



CUSTOMER-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS TO GROW REVENUE

BUSINESS BRIEF

By Dale Eskra

“WE DON’T HAVE TIME TO TALK TO OUR CUSTOMERS. BESIDES, WE ALREADY KNOW WHAT THEY NEED.”

A few years ago I attended a meeting at a large, respected, international software company to learn about a new product idea that was being proposed. There were around fifteen of us seated at the table. From experience I knew that this product concept had been hatched behind closed doors. The CEO was very anxious to see it released. Expectations of its ability to command a hefty price and have its value quickly perceived were running high.

At one point the product manager displayed on the screen a highly confusing and complex diagram with connecting arrows going everywhere. “This is how it works,” he proclaimed, and proceeded to explain what was going on.

The explanation only confused things more, at least as far as I was concerned.

The presentation went on for an hour or more, then there was discussion about how this product—I should say, “solution”—would be marketed.

I then raised a question that I thought was only logical to ask. “Have you talked with some of your customers about this to get their views? Seems like a solution of this scope would be of interest to some of your largest customers in several industries. You have an impressive roster of big names to draw on for their input....”

At this point the VP of Marketing suddenly turned very defensive. “We’re under a lot of pressure to get this released. We don’t have time to talk to our customers. Besides, we already know what they want.”

There was dead silence in the room. Yes, I had heard correctly in spite of thinking otherwise. The meeting went on and I kept my mouth shut.

SO, WHAT HAPPENED?

The product was released and it was a dud. It was an ill-conceived idea poorly executed with absolutely no input from any of the company’s most important customers. The CEO was not pleased.

OUR SOLUTION TO AVOID THIS DISASTER

Partner with your most valued and strategically important customers to lay out a concept, develop a prototype, have them use it, give you feedback, then package it industrial-strength and jointly market it with them. They will be honored to play this role, your risk will be reduced and the likelihood of success significantly increased.

We’ve done this many times. It really works!

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