

Customer Intimacy ... Are You a Good Listener?



The power of customer intimacy and the importance of listening was driven home to me in a series of interactions with potential annual report vendors. After a decade of using the same firm we decided to test the market and take a hard look at the competition. All firms were given access to the same information ... our story, goals, ambitions and background information on the company. One by one the companies filed into the executive conference room and made their pitches. As we approached the end of the process the front-runner was clear ... it was the incumbent. They left no stone unturned. They filled the conference room and presented what now seems like a dozen designs ... your annual report in the style of LIFE magazine, your annual report as it would appear in the style of National Geographic, your annual report in the style of USA Today, etc.,... an impressive display of firm capability. Then came Savage Brands ... two presenters and two designs ... my first reaction: They didn't listen! After calling on us year

after year without result had they given up? Were they simply going through the motions? To our surprise (and relief) the two presentations were well thought out, insightful, unique, and communicated our message clearly. They were listening and thinking! Long story short they won the shootout because they were listening. Less can be more if it truly reflects customer intimacy.

Are you so busy telling the customer about your capabilities that you forgot to listen? True intimacy is a result of a conversation ... be sure you are listening before you make your pitch!

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