

Three Characteristics Of Transformational Leaders

By Bruce Temkin, Customer Experience Transformist
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I work with many companies aiming to become customer-centric organizations. These efforts are never easy, and they always require a multi-year journey. In order for an organization to sustain a change agenda over that span of time, the senior management team needs to actively lead the effort. In my work, I've observed that the most effective leaders demonstrate three key characteristics:



1) Communicate "Why"

The only way to get people to truly buy-in to change is for them to understand why it's happening. Most executives tend to under-communicate. And when they do communicate, they often focus on "what" the company will be doing and "how" it will get done. Here are some ways that executives can improve their communications:

- Develop a clear script about "why" the company is going through the change
- Develop a clear script about "why" the change is good in the long run to your organization and its employees
- Make sure that your direct reports fully understand why the change is going on and have their own scripts
- Make sure that you regularly discuss the "why" in your ongoing communications

2) Model Desired Behaviors

Temkin Group's 6th law of customer experience is simply: "You can't fake it." And we can all learn from New Jersey mayor Corey Booker's mom, who once told the mayor: "*What you do speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you are saying.*" Your organization can tell what's truly important by observing your actions. If people see that you haven't changed, then they won't change either. Here are some ways that you can model new customer-centric behaviors:

- Look for new ways to use customer feedback; consider regularly calling out to customers
- Find ways to incorporate voice of the customer data/insights into your decision-making
- Start asking customer-centric questions like: who is the target audience and how will this help them?
- Make the change a top item on your meeting agendas; even above the normal operational items.
- Make choices about what meetings you attend or decisions you make based on the signal it sends to the organization about your support for the change

3) Reinforce Change

It's very easy for organizations to fall back into their regular, "comfortable" routines. So you need to make sure that you continuously reinforce the changed behaviors. Here are some of the things you can work on:

- Hold your direct reports accountable for change in their organizations
- Make "leading and supporting change" a key objective that you use to measure your direct reports
- Publicly recognize and call out people in your organization that are acting consistently with where the company is heading
- Don't promote anyone in your organization, even high performers, if they are not proactively supporting the change
- Embed the new direction in the hiring and new employee on-boarding process
- Ask people in your organization what you could be doing to more effectively support the change
- Develop personal goals every quarter for how you will reinforce the change
- The bottom line: Transformation takes strong, committed leadership. Read up on Purposeful Leadership.

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About The Author, Bruce Temkin

Bruce Temkin is Customer Experience Transformist & Managing Partner of Temkin Group. He is widely viewed as a leading expert in how organizations build differentiation with customer experience. He has worked with hundreds of large organizations on the strategies, operational processes, organizational structures, leadership, and culture required to sustain superior customer relationships.

Bruce works with executive teams to define the right strategy and develop plans for accelerating the path to customer experience improvements.

Bruce is the author of the popular blog *Customer Experience Matters* where he regularly posts insights on topics such as customer experience, branding, leadership, and employee engagement.

Prior to forming Temkin Group, Bruce was Vice President & Principal Analyst with Forrester Research. During his 12 years with Forrester, he led the company's business-to-business, financial services, eBusiness, and customer experience practices. Bruce was Forrester's most-read analyst for 13 consecutive quarters and remains one of the most respected analysts in the industry.

Bruce authored several Forrester's most popular research reports on customer experience including "*Experience-Based Differentiation*," "*The Customer Experience Journey*," and "*Voice Of The Customer: The Next Generation*." He created Forrester's Customer Experience Index, which rates more than 100 firms on their overall customer experience. He also led the creation and updates of many of Forrester's customer experience evaluation methodologies and training workshops.

Prior to Forrester, Bruce co-founded and ran a couple of Internet start-ups. He also held management positions with GE, Stratus Computers, and Fidelity Investments.

Bruce has been widely quoted in the press, including media outlets such as New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Business Week.

Bruce is a highly demanded public speaker who combines deep expertise with an engaging, entertaining style. He has delivered keynote speeches at hundreds of industry and corporate events; often recognized as the top speaker. At Forrester's inaugural Customer Experience Forum in 2009, for instance, his two sessions received the top ratings of the event.

Bruce holds a master's degree from the MIT Sloan School of Management, where he concentrated in business strategy and operations. He also holds an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering from Union College.

About Temkin Group



Temkin Group is a customer experience research and consulting firm. We have one simple goal for our clients: increase customer loyalty by becoming more customer-centric. Any company can improve portions of its customer experience, but it takes more than a few superficial changes to create lasting differentiation. The Temkin Group combines customer experience thought leadership with a deep understanding of the dynamics of large organizations to help senior executives accelerate their customer experience efforts.