



Excellence by nothing



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Over the past years, the customer has moved to pole position. Customers are no longer passive participants in the sales process but now dictate the rules. Experience creation is the associated buzzword. However, there are also other needs...

Experience creation

We just finished reading "The Future of Competition" by C. K. Prahalad and Venkat Ramaswamy. Another item eliminated from our notorious [reading backlog](#). Still going...

Well, to be honest, we have to admit that we -almost- completed it, since we skipped the last chapter. To some extent, this has been a somewhat frustrating reading exercise and some reader comments on the Amazon website give us the impression that we are not alone.

It is unfortunate. As readers of some of our [previous articles](#) on this website will understand, we also are advocating a focus on the customer, on experience creation, on collaboration, on interactions... The same goes for Prahalad and Ramaswamy.

However, while both authors are certainly aware of the paradigm shift that is occurring and clearly understand the many facets and challenges related to this, their "recommendations" of how to address these challenges are not exactly forward-looking and do not convince us.

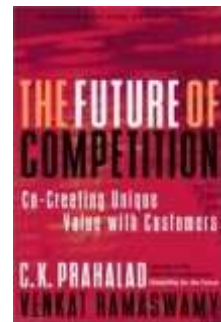
In essence, the authors promote ideas that further build on traditional thinking and current management practices. This includes a further quest for the ultimate real-time monitoring solution that will (again) provide full visibility on and control over all transactions.

If there is anything that we have learnt of past experiences, it is the frustrating observation that there is no ultimate control. Ultimate control only exists in environments where there is a standstill, where there is neither further evolution nor progress. Gartner already introduced their Zero Latency concept the end of the 90's, but the practical realisation is still a far-away dream and hopefully will never come.

Organisations and management teams will have to accept that full control is not an option. Interesting things only occur where there is room for non-conformity, non-predictability.

Therefore, organisations might have a better option while evaluating some alternative approaches. Whatever the claims of Prahalad and Ramaswamy, in most cases, consumers have no ambition to co-create whatsoever. Consumers just want to do their thing and the last thing they are interested in is co-creating value with their supplier.

Experiences are not created. They occur. Experiences occur when customer actions interact



The Future of Competition
 Co-Creating Unique Value
 with Customers
 C. K. Prahalad, Venkat
 Ramaswamy

with the business processes of a company. However, in most cases, the customer is not looking for this interaction. He or she just wants to do some stuff.

Most organisations still do not understand this and the net result of this are a lot of unwanted and most often, poor interactions.

Another type of interaction

A couple of weeks ago, we had a discussion about suppliers who really deserved the "excellence" label of our appreciation.

To be honest, there was only one. We are a small company, so our supplier base is limited, but still encompasses companies such as software companies, ISP's, accountancy, PC vendors and related equipment, office supplies and furniture, publishers, financial institutions, telephone operators, etc.

There was just only one company that really did excel: [Kaspersky](#). This russian virus-scanning company did excel in doing a good job while being non-intrusive. Their product simply does its work while not disturbing the user. Not while installing the product, not while using the product, not while updating the product. Never.

Over the past years, we have used several other, well-known security products and dumped them again for various reasons. But now, for the first time, we have even enabled the automatic weekly system-scan, since it hardly impacts the performance of the PC.

Great job, Kaspersky!


Excellence by nothing.

About the author



Marc Buyens is analyst, management consultant and owner of Xpragma. Marc started Xpragma in 1999 after a 20+ years career in the IT sector. Today, he provides advice, training and mentoring services focusing on the intersection of technological evolution, organisational change and business strategy: a messy world of unfulfilled promises.

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