy to protect customer programs from the chopping block.

Both good times and bad are important times to invest in customer experience. It makes sense that when you're making money, and things are up, no one wants to put a wrench in the wheel and slow the company down.

But when profits are up, it's a good time to experiment with a new program on a small group of customers. When profits are down, something is off in how you are providing goods and services to customers. The ability to balance short-term strategies with long-term goals is a key leadership skill today.

CHAPTER 5

Law 3: Lay Out Your Customer Experience Strategy and Stick to It

If CX is so simple, everyone would do it. It's much easier to talk about building a customer-centric business than it is to actually build one. Simply put, investing and prioritizing customer experience matters. And while experience centers on relationships and people, it also has a significant impact on the bottom line.

The hard part is not creating a plan; the hard part is sticking to it and being consistent. You must constantly go back and fix your recipe to ensure it's always relevant in an ever-changing world. But if you put customer work into your weekly schedule, it will be much easier than if you try to do it randomly. If your customer experience strategy is a wash, rinse, and spin cycle, it would look like the following:

- **Define your mission and vision:** Clarify why you are doing what you are doing, how you will measure success, and what that success looks like. Identify what customers value and what you can deliver, and use those insights to shape your vision.
- **Build a customer-centric culture:** Recognize that culture may not be visible, but it is felt by employees and experienced by customers.

The value of a company now lies in its ingenuity, relationships, and psychological power in the customer's mind.

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- **Align business goals with customer experience outcomes:** Understand your business objectives and how they intersect with the outcomes you want your customer experience to drive.
- **Align the organization around the vision:** Ensure the entire company is working toward the same mission and value set, grounded in the desired customer experience outcomes.
- **Operationalize the strategy:** Create a roadmap, cascade it to leaders and managers, and measure what matters to drive the outcomes you seek.

Every company has a different version of this, but generally, you start with goal setting, then get into how you're going to achieve your goal and figure out how to keep these priorities in check.

Customer Experience in Four Steps

1. **Walk a mile in their shoes.** This means understanding the reality of the customer experience; the leader personally goes through the customer journey to know it inside and out.
2. **Ask for the truth.** Leadership must have a consistent commitment to the truth and always be willing to ask for feedback from employees and customers.
3. **Yes to accountability.** Saying yes to accountability is a mindset. It's the mindset of employees who jump out of bed in the morning to start their day because they love their work. This is often innate, but you can inspire it in yourself by shifting your mindset and modeling and inspiring it in your employees.
4. **Small improvements every day.** Overnight success is a myth. Good things take time, and the most valuable experiences take years to build. Small daily changes have cumulative impacts.

Customer experience requires constant attention. Creating a culture of “fail fast and break things” is critical. It's all about experience design and empowering your people to deliver experiences they can be proud of. Giving employees the tools they need to own and deliver great experiences pays off. A study shows that 82% of customers are more loyal to brands that empower contact center agents to solve issues without having to follow a script.

CHAPTER 6

Law 4: Embark on Your Ninety-Day Get-Started Plan

It's important, when you start a new role, that you start strong. The customer leadership role is tough because you are walking into an uncertain situation where you will need to be an investigator.

At times you will feel like you're at a start-up because the path is not entirely clear. You will need to build the airplane as you fly it.

Some of the goals you will need for yourself in your new role include achieving early wins for credibility, finding advocates and building relationships, making informed strategy decisions, and finding focused learning time (you have a learning curve) while not drinking from the fire hose and getting overwhelmed.

The role of the customer-focused leader is to make life better every day for employees and customers. Your job is to effect change, starting where you can and spurring innovation. Ultimately you want to create a customer-focused culture across the company.

Your First Ninety Days in Ten Steps

1. Go on a CX listening tour
2. Gain tools for rapid learning
3. Match your CX strategy to the situation
4. Secure early CX wins
5. Negotiate CX success
6. Achieve CX alignment
7. Build your CX team
8. Create CX coalitions
9. Ensure you are not overly stressed and aim for balance
10. Be the tide that raises all boats

It's normal that in your first ninety days there will be some huge waves that throw you off your game or make the journey feel very uncertain. The key is to stay the course, hold on to what you can, and don't lose faith in yourself and the important work you are doing.

CHAPTER 7

Law 5: Anticipate the Future

Businesses are increasingly operating in a world where the products being sold are not physical at all. One of these intangibles is the relationship the customer has with the brand. The value of a company is not what it used to be: it now lies in its ingenuity, relationships, and psychological power in the customer's mind.

What Is a Futurist?

A *futurist* is a person who systematically explores predictions and possibilities about the future and how those possibilities can emerge from the present. A *customer experience futurist* considers the business implications of the broader trends and changes in society and how that could affect your customers.

You're seeing more innovation than society has ever encountered, coupled with more uncertainty than ever before on a variety of fronts. The world needs leaders who understand futurism and think about it all the time.

How Customer Experience Will Be Affected by AI

The exponential growth of AI has created many ethical gray areas and watchdogs calling to slow down the speed of AI development. One of the biggest opportunities for AI, and one of its fastest adoption areas, is customer service.

Although Goldman Sachs says AI could replace the equivalent of three hundred million full-time jobs, most experts agree that customer service jobs will be augmented and automated but not replaced.

By automating mundane tasks, AI could provide a better experience for customers with more self-service options and help fix some of the industry's biggest problems, especially employee burnout and inefficiency.

These experiences have led to a massive talent shortage and make it costly for companies, which have to continually recruit and train new employees, all of which affects the customer and employee experience. AI won't replace human customer service jobs in the short term simply because there are so many open jobs.

The Cone of Possibilities

Some leaders are bold futurists, moving too fast for the world, even alienating or offending some. Others are way too insular, not bringing in outside counsel to tell them when

they have their head in the sand. The ideal customer-centric leader who is also a futurist is able to ride in the middle.

The fact is customer experience cannot save your company from being disrupted. If your leadership is stale and your model is outdated, problems will arise. For customer experience leaders, the cone of possibilities framework provides a structured way to think about the future, anticipate various scenarios, and plan accordingly. The cone is made up of a series of zones that move from the most likely to the least certain outcomes over time:

- **Probable future:** The central part of the cone represents the most likely outcomes based on current trends and data. Examples could be increased use of AI in the contact center, the demise of retail stores and transformation into experience centers, the continued consumerization of health care, and so on.
- **Plausible future:** These scenarios are possible but less certain. They're based on potential shifts in current trends. Examples in customer experience would be more attention paid to the contact center by senior leadership and the CMO, the rise of new channels such as video chat, and increased personalization from brands as customer expectations increase, particularly among Gen Z.
- **Possible future:** These scenarios might seem unlikely right now but could occur if certain conditions change. One example is the idea that your entire customer experience will be automated, and customers won't want to interact with a person.
- **Preposterous future:** The outer edges of the cone represent wild, speculative scenarios. While they seem far-fetched, they challenge our assumptions and spark creativity. The preposterous future examples might include a contact center without a person in it, fully emotionally intelligent robots handling all customer issues, and the complete disappearance of jobs for humans.

CHAPTER 8

Law 6: Don't Forget That Employees Are Customers Too

Every team must have a great coach, and that great coach can be you. If you want to be a customer-focused company, you must start with the type of leader you want to be. A customer-focused culture is a coached culture of employees that genuinely feel part of a team. The culture must reward team-

Performance metrics are the number one hindrance to creating a customer-focused culture and organization. ”

work over praising individual superstar behavior and pitting individuals against one another.

A customer-focused company is not built by a leader and customers alone. The team is the secret sauce that leads to a business that customers can't get enough of. You practice how you play, and the enthusiasm for the drudgery of practice, and paying attention to all the minutiae and details, is what makes the team perform well when it counts.

Engagement Ideas for Contact Center Agents

The contact center has some of the worst churn of any industry, ever. But it is the most important place in your entire business: these are the lucky individuals who get to talk to your customers every single day. Brian Dunphy, the former VP of customer experience at Warby Parker, has seven tactics he uses to engage his employees in the contact center:

1. **Director for the Day.** Brian would swap positions with his agents so his agents would become the director and Brian would take the contact center calls.
2. **Recognition on TV boards throughout the office.** This recognition would be for anniversaries, birthdays, or an amazing call an agent had with a customer.
3. **Handwritten cards from leadership.** Brian would set a reminder to write cards to staff every week, including words of praise and gratitude.
4. **Special badge lanyards.** Brian would provide special lanyards to staff to differentiate veteran staff from new hires, with varying colors or beautiful designs.
5. **Team lunches.** Brian's team would host lunches for top performers. Lunch-and-learns would be moderated with senior staff, or they'd just enjoy some casual chitchat together.
6. **Having food delivered to remote agents.** Remote agents would receive a complimentary lunch while they were being onboarded and gifts for the very "serious" remote agent dress code like a bathrobe, fun-branded pajamas, or sandals.
7. **Agents coach other agents.** Brian felt that a message delivered by peers resonated more than a message delivered by management. One powerful tool would simply be to have agents coach one another.

CHAPTER 9

Law 7: Evaluate Success and Measure What Can Be Measured

The discussion of metrics is one of the more polarizing topics for leaders who run contact centers. The predominant metric for customer experience today is Net Promoter Score (NPS), which is how likely a customer is to recommend a company to a friend on a scale of 0 to 10.

But NPS is problematic. And with the proliferation of data today and the ability to analyze millions of pieces of structured and unstructured data, NPS is losing the appeal it once had for many leaders.

The contact center exposes how much or how little the company cares about its customer relationships. The way a company manages its contact center or any customer-facing role says everything about what they prioritize. Managing the contact center can be very complicated, but when you get very clear about your goal, the path is clear.

If there were one glaring problem with customer experience, it's this: performance metrics are the number one hindrance to creating a customer-focused culture and organization.

How you measure success says everything about what your company values and everything about how hard you are willing to work to make improvements based on the reality of customer feedback, not a euphemistic view from someone who simply wants to keep their job and make their bonus.

Experience Level Agreements

Experience Level Agreements (XLAs) are a way to run your contact center that starts with the customer experience and backs into the metric. Most contact centers don't do this.

If you want to create a new metrics program based on XLAs, you can do the following:

- understand your brand promise and how you can best bring it to life
- connect with your customers on a deep, emotional level
- identify what your customers want

From here you create a quadrant and tell the story of your customer's core expectations. Map these expectations to current questions on your survey and analytics engine or create new survey questions (and retire former ones that don't directly connect to actionable insights) that roll up directly to the XLA metric. Include the emotion and brand promise throughout in a clear and understandable way to "tell the story."

When you evangelize XLAs in your organization, it brings alignment around what all employees own in meeting customers' core expectations. Eventually, as you integrate them into the culture, it becomes a refreshing mantra for what the customer needs that will ensure that you are a true and steadfast advocate for your customers.

Earned Growth Rate

There is also a very basic way to look at customer happiness. You can obviously look at sales. If your sales are high, that means you are doing something right, but you don't know if what you are selling is good enough that the customer will come back. A better metric than just "sales" is how many of those customers are so happy they tell their friends.

Many businesses have taken customer experience and applied stats that are no longer relevant. Customer experience leaders are missing the point and have lost their way in focusing on a scoreboard that isn't guiding a customer-centric strategy. Why don't we think of the contact center as a place where employees contribute to the bottom line?

Everyone at your company touches the customer experience in some way whether you acknowledge it or not. Customers are more likely to come back after a contact center agent helps them than after seeing an advertisement interrupting their favorite TV show.

The Importance of Metrics for CX

The importance of metrics in shaping a successful customer experience strategy cannot be overstated. Monitoring the right customer experience metrics allows teams to gauge the effectiveness of their strategies, identify areas for improvement, and continually enhance the customer experience.

But traditional metrics like NPS and Customer Satisfaction Score that many brands relied on in the past may not fully capture the expectations of today's sophisticated customers. More modern companies are using data and analytics to get the full picture, filling the gaps where older metrics lack substance. Companies need to elevate their metric monitoring and track new behaviors and attitudes.

If you knew that your customer-facing agents were the most important people at your company, because they have the special and impactful opportunity to talk to customers, what resources would you put toward their employee experience? How would you measure or manage them differently?

CHAPTER 10

Law 8: Reaffirm the Priority

Most companies are bad at customer experience because it is really hard to do. Not only is it hard to get started, but it's hard to keep it up. Changing economic conditions, changing priorities, and changes in leadership and personnel: how is any corporation supposed to stay the course over years and years, decades and decades?

What business leaders might feel is very far away could be right at their fingertips. Just like a person, a business can change; its leaders just have to want to. When you talk about customer experience, it is a series of high-level business decisions. But it is also how you manage your employees. And it is definitely how you set up and manage your contact center.

Customer experience is like exercising. You have to do it all the time or you lose your muscle. Being customer-focused is a way of life.

Conclusion

Customer experience is a mindset. It is about putting in the work. It's about believing in yourself and doing things that are hard. Seeing what you are capable of is what makes life meaningful. You have to fight for the things you care about.

There is so much work to be done in the world. We need all the helpers we can get. Being a customer-focused person is really about healing the world. The faster we embrace being uncomfortable, the sooner we can fix some of the systemic issues that plague the world. The customer experience mindset is a way of life; it's a life of meaning through service to others.

And it's not just good for your customer. It's not just good for the business. It's good for you. Being of service to others means you have purpose in your life every day, and that meaning makes for a happier and more fulfilling life.



Blake Morgan is a customer experience futurist, author, and keynote speaker known for her insights on the future of customer-centric business. Named “The Queen of CX” by Meta, she has written three books on customer experience and was recognized among the top female keynote speakers by *Real Leaders* magazine. Morgan hosts *The Modern Customer Podcast* and is a contributor to *Forbes*. She teaches as a guest lecturer at Columbia University and the University of California, San Diego, and serves as adjunct faculty at Rutgers University. She has worked with organizations including Coca-Cola, AT&T, and the Federal Reserve Bank.

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