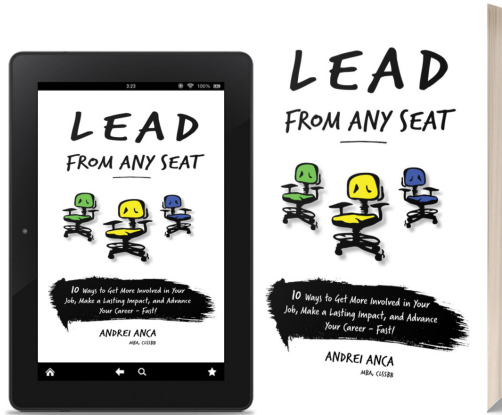




LEAD FROM ANY SEAT

10 Ways to Get More Involved in Your Job, Make a Lasting Impact, and Advance Your Career - Fast!

ANDREI ANCA MBA, CLSSBB

SAMPLE CHAPTER

Lead From Any Seat

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ISBN: 9781791565732

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A DIFFERENT WAY OF THINKING

According to a Gallup study published in 2015, less than one-third of Americans are truly engaged in their job in any given year. This has been steady since the year 2000, when Gallup began measuring workplace engagement. They define engaged employees as those who are involved in their work, enthusiastic about coming to work, and committed to their work place. In other words, over two-thirds of employees don't really care much about their jobs.

I find it puzzling that most of us are indifferent about our jobs, and just go to work and sleepwalk through the workday. We just work for the paychecks. Furthermore, per the same study, employees' view of their managers accounts for at least 70% of the variance in employee engagement scores and one in two employees leave their job to get away from their manager. I have heard this before and I firmly believe it's true—people don't leave jobs, they don't leave companies; they leave their managers.

If we don't get along with our managers or if we don't like them and respect them, it is likely that we will leave a company, despite a high salary or competitive benefits. Few people actually enjoy changing jobs. It may be exciting in the beginning, but the honeymoon ends quickly. You get in a boring routine and all of a sudden you learn that the grass is not always greener—similar issues, different company. Well, now what? Wait a couple of years, get another job and this goes on and on. Chances are that you eventually get tired and frustrated and you have only two options: start your own business or keep changing jobs.

Starting a business is tempting and I do encourage you to follow your heart and your passion. Start a business, give it a try, and if you put in enough passion and hard work, your start-up could very well be among the 10% that succeed. I am not going to talk about what you need to do get started on your new business. There are so many books, blogs, videos, and courses on this topic. But I do have a word of advice: don't start a business just because you hate your boss and you want to be your own boss. That is not enough and it won't get you very far.

Now, even if starting a business is not for you or even if you are not a risk taker, you do have to pay your bills. In this case, you still have to go to work and work for a boss who, chances are, you do not like or respect. Perhaps after changing jobs many times, you do finally find a fairly bearable job and force yourself to tough it out and hang in there. But now you will face even bigger problems. Since you are so unhappy with your job, you probably bring all the frustrations home with you; all this mess will negatively impact your life in general. You and those around you will become miserable. If you spend one-third of your day doing something that you don't like and perhaps working for a manager that you hate, by the end of the day you are exhausted and can't wait for the weekend. What kind of existence is that?

Steve Jobs once said: "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to **love** what you do." Are you doing great work? Are you applying yourself one hundred percent? Are you making a difference?



BE A COFFEE BEAN

Yet another parable (author unknown) landed in my inbox recently, and I find it so meaningful that I thought it was worth including in this book. Even if you have heard it before, I encourage you to read it again.

The story goes like this:

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life and how things were hard for her. She didn't know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed that when one problem was solved, a new one arose.

Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and in the first pot she placed carrots, in the second one she placed eggs, and in the last pot she placed ground coffee beans.

She let them sit and boil without saying a word. In about twenty minutes, she turned off the burners. She took the carrots out of the water and she placed them in a bowl. She then pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then, she ladled the coffee into a bowl. Turning to her daughter, she asked, "Tell me what you see?"

"Carrots, eggs, and coffee", she replied.

The mother brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and she noted that they were soft. She then asked her to take an egg and break it. After peeling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, she asked her to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled, as she tasted its rich aroma.

The daughter then asked, "What's the point, mother?"

Her mother explained that each of these objects had faced the same

adversity—boiling water— but each of them reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. After being subjected to the boiling water, however, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior. But, after being exposed to the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans, however, were unique. After they were placed in the boiling water, they had changed the water.

“Which are you?” she asked the daughter. “When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?”

Now back to you. Are you the carrot that seems strong, but with pain and adversity, you wilt, become soft and lose your strength? Are you the egg that starts with a malleable heart, but changes with the heat? Or are you like the coffee bean that actually changes the hot water? When the water gets hot, it releases the fragrance and flavor. If you are like the coffee bean, when things are at their worst, you get better and change the situation around you.



While I am not a big fan of fables, this one really struck a chord with me. I realized that during my career so far, I have met mostly carrots and eggs and very few coffee beans. This is extremely disappointing—and it's not just because I dislike the taste of carrots and I love coffee. Why are people so afraid to initiate change, to make decisions, and to take risks? Why do people let themselves be influenced and controlled by the working environment—and all they do is complain? Do you notice that some people always pose as victims and how everything else is to blame because they never get promoted, because they have to work long hours while their co-workers always leave early, and the drama goes on and on? For them it is always someone else's fault and they are the *victim*.

NO MORE DRAMA

Back in the 1960s, psychotherapist Stephen Karpman created the Drama Triangle, a model of dysfunctional social interaction. Karpman observed that in conflict and drama, there is always “good guy vs. bad guy” thinking. He also observed that the participants become drawn in by the energy that the drama generates. The drama obscures the real issues, confusion escalates, and people are no longer focused on solutions. Each point of the triangle represents an ineffective response to conflict.

According to Karpman, people stuck in this triangle bounce around among three archetypal roles: Victim, Persecutor, and Rescuer, each one as unhelpful as the other.

Victims are hopeless and helpless. They are not actual victims; they just feel and act like victims. They have a “My life is so unfair; poor me” attitude and they blame others for what happens to them. It is

never their fault. All they do is complain. They take no responsibility for fixing anything. The problem is that the victims feel like *change* is out of their control. They are just whiners, and nobody likes a whiner.

Persecutors usually blame the victims and criticize others and believe that they are surrounded by idiots who are inferior to them. They feel superior. They have a sense of power and control, but the problem is that they are the ones creating victims. They tend to be micro-managers because they don't trust anyone. They also have a hard time getting people to help them, because who likes a bully?

Rescuers are always working hard to "help" other people, mostly the victims. They often feel overwhelmed, because they feel like they have to constantly jump in to fix everything. Rescuers believe that they are indispensable, but people reject their help because nobody likes a meddler.

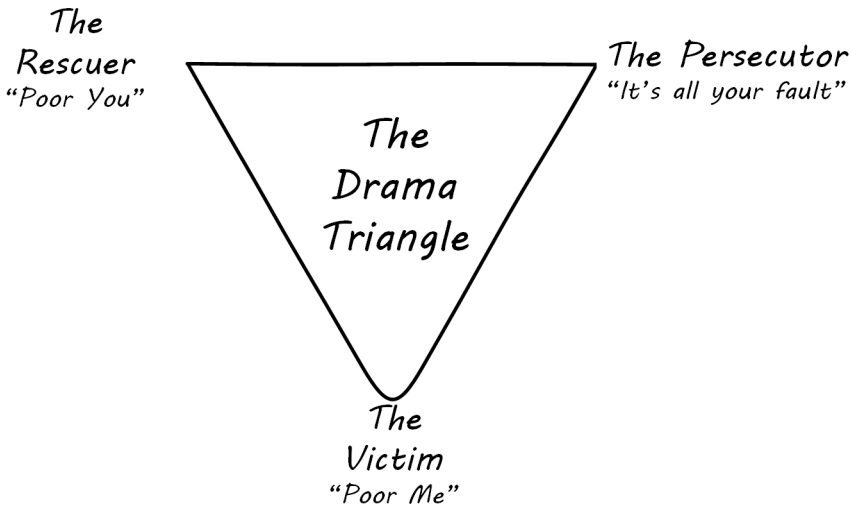


Figure 0.1 The drama triangle

Introduction

Unfortunately, there are no winners in a Karpman Drama Triangle. Once you are in the triangle, all you get is drama. You have to escape as soon as possible, and the only way to do it is to stop participating as a victim, persecutor, or rescuer and move to the center. The center of the Drama Triangle combines elements from each corner: sensitivity, compassion, and responsibility. It is the optimal position for you to focus on solutions and to make a difference without alienating others.

Executive coach and author David Emerald created an alternative to the Drama Triangle, called The Empowerment Dynamic (TED). Emerald offers antidotes for each role and default behavior. He suggests replacing Victim with Creator, Persecutor with Challenger, and Rescuer with Coach. But creating and challenging means stepping out of our comfort zone and this could be risky. We are afraid to take risks because we are afraid of making mistakes and looking bad. We would rather do nothing, say nothing, and keep riding the wave of mediocrity. I strongly believe that any action is better than no action; you must take the challenge.



MEDIOCRITY

CHANGE IS SCARY

In my profession as a Change Leader, I encounter a lot of resistance because I bring change, and most people are scared of change. In every organization, however, there are a handful of people who would love to do things differently, but they are afraid to initiate anything because they don't know where to begin. If you are one of them, fear no more. After reading this book, I promise you that you will not only know what to do, but you will change your entire perspective about your job, your boss, and even your co-workers. You will see things differently since you will have a new tool box loaded with tools that will help you get organized and be as effective and as efficient as possible.

How to Use this Book

My goal is to persuade you that you have the opportunity to change everything you encounter at work—and in life in general—for the better. And you don't have to quit your current job. You just need to care, to get involved, and to change the way you approach your job.



"If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude."

-Maya Angelou

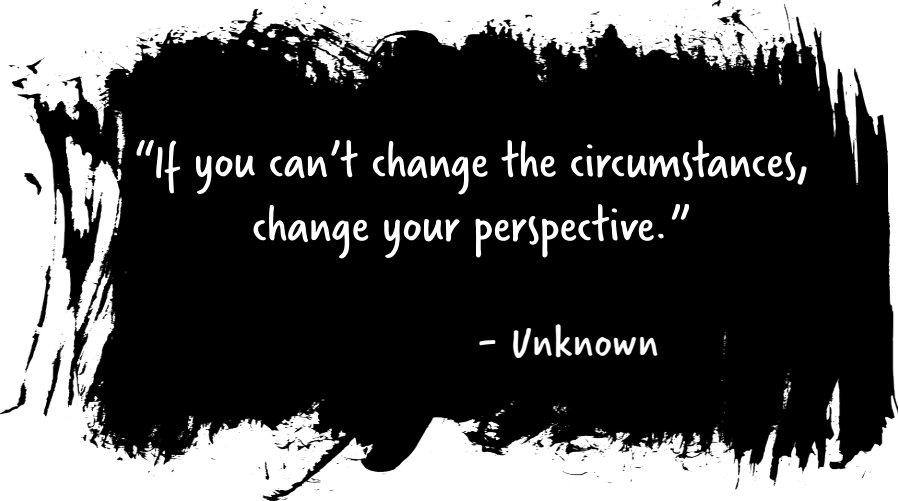
I typically apply most of the tools using Microsoft Visio and Excel, but if you don't have these programs or you don't know how to use them, don't worry. You can use any other similar products or even draw them by hand on a piece of paper. In fact, I prefer using a whiteboard or sticky notes on a wall, especially when using the tools during team meetings. This gets more interaction and participation from team members.

While these tools can help you add structure to your work, they will not help if you don't have the desire to drive change and to make a difference. Becoming a coffee bean is a prerequisite.

1. CHANGE

YOUR

PERSPECTIVE



"If you can't change the circumstances,
change your perspective."

- Unknown

YOUR BOSS IS YOUR CUSTOMER

The founder of Walmart, Sam Walton, once said: “There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else.” The customer of your company is indeed the biggest boss and the most powerful. Without customers, your company would not even exist. But this is the big picture. How does it translate to your level? While you may not interact with the external customers of your company, you definitely interact with your internal customers, and the biggest one in your case is none other than your boss. So, I challenge you from now on to change your perspective and think of your boss as your prime customer. Not only does your boss represent the company you work for, but the company that pays you to do a job is connected to you through your manager.

Think of your boss as your *paying* customer. You don’t have to really like her to perform well. If you had your own business, what would you do if you didn’t like your customers? Would you stop serving them? If you refuse to provide service, they will find someone else who can. Same with your employer. If your company—through your manager—is not happy with your services, what do you think will happen? They will let you go and find someone else.

As I mentioned in the introduction, chances are that if you leave your job, it’s mostly because your manager drives you crazy or because you get frustrated or offended. I personally don’t understand how people get offended so easily. I grew up in a Communist country where it was difficult finding food in the stores and satisfying

basic survival needs. When we had so little, we didn't get offended easily. We just wanted the necessities: food, electricity, heat, and hot water. We had a totally different approach to life. But I understand, as circumstances change we must be assertive and stand up for ourselves. We don't have to tolerate and endure uncomfortable and frustrating situations anymore.

If you feel like you are not making enough of an impact—as I hear many millennials saying—you will probably start looking for another job right away. I am sad to see young employees come and go because they feel that they are not making an impact. When you ask them how long they have been with the company, the answer may be “almost seven months.” First of all, seven months is not enough time for anybody to make an impact. Second, what have you done to make an impact with your number one customer—your boss? How did you serve your customer better than your competition—your peers and other employees?

In his book *Linchpin*, Seth Godin mentions how companies today are not looking for people who just do their job and follow directions. He believes that this outdated approach is the result of the brainwashing done by schools and by “the system.” The rules worked for two hundred years, but not any longer. He is right on point. I agree with him not just because he is one of my favorite authors, but because I experience this every day at work. Following directions is not enough—at least not if you want to succeed and to make a difference.

The crucial first step in making an impact is to change the way you think about your boss. Think of your boss as your customer and not only will you start making an impact sooner, you will also be more appreciated and rewarded. All you have to do is to shift your focus from yourself to your customer.

As in any business, before you start serving your customers, you need to get to know your customers and understand their needs.

SEE THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUR CUSTOMER

Henry Ford said: “If there is one secret to success, it lies in the ability to get the other person’s point of view and see things from that person’s angle as well as from your own.” This is such a simple statement, easy to understand and follow, yet the majority of us choose to ignore it.

More often than not, businesses are so passionate about their products or services that they forget that they must satisfy *customers’* needs, not their own. We, as employees, are guilty of making the same mistakes. We get so caught up in our daily routine, so eager to show our skill set and to impress, that we often neglect the needs of our manager, the needs of our stakeholders, and the needs of all our internal and external customers.

If you are committed to truly helping, you can’t continue to put yourself first. It’s not about you; it’s about you serving others. If you hire a contractor to paint your living room, you are probably very specific about what you want. What if the contractor is also a mural painter who decides to paint a beautiful scene on your walls? What would you say? You may in fact like it, but that was not what you wanted. You may appreciate the talent of the painter, but you will be a dissatisfied customer. I am not saying you shouldn’t be passionate and love the work you do, but I urge you to listen and understand what your customers really want.

“You can’t just ask customers what they want and then try to give that to them,” said Steve Jobs. “By the time you get it built, they’ll want something new.” What will they want next? To serve any customer over time, not only must you truly understand who they are, you also must learn as much as possible about them so you can anticipate their needs. While your main focus will be on internal customers, it’s helpful to understand your external customers as well.

Before we even start talking about customers, do you understand what your company does? I find it alarming how many people know next to nothing about their company; they have no idea what industry it operates in, what products or services it offers, and whether it is a public or private company. You must have the curiosity to learn as much as possible about your company. Find out how and when the company was founded, what is its service/product offering, what markets it operates in, and how many sites it has. Does your company sell directly to consumers (BTC), to other businesses (BTB), or both? Who are they and what do they do? Why do they buy? What needs is your company trying to satisfy?

According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, developed by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow, people are motivated to achieve certain needs. As soon as one need is fulfilled, they seek to satisfy the next one, and so on. Each lower-level need must be satisfied before a person can focus on the higher needs.

Maslow came up with five categories of needs after studying prominent figures such as Albert Einstein, Jane Addams, and Eleanor Roosevelt:

Physiological needs. Anything that the body needs in order to function properly and not fail: air, water, food, etc.

Safety needs. After people satisfy their physical needs, safety needs are next: personal and financial security, health and well-being.

Love and belonging. This is the third level of human needs. It is especially strong during childhood, when it can actually override the

second need (the need for safety): friendship, family, and affection.

Esteem. People have the need to feel respected, to be valued and accepted by others. Maslow mentioned two different versions of esteem needs: lower and higher. The lower version of esteem is the need to be respected by others, including attention, fame, and status. The higher version of esteem is the need for self-respect. For example, people may have needs of strength, self-confidence and independence.

Self-actualization. This need refers to a person's full potential and the awareness of that potential. People may perceive this need differently. For example, one person may have the strong desire to form a large family. For other people, it may be expressed in paintings, pictures, or music.

With theses in mind, can you easily determine what needs your business satisfies?

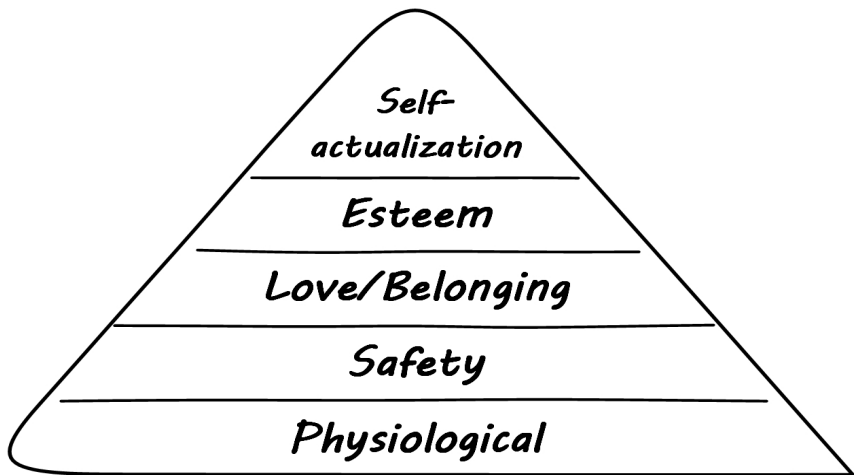


Figure 1.1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Triangle

You are probably wondering why you need to know all these business details, especially if you don't have any direct contact with customers. Unless you work in Sales, Marketing, or Customer Service, chances are you have minimal or no interaction with the final customers. The answer is simple: understanding as much as possible about your employer and its customers helps you tremendously with integrating into the culture of the company. It will keep you engaged and motivated. Knowing that you help people and improve their lives through the work you do every day can make a world of difference in how you see your job. It gives you sense of accomplishment and helps you take ownership of everything you do in your job.

I spent my second week with a roadside assistance company in one of the call centers to understand the business. I didn't have any experience in this industry. It was a lot to learn and I felt like I was drinking from a fire hose, but what impressed me the most was the dedication and passion of the nearly minimum wage agents. One of the agents, who had been with the company for over seven years, wouldn't stop talking about how much she enjoyed her job and the satisfaction she got from helping people who were stuck on the side of the road or involved in an accident. And she was not the only one who felt that way. Initially, I couldn't understand why these employees who performed such a stressful job were so passionate and dedicated. It couldn't have been just for the paycheck. By the end of my visit, after listening to many live customer calls, I realized that the main reward was the feeling of helping someone in need. The agents communicate with desperate customers, ask questions to understand the problem, and then do whatever it takes to help them.

Going back to the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs, what needs do you think a roadside assistance company satisfied? I would say safety needs. The customers were either involved in an accident or stuck on the side of road, so they were concerned about their safety; I bet they were not thinking about satisfying their esteem or self-actualization needs at that time.

You may not interact with your external customers as closely as these agents were, or you may have no direct contact with them. You do, however, interact every day with your internal customers, and your manager is one of them—the most important one.

READ CUSTOMERS' MINDS

Unless you are psychic, you will never be able to peek into peoples' minds and to know exactly what someone thinks, feels, or really wants. There are some things, however, that can help you at least make a fairly accurate guess, like body language, facial expressions, or tone of voice.

The Perspective Pie (Figure 1.2) has four slices. Each slice helps you get closer and closer to the customers' minds and understand what they need and how you can help solve their problems. Listen to what they have to say and pay attention to what they do. You may not know what they think and how they feel, but put yourself in their shoes. How would you feel; what would you think if you had the same problems or frustrations?

This is an extremely powerful tool that can help you start shifting the focus from you to the customer. The better you understand your customers, the better the chance you have to help them alleviate their frustrations. Start with your current manager and fill each slice of the pie with your best guesses at first. Keep updating it as you

learn more and more about your boss and keep the same customer-focused lens on.

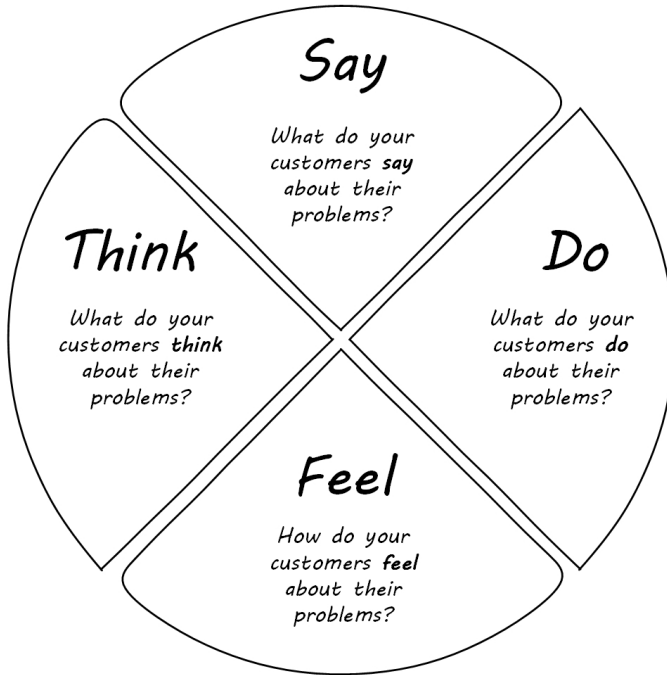


Figure 1.2: The Perspective Pie

Voice of the Customer, Voice of the Business, and Voice of the Employee

Voice of the customer (VOC) is a term that describes your customer's expectations and preferences. It is what customers expect a product to do and how much they are willing to pay. The customer requirements are not always clear or explicitly stated. Usually unwritten needs or wants are also important and have to be translated to specific requirements.

Voice of the business (VOB) represents the needs, wants and beliefs of people who run the business. They are concerned about growth, revenue, profit, and employee satisfaction.

VOC and VOB should always be looked at together. They must be aligned. The customers want the best products at the best prices and the shareholders want to make profit so they can continue to do business. Your job is to help them make that happen.

Voice of the employee (VOE) is crucial to promote the mission of the company because it helps develop ownership and a sense of responsibility. This voice is yours. If you understand the voice of the customer and the voice of the business, you then understand how you directly contribute to the success of your company.

Critical to Customers

To identify and prioritize what is important for you to work on, you first need to understand what motivates your internal customers and what is critical to their satisfaction. These are the expressions of your customer's needs, but they need to be translated into more specific requirements. There are at least two main buckets you should be focusing on.

Critical to quality: What is most critical to customer satisfaction in terms of quality? The customer wants a reliable, defect-free product—it could be an application, a report, or a financial analysis.

Critical to delivery: The customer wants a product delivered on time. In other words, the customer wants you to meet your deadlines. Once you commit to something and agree on a timeline, you must do everything you can to deliver it within that time frame.

Knowing these criteria enables you to drill down deeper and translate them into specific requirements. For example, a defect-free product sounds pretty vague, but if you drill down you may discover more specific attributes. The same applies to delivery. You need to

truly understand and translate deliverables into requirements. Develop a detailed timeline and have it approved by customers.

The voice of the customer tells you how well your product/service meets or doesn't meet your customers' needs. But how do you "listen" to their voice? How do you know their expectations?



CTQ Tree

Originally developed as part of Six Sigma Methodology, CTQ Tree (Critical to Quality Tree) is a tool that can be used in many situations, including when you are creating a product or providing a service to your internal customers.

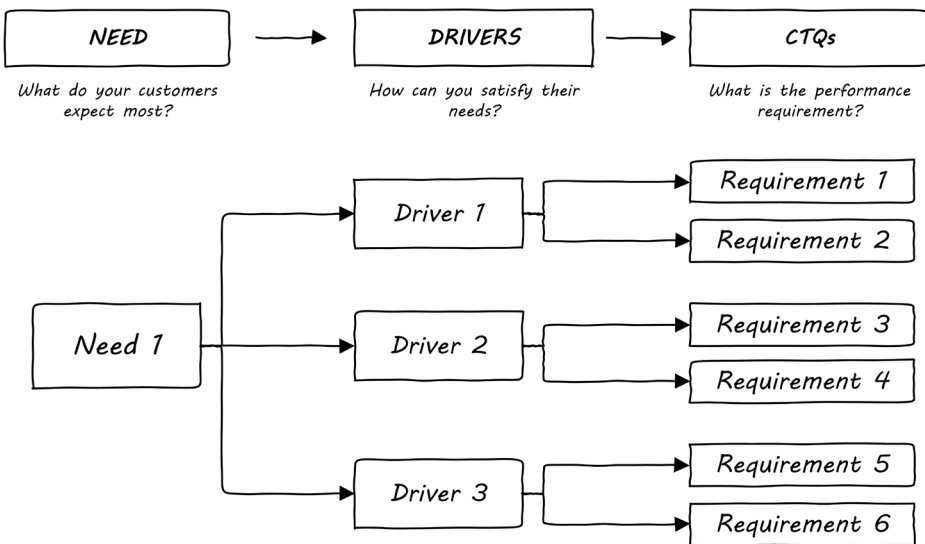


Figure 1.3: CTQ Tree

While we all understand that quality is important to our customers, it is not always easy to define it. This is when the CTQ Tree is useful. It helps you understand how your customers define quality.

Follow these steps to build a CTQ Tree:

Step 1: Identify the needs

The first step is obviously to identify the needs of your customers. I recommend creating a CTQ Tree for every need that you identify. Ask: what is absolutely critical for this product or service? This is not as difficult as it may seem. The easiest way to find out is to ask them. If your customer is your direct manager, just ask him. If your customer is a group of people, you can also organize a brainstorming session using the brainstorming tools you will learn in this book.

Step 2: Identify the drivers

In this step you need to identify what are the quality drivers and how you can satisfy the need. This step is extremely important because these factors determine whether or not the customers perceive your product as high quality. Do not rush through this step. Work closely with your customers to truly understand what is important to them.

Step 3: Identify the requirements

Now that you understand the needs of the customers and what drives quality, you need to identify the performance or criteria to satisfy each of the drivers. Don't be vague. Be specific and use real numbers. State "all requests processed with 24 hours or two business days," not "all requests processed in a timely manner." This step gives you the chance to evaluate whether you have the right skills, resources, or technology in place to meet the requirements. If not, you may need to tap resources from other departments, but the only way to find out is to create specific requirements.



CTQ Tree EXAMPLE

This example illustrates what a company with a call center may need to do to provide outstanding service to its customers when they call the help line.

CTQ Tree

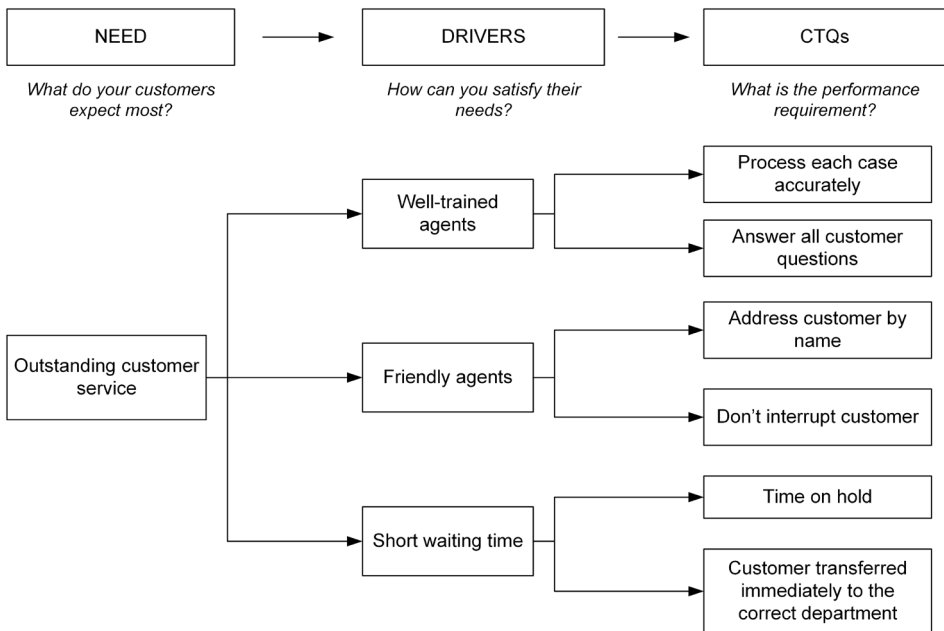


Figure 1.4: CTQ Tree Example

I encourage you to go through this same exercise and use your manager as your customer. What does she or he most expect from you? This tool helps you get specific and identify what you need to do to satisfy your manager's need.

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