Users, Not Customers: Who Really Determines the Success of Your Business

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If you're still chasing customers online, you're looking at the challenge backward.

Aaron Shapiro helps companies build thriving digitally driven businesses. In his firm's extensive study of the Fortune 1000, a clear pattern emerged: the most successful companies drive sales by focusing on users instead of just customers. This is a fundamental strategic shift.

Rather than trying to get people to buy stuff online, these companies home in on the user experience. They've realized that building relationships between people and their brand has huge value, even if those users aren't spending a dime on their products (yet).

It's no secret that Internet-based companies like Google and Facebook thrive by building their user base before turning to monetization. Shapiro's big insight is that offline companies can successfully do the same, integrating offline products with an online presence and building platforms that create a lasting relationship between their brand and their users. Shapiro provides a strategic approach to refocusing your business in every way, from technology infrastructure and management to product design and marketing.

Users, Not Customers: Who Really Determines the Success of Your Business Details

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Jennifer Ware says

I received this book for free from goodreads.com. This book would be very helpful for a business student or small business owner. I did learn a lot, got some helpful hints for my next garage sale or craft sale and learned some interesting facts about my two favorite companies, Target and etsy.com.

Jennifer says

A great look at the necessity of creating a digital interface that is slick, simple, and joy-giving not just for your customers, but for all users of your business - staff, clients, job applicants, followers - any one who may come into contact with your businesses digital world.

The hard part in reading this as a librarian is that 1) I have little power to change anything in our digital world. 2) The library world does its very best to stay current and user-experience focused, but much of our digital content (internal database for tracking books, and external interface used by our patrons) isn't created by companies with a user-centered philosophy. It's created by just a few large companies who stick with what works.

So, definitely gave me food for thought and will keep me on the lookout for digital output that is focused on users.

cheryl says

Users: Not Consumers
Aaron Shapiro

Users: Not Consumers is designed as a manual for entrepreneurs and small business owners who are interested in establishing an online presence to attract new customers. Entrepreneurs and small business owners need to convince potential customers arriving at the new website to try the company's product or

service. Mr. Shapiro has evaluated 349 of the top companies comprising the Fortune 1000 ranging over 19 industries. By the end of the book, Mr. Shapiro expects to convince entrepreneurs and small businessmen that HUGE, can develop a proficient disposable technological presence online to help attract new business and to increase its viable market share in its industry.

Mr. Shapiro studied the top performing companies in the Fortune 1000 "that consistently performed better in the digital environment than their peers." After comparing companies such as Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Google, Walmart, Best Buy and American Express; he determined that what the fortune 1000 companies have in common is that they put the needs of their internet users as the company's top priority. Another common trait shared by the fortune 1000 companies is comprehensive, automated, self-service. . ." customer service oriented websites and social media pages. The user-customer wants to search for the item that he needs to find on a website that is simple to use and easy to navigate from locating the item to purchasing that item.

Readers who do not have a degree in business may be uncomfortable with the use of business terminology such as user-centric management- anticipating and meeting user needs. Concentric Organization- using small teams of computer technicians to "create the digital tools to advance business goals". Disposable Technology- ". . . digital tools that are easily disposed of; evolved, and replaced . . ."and Higher Calling Products a term that is not sufficiently defined in laymen's terms to foster the understanding of the readers that do not have a business degree.

Users: Not Costumers would have been more informative and complete as a sales tool if it included the survey completed by the 397 companies from the Fortune 1000 that responded to the survey, the names of those companies, and their ranking in the Fortune 1000.

I agree with Shapiro's belief that business customers are very interested in websites that make the shopping experience simple and easy to use from the time the customer selects her item until the moment she pays for that item.

I agree, that online customers expect to encounter exceptional customer service representatives when problems arise both during the ordering process, as well as after the order has been completed.

I believe that Shapiro's potential customers would like to know how well Shapiro and HUGE have improved the bottom-line (increased sales) of their existing customer base.

As a marketing tool Users is a well written guide for entrepreneurs and small business owners who wish to service markets outside the company's local community. The only missing element is the missing statistical information pertaining to how well Shapiro's clients performed in their industry before the company became client compared to how well the company has performed becoming a client. Although is not complete, I highly recommend Users to all entrepreneurs and existing small businesses who wish to develop an online on the internet.

Lulu says

I won this book from the first reads giveaways and I am so excited to read it. Thanks.

Benjamin Holcomb says

I am currently reading – and enjoying – this immensely. Very thankful to have received this through the Goodreads First-Read program, and I will add to this review upon completion.

Glauber Laender says

O livro é muito bom, sobre como criar uma empresa user-first. Porém, peca pelo excesso de exemplos, que se fosse direto ao ponto, o livro teria a metade das páginas.

Troy Swinehart says

Book #2 for 2013 - Another book that has been on my mind for awhile. I am curious how to apply this to da Vinci's Resume.

(RESTART after my summer of distractions with the new job and new house.)

Jennifer says

This book really is a guide for how any business needs to evolve if they want to survive in the digital age. My work book club had the opportunity to discuss the book with Aaron Shapiro and everyone really enjoyed it. We work for an organization that is pretty conservative and old school so it really gave us something to think about. I liked the real life examples of companies that we all deal with on a day to day basis.

Ryan says

This was an ok business book. Of course we all want better, faster online experiences but I didn't get much from the book. I did enjoy the parts on bilateral customer service and he did have plenty of good examples.

However, I think the correlations between the stories and his thoughts were often off. Sometimes authors study companies, find what is great and then share their findings (Good to great, seven habits), sometimes they think up something they think is innovative and try to force examples towards their thinking. Regardless of the study of the 1000 companies, I believe this book to be the latter.

Just ok, I think it will help grow his company though.

Martin Bihl says

please see my review on Advertising Age at: http://adage.com/article/ad-and-marke...

you may also see it here: http://wp.me/P23AlC-Hr

donna says

Have you ever given up on a website because it was too difficult to use? Have you ever written a bad online review because your experience with a company was so terrible you just had to share it with the world? Have you ever thought of ways your own company could avoid these problems?

Aaron Shapiro, CEO of digital marketing and design company, HUGE, identified a list of Fortune 1,000 companies that were using digital technology effectively in order to illustrate why businesses should be focusing on the user. Users are defined as anyone who interacts with a company through digital media whether they were customers, brand fans, journalists or employees. Companies who put users first have been seeing big wins and anyone who conducts any sort of business on the web – whether it is for ecommerce or just having a site to connect with your customers – can learn from the lessons in this book.

I'll admit at first that I thought he was only speaking to medium to large-sized companies, but as I stuck with it I found myself highlighting a lot of examples of how I could incorporate some of these user-centric ideas into my work at a public library. Yes, you have to have the right technology people on board, but you also need to get your whole organization behind focusing on the user in order to create easy, fun, useful experiences for people who interact with you online.

This book is an excellent introduction to designing experiences for your users. It will also help any manager trying to figure out who to hire and how to go about making the changes that will make customers happy and keep them coming back for more.

Shane Cormier says

This book couldnt be more correct on the futures of how people shop. That first paragraph caught my attention so much I had to force myself to put it down each night so I could get sleep. I know that I personally will be using my smart phone for comparing prices more often now that my eyes have been opened at a new way to save money. :)

Clare Cannon says

This book had so many good ideas it gave me heart palpitations... there are too many things I want to put into practice! Much of its content explained changes I'd already noticed but hadn't yet thought through the consequences of. Things like: the difference between a user and a customer; how to make sure the management in your company is directed towards users; building a concentric business around meeting user needs; the importance of disposable (modular) technology which can adapt and change; the need to establish and highlight the value of your offering, above volume and price; how to go about 'utility marketing' which attracts users by giving them something valuable; how to employ bilateral customer service: combining self-service with full service to keep people coming back, etc.

This is up to the minute marketing advice, with clearly signposted chapters and handy chapter summaries that make it easier to remember the content and put it into practice. www.GoodReadingGuide.com

Karen says

This was a very interesting book. He focuses mostly on for-profit companies but there is a lot non-profits can learn from it.

Mr. Shapiro's premise is that in this digital age, we as companies need to realize that our customers have because users, and that much of our business is done online and if the company does not have a good digital presence then there is a good chance they will lose the customer. He believes that the most sucessful companies create online experiences that leads their users to become customers. He provides many examples of this, how companies like Nutrisystem use their online presence to establish a relationship with users through forums, articles and weight loss tools that is meant to to turn those users into customers of their product.

I think this is very important for libraries to learn since we have been for so long a place where people went to for books and programs, but with the advent of e-books and online databses, our patrons do not have to ever have to enter our building but we can still provide invaluable services to them. We need to let patron know that we are just as useful online as in person.

A very good read with many good examples.

Chris says

Aaron Shapiro does an excellent job explaining why user-centric models are shaping the future successes of businesses.

I recommend reading although the 2nd half is more about implementation (and much slower/repetitive)