

# Builder

## Customer Care Central

*As Eliant honors 43 builders for achievement in customer-centric business operations, we look at how that all ties back to smarter, more profitable business.*

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You figure, for insight on how to bake customer care into a business model for profit, the Harvard Business Review might be a good place to go.

Interesting, though, that "The Latest," a feed of published articles that offer high-level wisdom on topics ranging from avoiding conflict, to conserving energy, to benchmarking, to what makes a good start-up

town, will scroll pages and pages before an article whose focus is customers, customer-centricity, customer care, customer satisfaction, shows up in the feed.

Deep in the archive, however, there's this. That's not too shabby.

As is so often the case, putting customers' needs at the center of one's business--not simply in the pre-transactional and transactional moments, but during, and well after the purchase--turns out to be a pretty smart strategy to make money.

Last week, Eliant called out MBK, the Olsen Company, New Home Company among a total of 43 different builders it recognized for being in the top five for their excellence in one or more customer-experience categories in its 20th Eliant Homebuyers' Choice Awards. Builders with consistently high levels of customer satisfaction included: The New Home Company (23 awards), Benchmark Communities (20 awards) and The Olson Company (11 awards). Rosewood Homes (9 awards) and MBK Homes (8 awards) also distinguished themselves once again this year.

Importantly, what Eliant has begun to quantify, measure, and celebrate is an ever-stronger correlation between customer care focus and referral business, a critical catalyst in a housing recovery that's fragile in spite of huge and growing "pent-up" demand. Want more proof that customer centricity is good for business?

In the all-important category of "Percent of Sales from Referrals," FCB Homes (Medium Builder segment) and GL Homes of Florida (Large Builder and High Volume segment) scored the highest "Percent of Sales from Referrals. In 2015, Stockton, CA-based FCB Homes sold an astonishing 47% of their homes from referrals followed closely by GL Homes (Palm Beach Adult and Palm Beach Luxury) selling 46% from referrals.

Who couldn't use a little of that mojo right about now? What Bob Mirman at Eliant, Paul Cardis at Avid Ratings, Charlie Scott at Woodland, O'Brien & Scott; and Geoff Graham at GuildQuality are doing is working to help firms elevate their game.

To some extent, it's understanding the difference between customer service and customer care and customer satisfaction.

One, customer service is a tactical discipline aimed at getting people information they need to get through a transaction or solve an issue or repair. In many organizations, customer service is an outsourced center of people who can answer questions and address problems. Customer care, however, is part of an organization's reason for being; it's in everybody who works there, and it places customer needs and their experiences with the entire organization at the top of the pyramid of priorities. And, it makes business sense.

Customer satisfaction is about outcomes. It happens, and along with it improved profits, less warranty call-back work, and more referrals, not just as a byproduct of customer service, but of customer care.

So if you don't have a relationship with an Avid, or an Eliant, or a GuildQuality or a Woodland, O'Brien & Scott, chances are it would make good business sense to look them up and get some help on making customers--especially the new ones coming in these days--the center of your business.

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