




**Retail Marketing Strategy**  
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**Lecture-18**

Welcome back everyone. And today we will be beginning with session 7 of the week 3 of the course Retail Marketing Strategy.

### Learning Objectives:

After going through this module, the learner will be able to appreciate:

- Customer Centric Approach to Selling: How this can be utilized by the retail salespersons in stores

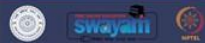
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So, this particular module is entirely focused on understanding the tenets of customer centric approach. If you remember in one of the earlier sessions I had utilized customer centric approach as a term as a part of learning something new. So, today we will be expending a lot more on that and we will also delve into understanding how customer centric approach which is primarily popular in B to B selling can be used by the people who work in retail stores. So, considering this particular module the learner once we are done will be definitely able to appreciate the customer centric approach to selling and how this can be utilized by the retail sales person to create best experiences for their customers.

## Customer Centric Approach:

Creating a satisfying customer experience at each stop along the customer journey is the goal of a customer-centric approach to company. It entails comprehending consumer wants, preferences, and behaviour in order to design goods, services, and marketing tactics that meet or surpass their expectations.

Source: Customer Centric Selling, Second Edition, Bosworth, Holland and Visgatis, Mc Graw hill



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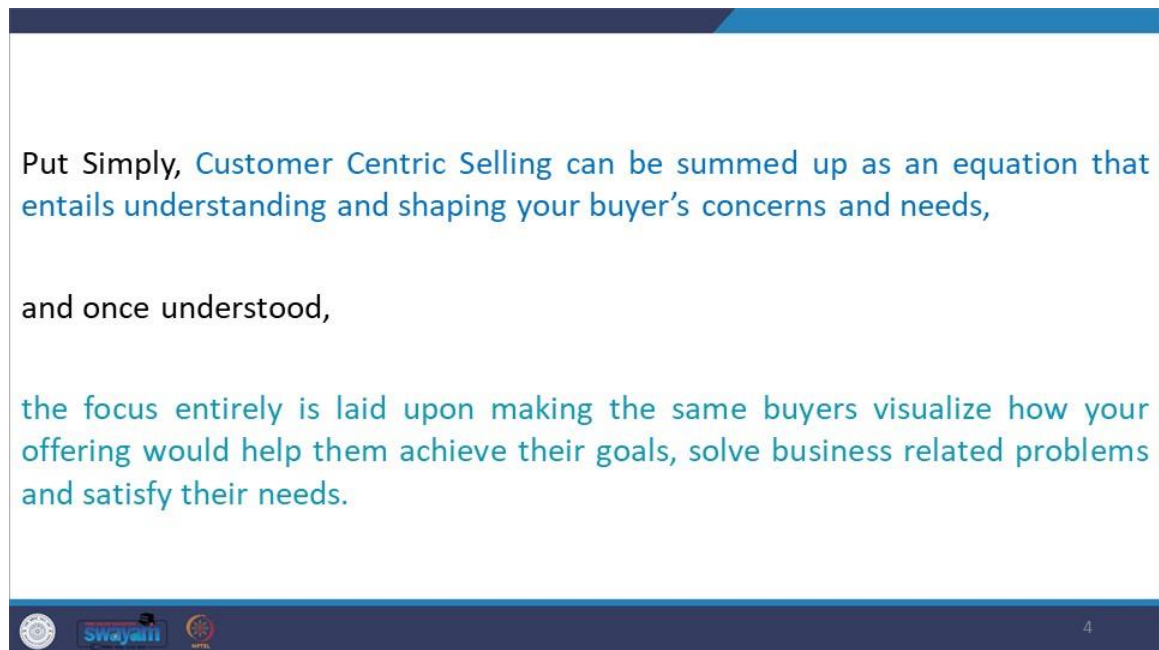
So, this is how we will be moving forward. So, let us again first recollect what customer centric approaches. So, if you remember that particular learning something new snapshot we had mentioned that customer centric approach is all about creating satisfying experiences for your customers at each step along the customer journey. Now let us say consumer journey is definitely going to have various stages it could be need recognition it could be let us say pre-purchase information search then how you evaluate alternatives and eventually how you buy and even could be related to post purchase behavior.

Now in all these stages a consumer is definitely going to interact with the retailer through many touch points. Let us say he could be visiting the store for collecting some information about the products before he makes his decision or mind to buy the product. Now in this case a customer centric retailer is definitely going to have a knowledgeable sales staff who is not only going to be courteous, but are also going to be expert in their field in helping out consumers in determining which product is going to be the best fit for them. As and when the consumer will move further in the journey even with respect to the purchase stage customer centric approach is very important. Now one very micro example of this could be offering multiple ways to make the payments.

You might have a certain section of consumers who could be only comfortable paying through credit card. So, you need to have all those mechanisms in place which can facilitate all this. Now even with respect to post purchase behavior customer centricity is going to be very important. Now this can be looked at from the perspective of resolving complaints in the minimum possible time or having a

proper system through which consumers can kind of share their grievances with the retailers. But if you want to look at it in one of the simplest ways customer centric approach is all about thinking or maybe you can say before you execute any decision you need to have thought processes about how this is going to impact your customers.

Is this going to make their life easier or is it going to bring in value for them? If it makes their life easier or adds more value then definitely a retailer should go ahead with that. If it can even for an iota lead to dissatisfaction then a retailer should not execute that. And in other words or from a different perspective it also entails comprehending consumer wants preferences and behaviors. So, that right goods and services or the offerings which have best fit can be designed for them to surpass their expectations which again indicates you are trying to bring a delight factor for them.



Put Simply, Customer Centric Selling can be summed up as an equation that entails understanding and shaping your buyer's concerns and needs,

and once understood,

the focus entirely is laid upon making the same buyers visualize how your offering would help them achieve their goals, solve business related problems and satisfy their needs.

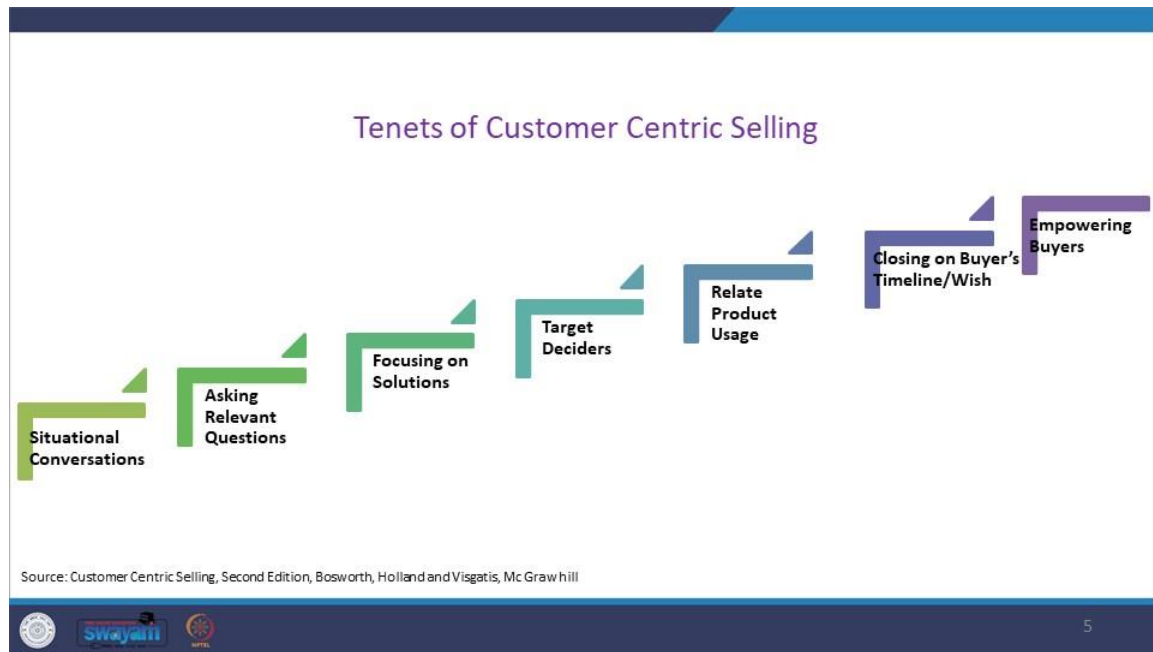
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Now customer centric selling can also be summed up in the form of an equation which is all about as I just said understanding and shaping buyers concern, but you should not stop there.

Once you have understood the buyers concern then you also need to have certain products services or offerings for them which are going to solve their problems. And in this case also we need to have that perspective you should have the thought processes of solving your customers complaints only then you will be able to bring in a very high value for them. In other words it is going to be a best situation if you can help your buyers visualize how your offering would help them achieve their

goals, solve their business related problems or personal problems or will satisfy their needs. Now when we talk about the facet of business related problems what we are simply saying is we are talking in the context of B2B selling right.



Now these are the tenets of customer centric selling which we will be discussing as a part of this module starting from situational conversations asking relevant questions to finally, focusing on solutions and targeting deciders and understanding or relating it with product usage, closing on buyers timeline or wish and finally, empowering buyers see.

I am again repeating this these particular tenets have been meant for or designed for business to business selling. But if you look at each one of them they can be of immense self in creating unique or very easy breezy or I would say heightened customer experiences as far as a retailer or a retail store is concerned.

## Tenet 1:

**Having Situational Conversations:** As far as the traditional approaches to sales are concerned, they rely heavily on presentations. This can also be allied with simply presenting products in stores.

However, having conversations relating to prospects and customer's situational issues is more impactful. Situational conversations allow the buyer to visualize how the offering would help him or her to solve their problems, achieve goals or satisfy their needs.

### Understanding this from the context of a retailer



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So, we will be looking at each one of them from a retailers perspective or from a retail store perspective at a micro level. Now first one is about having situational conversations. Now as far as the traditional approaches to sales are concerned it was all about you know giving presentations going and meeting the prospective customer or the existing customers if you have a new product to pitch to them and you would go with the presentations.

And the idea was you could use audio visual mechanisms to bring in a very heightened experience right if you use that combination. But see this can even be aligned with simply presenting product in stores like you have a retail establishment and you are simply presenting products to the customers you do not have the thought processes of having situational conversations. Now before we understand how this can bring in value we will first understand what situational conversations are. Now situational conversations are all about when you try to understand a buyer situation and this can also be aligned with one of the most popular theories spin selling which was proposed by Neil Rackham in which the first facet is about situation questions in which the whole idea is to understand your buyer situation and then you can recommend the best of products to them. Now in this case once you have understood the buyer situation you can recommend products to them and maybe you can help them visualize how this offering is going to solve their problems or they help them achieve their personal goals.

Now let us understand this with an example let us say you have a retail establishment running and you have a customer who has simply come to buy the shampoo. Now if you are not having situational conversations you can recommend

them any shampoo from any of the options which are available in the store or which are being displayed on the shelf. But if you have a situational conversation approach you will be asking them questions like if they have dandruff or their hairs are dry only then you will be able to recommend the best shampoo for them right and this can even be looked at from the perspective of creating satisfying experiences for the shoppers. So I hope you got an idea about how having conversation can be wonderful as far as even the smaller retailer establishments are concerned. Let us say if you have a mother and you have conversations with them asking them what is it that their kids prefer at home then just imagine how you can completely transform their grocery basket.

## Tenet 2:

**Asking Relevant Questions:** Rather than sharing opinions with customers in retail stores about how the offering being presented is best, the customer centric approach depends on asking relevant questions.

The offering should be steered towards the buyer by asking relevant questions as regards comprehending their issues and problems. And the answers to these pertinent questions must be utilized in moving the prospects to useful solutions, in ways that even the buyers would not feel as they have been forcefully sold.

So this is again one aspect which you can consider. Now the next tenet which we are going to discuss is about asking relevant questions. Now this is more of an extension of situation analysis which is all about rather sharing your opinions with the customers about which product is going to good for them if you are working as a sales rep in a retailer establishment or a store. The best as far as the customer centric approach is concerned is to ask relevant questions. If you remember just a few minutes back I gave you the example let us say if you have a mother coming into the store and if you ask them relevant questions about what their kids will prefer or with respect to the maintaining or securing the health of the kids then you will be able to recommend them the best of the products which again will go a long way in creating satisfying experiences.



And the other good thing is see you can also utilize these questions as a pathway to ensure smooth selling because once you have analyzed their situation and asked relevant questions your recommendations are definitely going to be come across as forced because they were completely dependent upon the conversations that you had with the customer. Now this again is going to be beneficial in long term and will also as I said will not give a will not give a feel of a forced sale right and many times customers if they go through a forced sale definitely go through the feelings of guilt and then again this might kind of impact their next visits to the store because having the feelings of guilt is not going to be good at all. Now another tenet as far as the customer centric selling is concerned is about solution focused. See one way is you can definitely have a relationship building approach right where you work on building relationship with the customers and this also pays to an extent rather this can also pay in a big way but the best situation is going to be when you kind of create a conjunction between relationship building approach as well as solution focused approach where you are definitely working on relationships but you are only recommending those products to the customers which are going to be best for them or will indicate a best product customer fit right.

### Tenet 3:

**Solution Focused:** Relationship building undoubtedly pays. However, the best scenario is when the relationship building is coupled with a solutions driven and product usage approach.

It is very important for the salespeople in retail stores to understand and also make the prospects and customers realize how the offering is beneficial for them and would solve their problems. A successful seller must do far more than just cultivating relationships.

So, just imagine how much value this will bring in as far as loyalty with respect to a particular retailer is concerned right and anyways it again becomes important for the sales people in retails to understand and also make the prospects and customers realize that how offering is going to be beneficial for them.

So, a successful retailer must always go beyond just cultivating relationships but if it is combined with solution driven approach it is definitely going to be magical right.

## Tenet 4: Targeting Deciders

**Targeting Deciders:** Customer centric selling certainly calls for better understanding of the decision makers.

Now the fourth tenet which you need to understand is targeting deciders right which means you need to understand who is the person who is going to take the final call as far as decision making is concerned. Now just imagine a case of a family decision making or a family who is thinking of buying let us say an electronic appliance maybe let us say a washing machine and they go to a store collectively. So, the smart sales person or the retail sales person is going to be the one who can eventually understand who is going to be the decider in the group who can be an influencer and who is going to be the user. Now that will depend upon the gadget which is being purchased right if it is a trimmer let us say a mail trimmer then definitely maybe a father or a son could be the user or if they have come to purchase a washing machine then definitely any of them could be the user and I am connecting it with the campaign of Ariel which was share the load I would again urge you to go back and look more into it that is why when I talked about washing machine I did not differentiate between whether this is going to be used by only housewife or she is going to be the only key decision maker and husband is not going to play any role.

So, the salesperson can also be the user that is why I said please go and look back into the Ariel's share the load campaign, but eventually the whole idea or the magic lies in understanding who is eventually going to decide and that is how the salesperson can drive conversations and pay attention to. Now we have finally got to the last leg of understanding consumer centric approach we will be looking at the tenet 5, 6 and 7. Now see again it becomes important that you focus on explaining the product usage to the customers let us say if you want to sell a product one



approach which you can have is you are precisely talking about the product features and attributes, but what if they are not very usual for that particular customer. So, if your focus is going to be on explaining the product usage and what benefits this will bring into the customers that again is going to be magical. So, if all those people who work in retail establishment on the sales profile if they have this approach then this again is going to bring in very fantastic results.

### Tenet 6 and 7: Closing on Buyer's Timeline and Empowering Buyers

**Closing on Buyer's Timeline:** Customer centric salespeople in general and in stores do not build too much pressure on the prospect or the customer to buy on the spot. Pushing the prospect or the customer too hard in stores can also result in losing the sale.

**Empowering Buyers:** Selling should be relooked as a means to empowering buyers to achieve their goals, solve their problems and satisfy organizational needs.

The other tenet which again becomes important is closing on buyers timeline again you see buyers timeline because this is precisely derived from the B to B selling approaches, but in terms of retailing we can simply look at it from the perspective of not being pushy. See if in a particular retail store the sales person is going to be too pushy then it will definitely come across as a forced sale and will not create that level of satisfaction. So, what becomes important is you do your job you explain the customers about the product usage understand their situations recommend products accordingly, but if they are not willing to buy at that moment do not be too pushy because in many of the retailing research studies it has been identified that forced selling in retail establishment actually deters consumers from visiting that particular retail store. And finally, we get to the facet of empowering buyers which clearly indicates that your objective should be about helping customers in solving their problems you should let them take the final call with respect to the products they prefer. But if in certain situations you feel that the particular product which they have selected is not going to be ideal product fit then you should definitely move further and adopt a sense making approach where you will be working together with the buyer in figuring out which product is going to be beneficial for

them by giving them certain explanations or by sharing some important information.

Maybe you can look at it from the perspective of let us say if a particular family has come to buy a washing machine then depending upon their needs if you think that the product which they have selected is not going to be the best for them then definitely you can go for a sense making approach and all these tenets are indeed going to be magical in creating best of customer service experiences. So, as far as this particular module was concerned I really hope that you enjoyed learning about the tenets though which were eventually driven from the business to business selling approaches, but we indeed learned how they can be applied on the people who work in retail establishment or retail stores. So, as we move further we indeed we learning a lot more exciting things. So, looking forward to meeting you in the next session again wishing you a good day ahead. Thank you.