

Power to the People

NEWS CORP. PRESIDENT PETER CHERNIN, featured in the first issue of this magazine, is fond of saying that we live in a time when customers have never had more choices and more power. Business is about delivering products and services that attract, engage, and satisfy customers. That's as basic a statement about business as you can imagine. Yet the corporate landscape is full of companies trying to figure out why they can't figure out who their customers are and what they want. Do they want to be pampered? Challenged? Fulfilled? Do they want respect? Sentiment? Tough love? Who are these people?



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Pleasing customers is the great challenge of business, and this issue of *Forrester* is stuffed with stories of companies wrestling with that challenge and lessons in doing it better. In our cover story, “Why Your Customers Hate You,” James Surowiecki of *The New Yorker* talks to companies who know they're staking their futures on how they treat their customers. What makes good customer service? What is just a myth? What's the best way to use various channels to communicate and serve customers?

Elsewhere we consider the questions businesses ask about those customers: how to develop a multilingual communications strategy, how to convince customers that their bank records are safe, how to sell music to people old to care about MTV, how Amazon enables its customers to

develop its most effective marketing content, and on and on.

In recent months, it has become clear that millions who made use of Microsoft's Internet Explorer or watched TLC's *Trading Spaces* were willing to switch their web or television browsing habits given what they perceived to be a reasonable choice. The companies that can serve customers well in an age of zero or near-zero switching costs are the ones we'll be covering in these pages for years to come.

We're pleased to present an issue focusing on serving customers, but we're not big fans of the word “customer.” That word reduces people to mere recipients of products and services. Indeed, one could argue that thinking of people as solely customers is a symptom of a larger problem. We're not just customers, after all. We're people.

This issue acknowledges that basic truth in “The Faces of Offshoring,” portraits of individuals whose lives and careers have been changed by globalization—although not in the ways you or they might expect. Each person we profile is far more than a collection of attributes; they are all more than examples of groups. They're real, complex, surprising. Think about that the next time you hear someone talk specifically about a broad market. It's individuals who make decisions, and you don't have to be Peter Chernin to know where the power is nowadays. ●