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Increased Customer Focus Will Help Business Thrive in 2021

CLAREMONT, CA— The current economic disruption is giving businesses big opportunities to take steps to redefine and renew the relationships and processes that customers value most, according to the Society for the Advancement of Consulting® (SAC). Businesses that tune into evolving customer needs will thrive the most in 2021.

Put Customer Needs and Innovation Top of Your Action List

“Manufacturers and distributors must get on top of changing customer needs so that they can get ahead of the curve,” points out Lisa Anderson, president of Claremont, CA-based LMA Consulting Group, Inc. and manufacturing expert known for creating supply chain resiliency. Start with your key customers and find out how you can provide value. Zero in on changing buying behaviors from their customers. Listen for opportunities for new, upgraded products and services, as well as new market opportunities.

“On the supply side, rethink, redesign, and innovate,” says Anderson. “Set up your operations, supply base, and related supply chain and logistics networks to be resilient to changing conditions, as well as efficient and profitable. You’ll be prepared to thrive post COVID-19 and take advantage of opportunities as they arise.”

Strike a Balance Between Independence and Interdependence

“Today’s business leaders face incredible pressure to anticipate, adapt, and produce.” says Dr. Maynard Brusman, a San Francisco Bay Area consulting psychologist and executive coach.

According to Dr. Brusman, “Figuring out what’s next is not easy for business leaders. What leaders need is a balance of independence and interdependence. What we have known about the past and assumed about the present is no longer sufficient to prepare for a desired future. Most people don’t like giving up control, especially in uncertain times. Perhaps that’s why we resist the idea of interdependence: we believe autonomy, individual liberty, and independence will yield greater innovation, production, and wealth. We need better interdependence to reach and maintain peak performance adding value.”
Dr. Brusman advises his executive coaching clients, “Focus on economics and management issues, as well as how you respond to social, technological, cultural, political, environmental, and religious issues.”

**Value, Mission, and Relationships Key to Nonprofit Success**

Karen Eber Davis, president of Sarasota, Florida-based nonprofit revenue growth firm, [Karen Eber Davis Consulting](#), and author of *Let’s Raise Nonprofit Millions Together*, recommends three steps for leaders, especially those who lead nonprofits, to take now to thrive in 2021 and beyond.

“First, believe in your organization’s value. Second, do whatever it takes to build awareness for the mission,” she said. “Finally, develop and maintain robust relationships.”

**Prepare for One Step Forward, Then Two More Steps Forward**

“The best companies continually find ways to bring visibility and transparency into their relationships, partnerships, and processes,” according Diane L. Garcia of [Lorraine Consulting, LLC](#). Diane has over 13 years’ experience in operations and supply chain management. She is an expert in helping clients improve on their unique business processes, applying cutting edge supply chain optimization knowledge, and implementing best practices with manufacturing and distribution companies.

“One way to prepare for the future is by utilizing business intelligence tools, which will assist you in leveraging the mountains of data you collect,” Garcia points out. “This will enable you to predict future trends. Sharing insights like this across the supply chain will support forward momentum,”

**Fly High in 2021 with Customer Empathy and Motivation**

“The two big steps to thriving in 2021 are using customer empathy and boosting motivation,” says Steven Hunt, an expert in global leadership growth at [Steven Hunt & Associates](#).

“Customer empathy is re-imagining your products and processes from your customers’ 2020 perspective,” explains Hunt. “Like most airlines, Eurowings, Lufthansa’s budget airline, had prohibitive charges on re-booking flights, pre-Covid. But 2020 has given customers a different experience. Now, Eurowings is looking to make flight re-booking cheaper and easier permanently. This reflects what is technically possible, what customers value, and what customers are used to now.

“The second step is motivation. Months of being psychologically at full stretch—coping with the uncertainties of 2020—has induced listlessness and acedia in many people,” he points out. “To thrive in 2021, define a clear focal point for your business, create true commitment, and build up renewed levels of staff motivation.”
Focus on What Matters to Customers Now
Now, more than ever, organizations must take time to understand today's customer priorities and challenges, then respond accordingly, according to Linda Popky, president of Redwood Shores, CA-based strategic firm marketing firm Leverage2Market Associates, and author of the book Marketing Above the Noise: Achieve Strategic Advantage with Marketing That Matters.

“Priorities have changed as a result of the pandemic. What seemed important nine months ago may not even be relevant now,” she notes. “Your value proposition to customers needs to focus on where they are today. Don’t rely on what worked before. Meet customers where they are today and show them how you can help them succeed in today’s changed environment.”

Two Positive Weapons to Dominate Your Market
“It’s time to use disruption and volatility as offensive weapons, and not dread their presence,” said SAC Founder Alan Weiss, PhD. “They will continue in increasing degree. Adapting isn’t sufficient—you must use them to dominate your market.”

About SAC
The Society for the Advancement of Consulting (SAC) is the premier association for independent consulting professionals who subscribe to an industry code of ethics and provide significant consulting results among their clients. Founded by Million Dollar Consulting guru Alan Weiss in 2003, SAC offers a series of in-person and online programs to help consultants share best practices and learn from industry experts and thought leaders in the business world. SAC today has members in 14 countries around the world.

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