

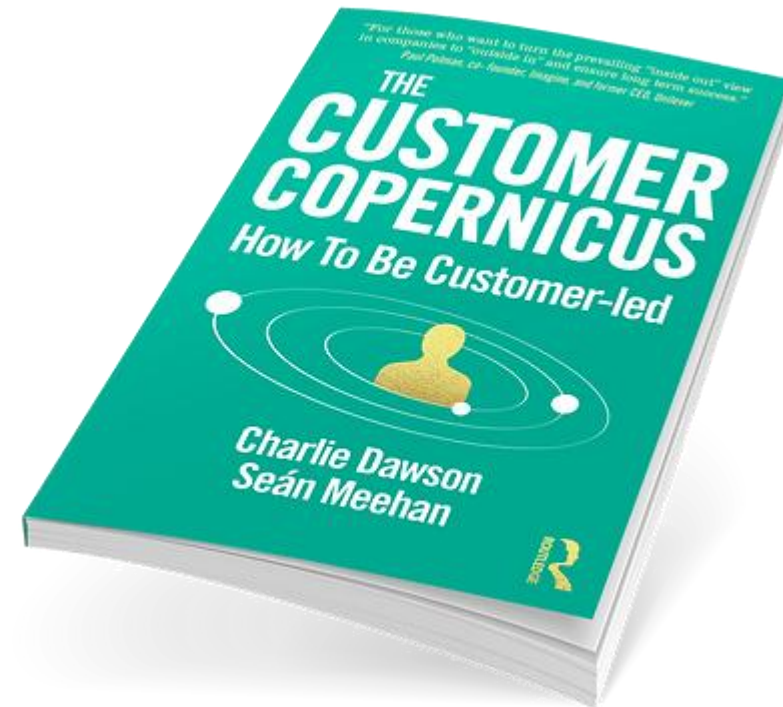
the
Foundation

How to be genuinely customer-led

28 April 2026

Some introductions...

**the
Foundation**
the customer-led growth consultancy



Charlie established The Foundation in 1999 with the aim of helping organisations be more successful by being better for their customers - in strategy and leadership, proposition and real world experience.

Clients include LNER, Vitality, HSBC, Cancer Research UK, The National Trust, John Lewis and more.

His book about customer-led success, *The Customer Copernicus*, was published in 2021 and explains why something that looks attractive and obvious is rare and, even when achieved, usually temporary.

Being customer-led much claimed, little seen

“There are many ways to center a business. You can be competitor focused, you can be product focused, you can be technology focused, you can be business model focused, and there are more. But in my view, obsessive customer focus is by far the most [effective]”

“Earning lifelong relationships one customer at a time, is fundamental to achieving our vision.”

Being customer-led much claimed, little seen

“There are many ways to center a business. You can be competitor focused, you can be product focused, you can be technology focused, you can be business model focused, and there are more. But in my view, obsessive customer focus is by far the most protective of Day 1 vitality”

Jeff Bezos, CEO Amazon

Letter to Shareholders, April 2017

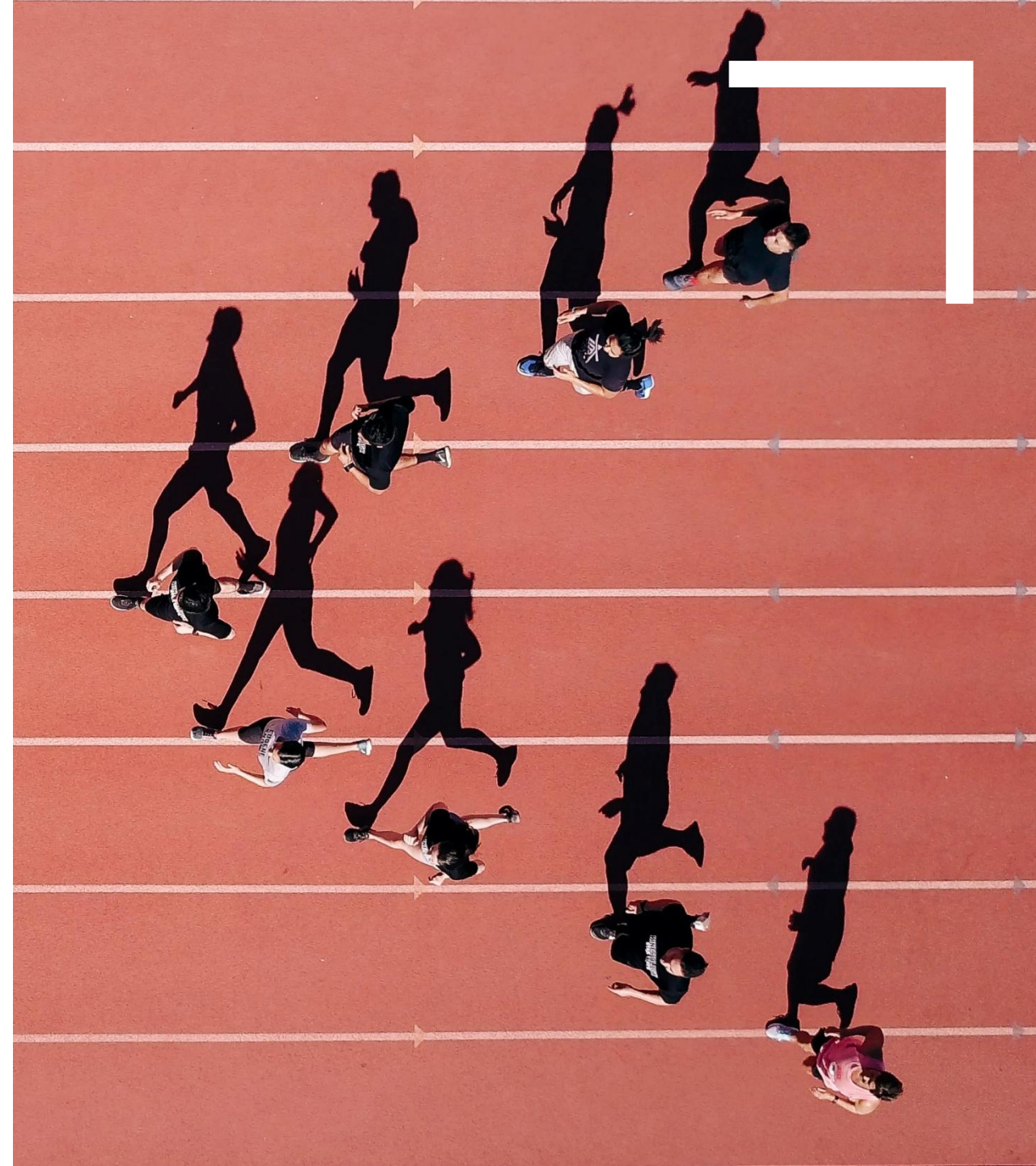
“Earning lifelong relationships one customer at a time, is fundamental to achieving our vision.”

John Stumpf, Chairman and CEO Wells Fargo

Letter to Shareholders, February 2016

Aims for this session

1. To define what being customer-led means and why it matters
2. To show how inside-out and outside-in perspectives differ
3. To share two practical approaches to help you do it well
4. To share headlines from a new report on why being human is an advantage



Being customer-led is obvious and attractive

The logo for TESCO, featuring the word "TESCO" in a bold, red, sans-serif font. Below the text are five horizontal blue lines of varying lengths, creating a stylized underline.The logo for amazon.com, featuring the text "amazon.com" in a black, sans-serif font. A curved orange line is positioned below the text, resembling a smile.

Being customer-led is obvious and attractive

The logo for TESCO, featuring the word "TESCO" in red, uppercase, sans-serif font, with a blue horizontal line underneath that has a wavy, dashed appearance.The logo for amazon.com, featuring the text "amazon.com" in a black, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a curved orange line underneath the word "amazon".

It's often claimed and talked about, rarely done for real...

Revenue only comes from
earning customer decisions in
your favour

Not from products or services



The word 'customer'
is an imperfect shorthand



Customer more usefully means
'the people your organisation serves'



Being 'customer-led' means...

... listening to customers and
doing what they say?



**Understanding the
problems customers need
to solve or the outcomes
they want...**

**...then finding new and
better ways to solve
those problems or meet
those needs.**

Understanding the problems customers need to solve or the outcomes they want...

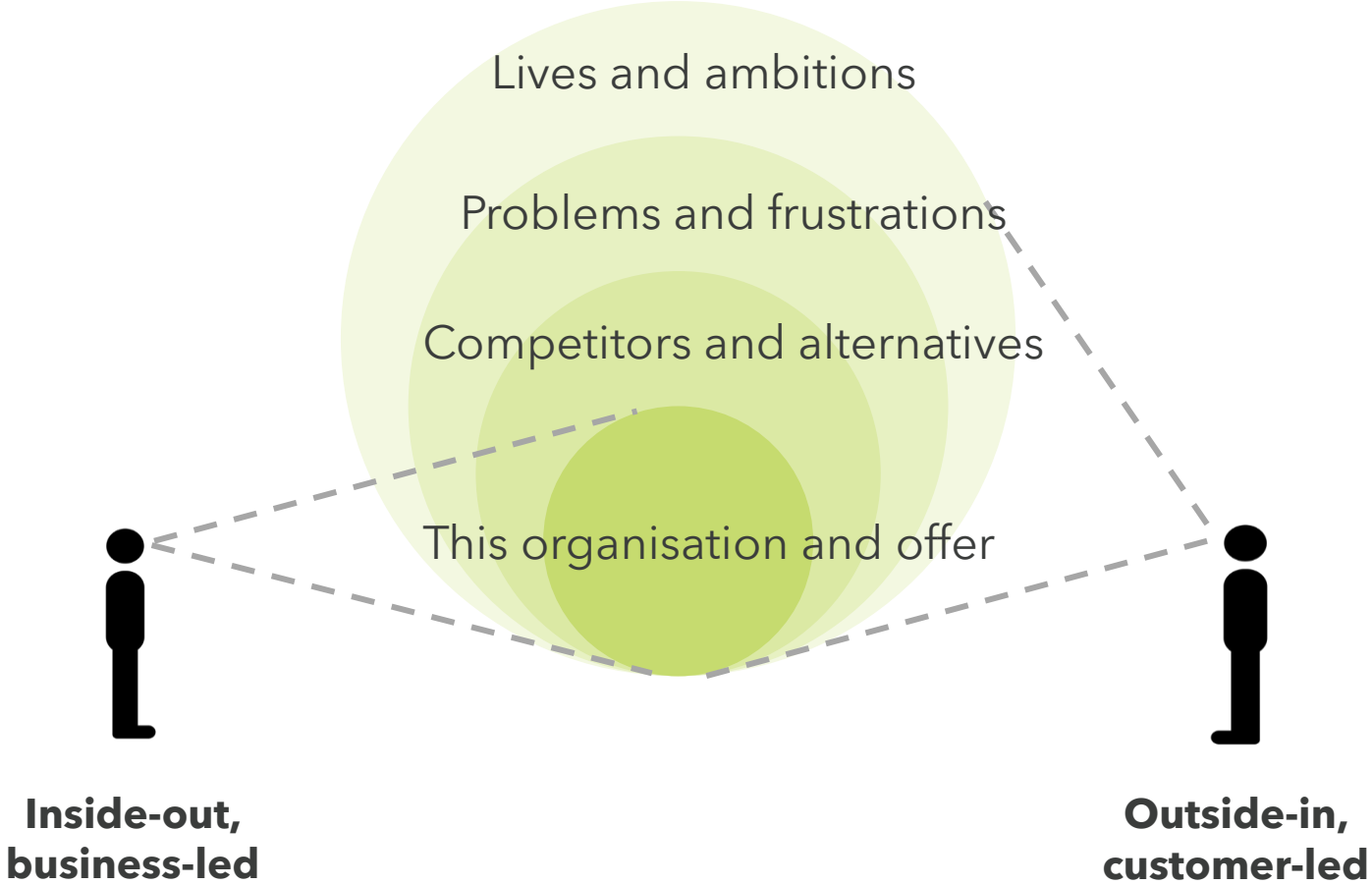
...then finding new and better ways to solve those problems or meet those needs.

For example...

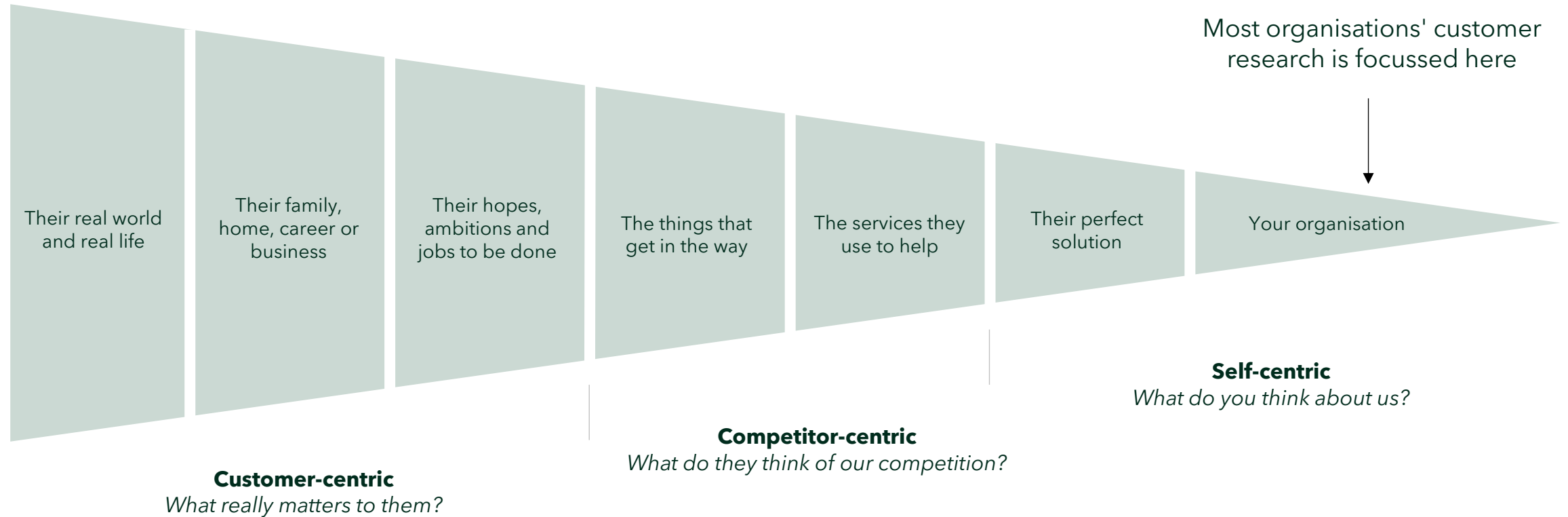


NETFLIX

Why so hard?



The questions we ask are usually inside-out



An outside-in perspective helps you see who the real competitors are for customers' decisions...



“To be the nation’s favourite
bus operating company”



“To be the nation’s favourite bus operating company”



- Measuring success through competitor benchmark tests
- Pricing aggressively against other bus operators
- Showing only your bus routes on your app
- Not accepting other bus operators' tickets - and selling day passes which only work on your buses

An inside-out perspective tells us bus operators' competition is other bus operators



First  **Bus**

 **Stagecoach**

 **ARRIVA**



Westminster Abbey

W

Westminster Abbey
Trafalgar Square
58

myurbanjungle.com

BUS STOP

Please do not chain your bicycle to these railings



An outside-in perspective shows the true competition as other modes of transport – or not travelling at all

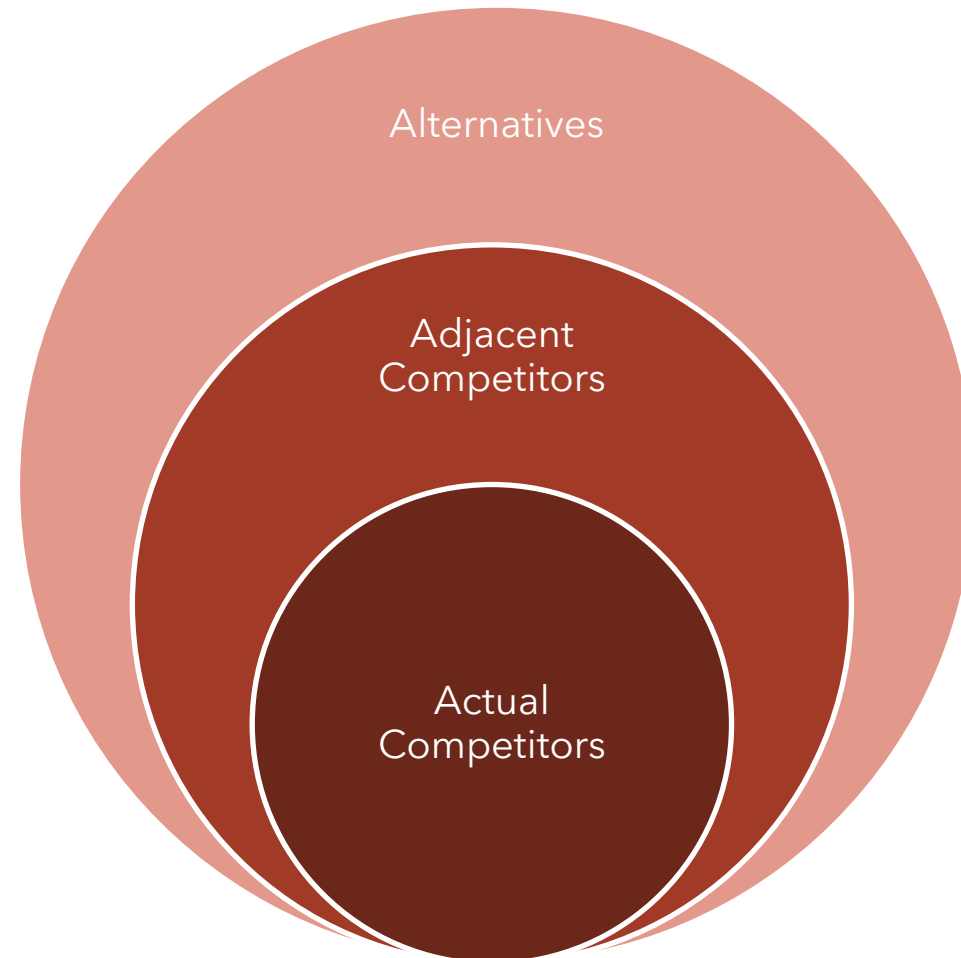


Thankfully someone gets it...

“To get London moving”



A useful model outside-in perspective on your competitors and alternatives...

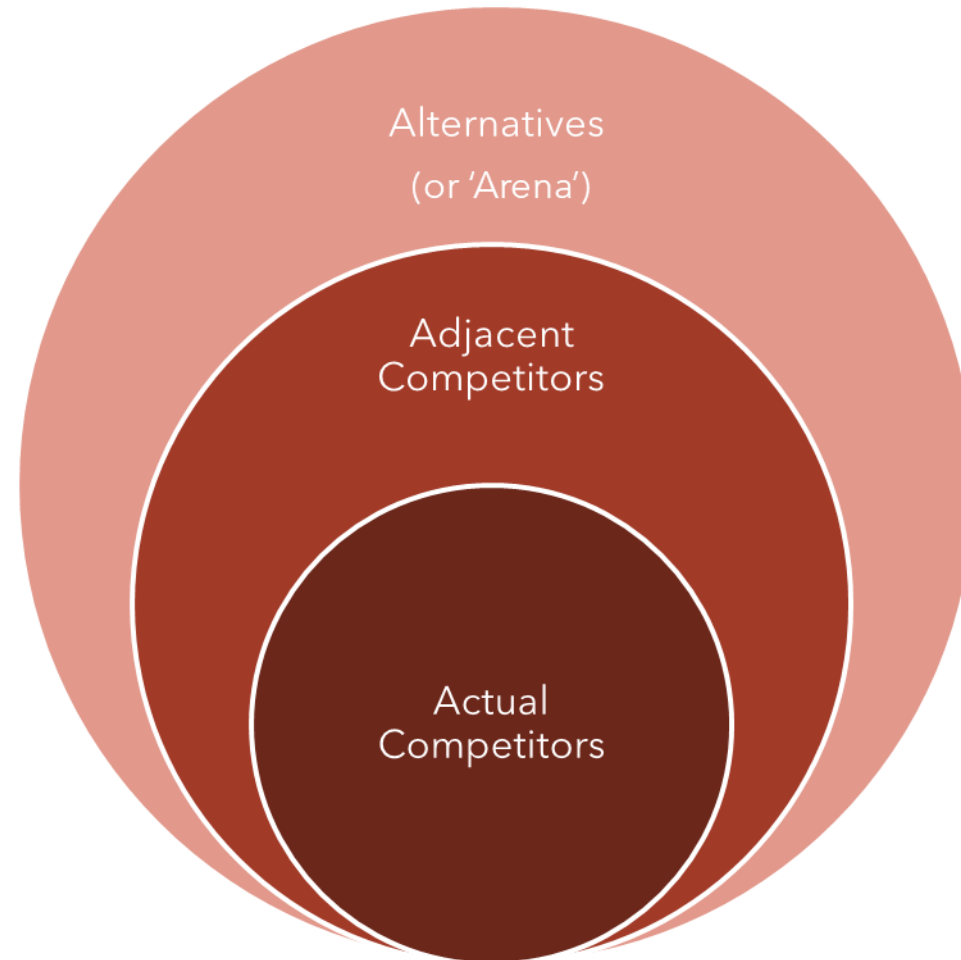


The 3A's model

For example...
A Mars bar



For you in your world...?



Immersion – for customer-led belief on a specific issue



- Inconvenient customer truths – customer immersion
- Doubt we can do things differently – parallel immersion

Honest truths – from Customer Immersion



Printed On : 04-Feb-2017 14:38

Sundaram Motors
Volkswagen Mount Road
7, Whites Road
CHENNAI, 600014

VAT R.C No. : 3318902002 W.E.F. 01-01-07
C.S.T.R.C No. : 10021 DTLD 2W.E.F. 28-06-07
Ser. Tax. No. : AAICT0199K37001
PAN : AAICT0199K

Phone No. : 044-40407000 / 91
Fax No. : 944-40407071
E-Mail : service@vw-sundarammotors.co.in
CH No. : US4101TH1029PTC002973
T.I.N. No. : 3308902002

Tax Invoice

Invoice No. : VW1020795
Invoice Date : 04 - Feb - 17
Regn. No. : GJ55D793
VIN :
Model : Plus 1.2 CR-Trendline
Kms In : 89,744
Kms Out : 89,749
Service Advisor : M Venkatesh
S.A. Mob. No. :

Labor Details

S. No.	Description	Labor Code	Category	Qty	Unit Price	Customer Share %	Amount	Ser. Tax (14%)	Amount Incl. Tax
1	HOLD DIESEL 8000 MM (HP 50000)	Paid	400	4.80	100.00	1,880.00	267.04	2,147.04	
2	WHEEL ALIGNMENT DD	Paid	80	4.80	100.00	400.00	56.70	456.70	
3	FRONT BOTH STRUD L	Paid	300	4.80	100.00	1,350.00	189.00	1,539.00	
							3,630.00	512.74	4,142.74
									4,129.00

Switch Share Cost (S.B.C) : 17.86
Kishu Kalyan Cass (K.K.C) : 17.86

Parts Details

S. No.	Description	Part No.	Category	Qty	Unit Price	Customer Share %	Amount	VAT %	VAT Amount	Amount Incl. Tax
1	3372489 MAG. PRD DES	CL3372489	Paid	4.3	820.96	100.00	3,530.13	14.50	511.87	4,042.00
2	FILTER ELEMENT WITH	00L115002	Paid	1	360.61	100.00	360.61	14.50	52.19	412.80
3	FILTER W/TH	04 80813002	Paid	1	145.65	100.00	145.65	14.50	21.15	167.00
4	AIR FILTER	8RF129120	Paid	1	342.36	100.00	342.36	14.50	49.64	392.00
5	FUEL FILTER	8RF127402A	Paid	1	1,124.02	100.00	1,124.02	14.50	162.89	1,287.00
6	DUST AND POLLEN FLTR	8R062087	Paid	1	679.61	100.00	679.61	14.50	98.00	777.61
							6,681.68	852.82	7,534.50	
Total Parts and Labor										11,102.00

Rupees : ELEVEN THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED TWO RUPEES AND ZERO PAISA ONLY

INFORM TO CUSTOMER BATTERY FRONT WHEEL BEARING, CLUTCH ASSEMBLY, V BELT, TENSIONER, STEERING RACK, TIMING BELT, REAR WIPER BLADE, ENGINE OIL SUMP COVER NEEDS REPLACE.

Payment Details: All Payments may kindly be drawn in favour of T.V. Sundaram Iyengar and Sons Pvt Ltd. A/c Sundaram Motors.
Payment Terms: I Certify that I have taken the Delivery of my Vehicle and work has been done to my entire Satisfaction.

Customer Signature: _____ Date: 02/02/17
Sundaram Motors
Volkswagen Mount Road
Authorized Signatory

Management shall be responsible for Claims regarding this invoice.
Regd Office: 7-6, West Veil Street, Post Box No-21, Madurai-625003, Division of T.V. Sundaram Iyengar and Sons Pvt Ltd.

Page 1

We COULD do things differently – from Parallel Immersion



The Human Experience Advantage:


How organisations turn being more human into a competitive advantage

THE FOUNDATION

The customer-led growth consultancy

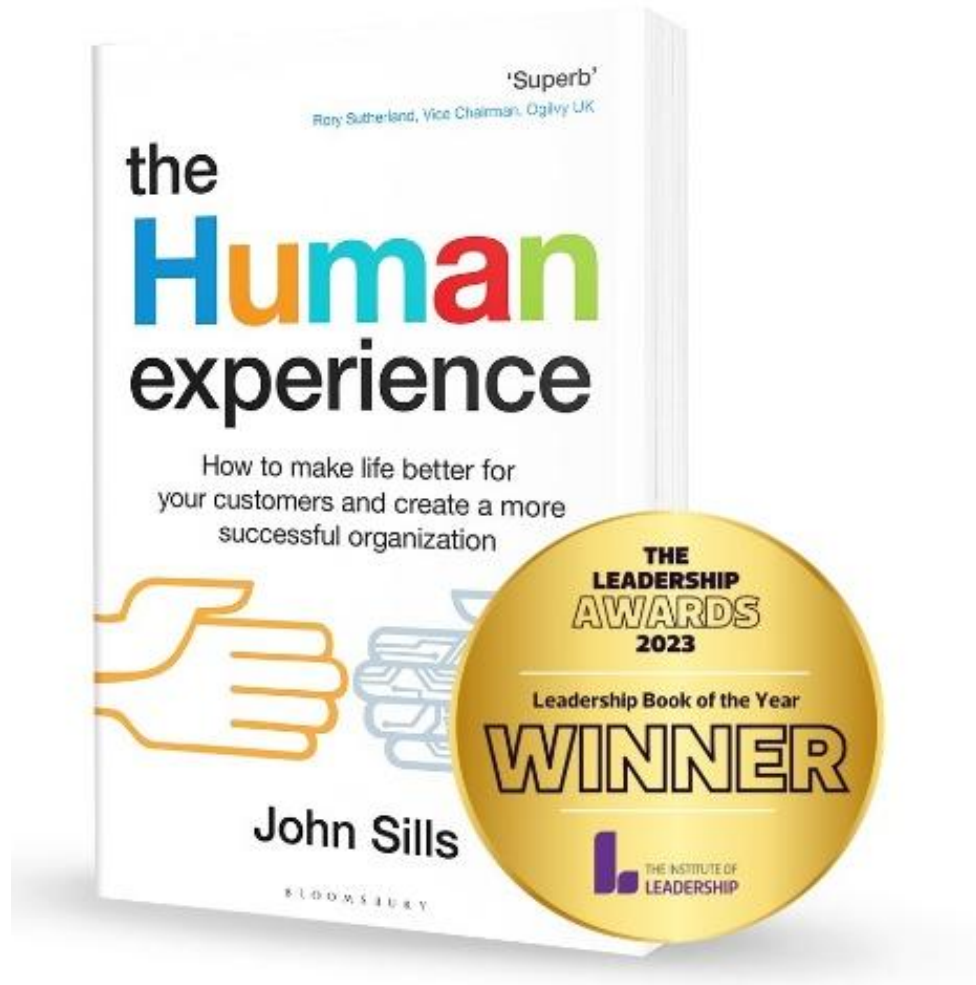
The Human Experience Advantage

How organisations turn being more human into a competitive advantage



April 2026

Discover more: the-foundation.com



**We judge organisations
the same way we judge
people...**



Patterns not parts

We don't audit the people we choose to keep in our lives.

We just notice - over time - whether they show up. Whether they're the same person every time. Whether they do what they said.

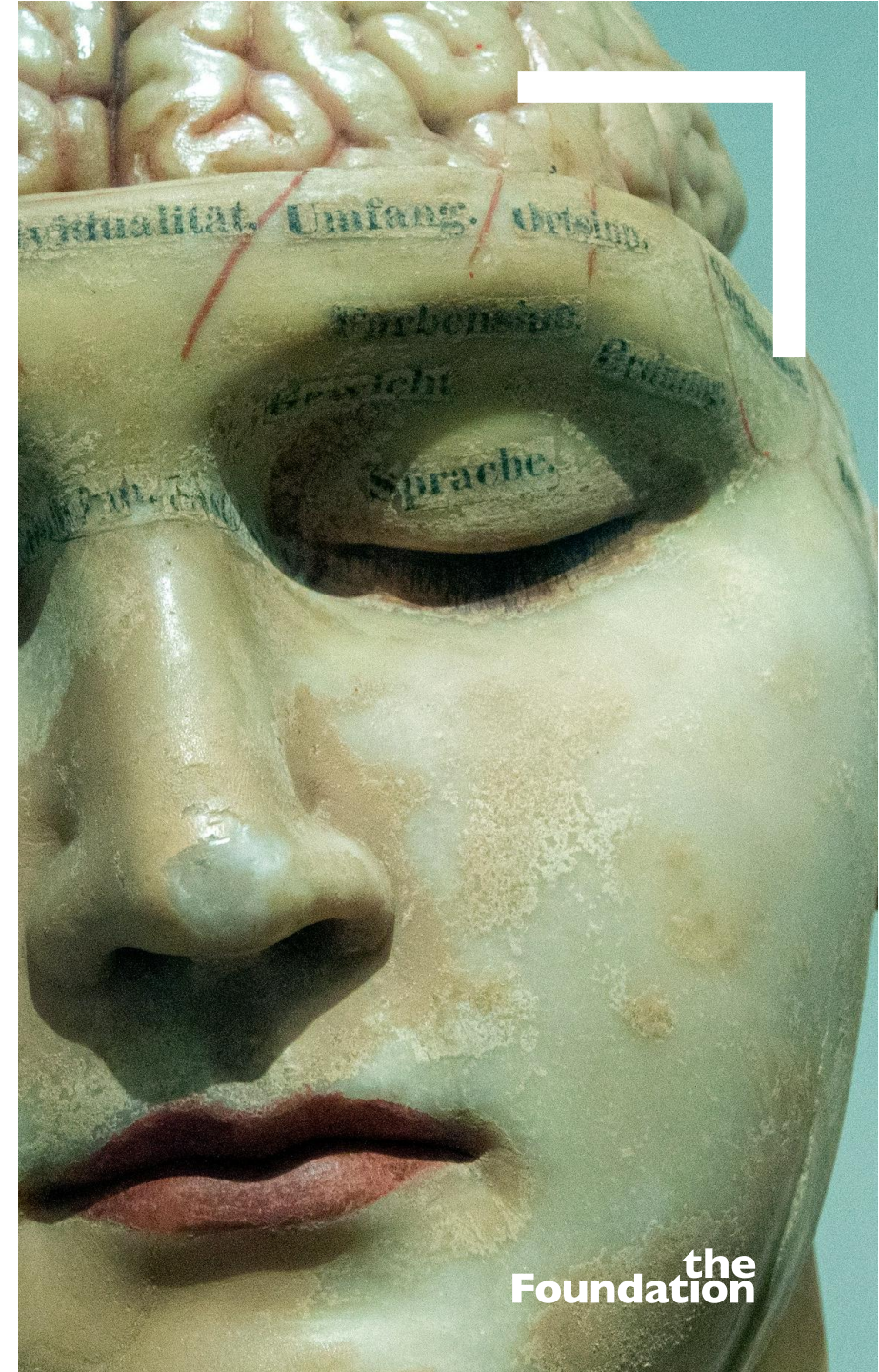
Customers are doing the same thing to you. Not scoring your parts but reading your pattern - your behavioural fingerprint

What would you do if your partner:

- Didn't answer your calls
- Wouldn't let you message them
- Didn't keep their promises
- Made you organise anything you did together
- Spoke in words you couldn't understand
- Blamed you when things went wrong
- Was nicer to new people they just met than to you

Behaving in human ways isn't a soft, feel-good idea.

It aligns with the decision-making architecture your customers already carry.

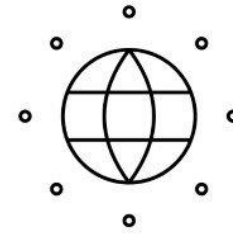




5,300
customers



277
brands



24
sectors

The 7 behaviours of a more human organisation



Accessible

Easy to get in touch with. Responsive when a customer contacts you. Having visible leadership and transparent ways of working.



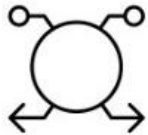
Consistent

Customer reality matches the brand promise. The experience is the same in whichever way the customer chooses to interact – in person, online, via an app, on the phone – and the whole relationship is as good as it was at the beginning.



Flexible

Knowing when to stand in front of the rules. Adapting to different people and situations. Allowing customers curated choice.



Proactive

Doing the work for customers. Identifying and resolving potential problems. Answering the next question before it's asked.



Respectful

Conscious of the customer's time. Being respectful of them as an individual. Showing humility when called for.



Responsible

Taking ownership of the experience and its problems. Helping achieve the customer's desired outcome. Caring for your customer's wellbeing.



Straightforward

Providing certainty of what's going to happen and when. Speaking in jargon-free, human language. Creating an adult-to-adult relationship.



70%

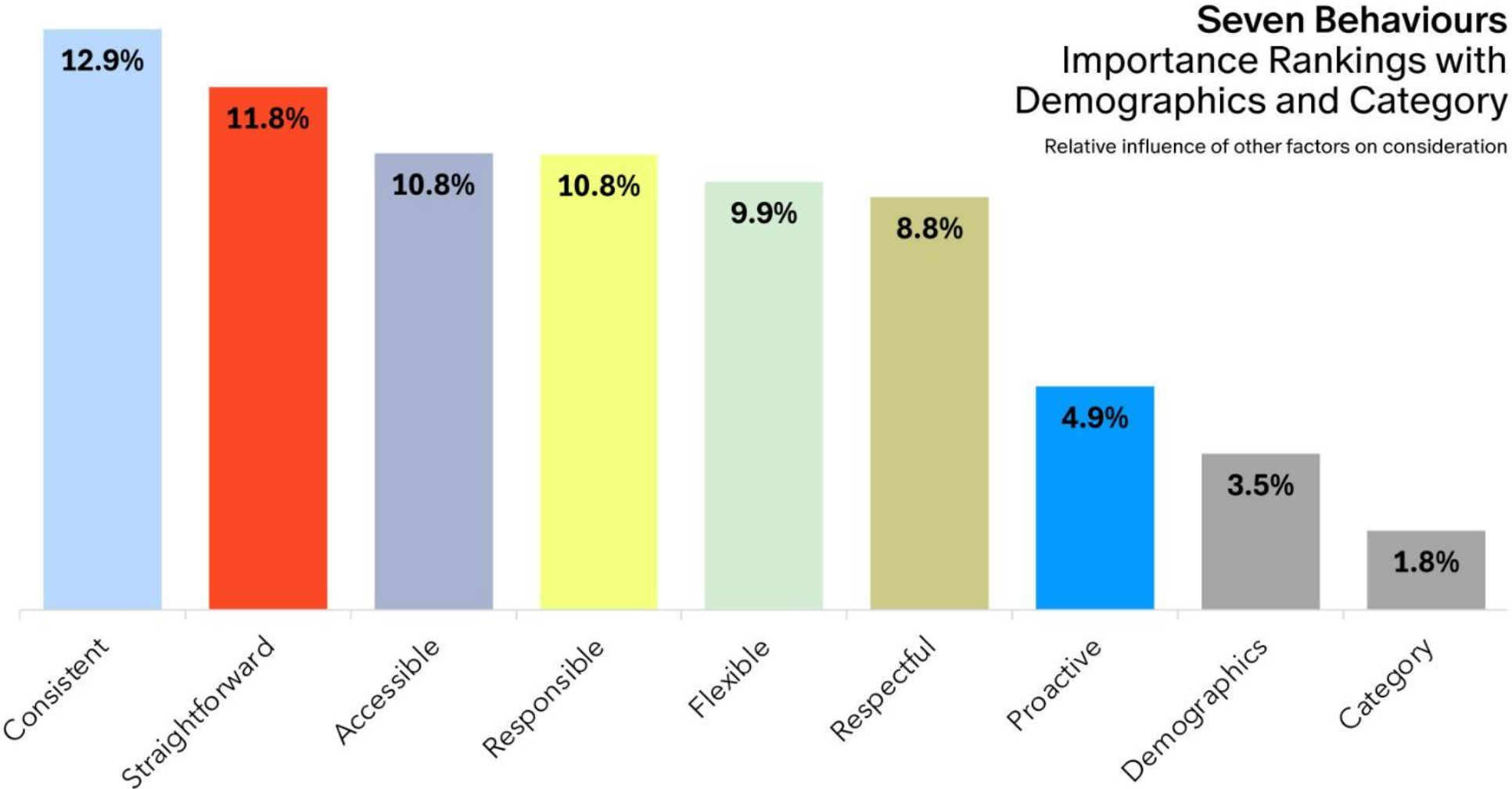
of brand consideration is explained by
the seven organisational behaviours.

This holds consistently across every demographic group and category we tested



**Which behaviour do you think most
impacts consideration?**

The order of influence



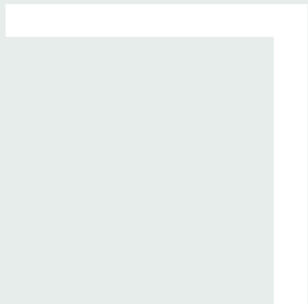
What customers say matters isn't always what earns their consideration

What they SAY matters most

- #1 Straightforward (22%)
- #2 Responsible
- #3 Respectful
- #7 Proactive ← ranked last

What ACTUALLY earns consideration

- #1 Consistent (13.2%) ← the real #1**
- #2 Straightforward (11.9%)
- #3 Accessible (10.4%)
- #7 Proactive (5.1%) ← still last



So, who has the
Human Experience
Advantage?

The 'winning' brands aren't the ones you expect

The brands that scored highest in our research are:

01 | Macmillan

02 | Tesco

03 | Cancer Research UK

04 | Boots

05 | Samsung

06 | Greggs

07 | Nationwide Building Society

08 | Visa

09 | Lidl

10 | British Heart Foundation

What the winners appear to have in common

They promise within their capability

Greggs doesn't claim to be fine dining. Tesco doesn't posture. Nationwide doesn't say it's disruptive. Each keeps expectation and delivery tightly matched.

They have operational depth

Consistent scores are built on mature supply chains, scaled processes, and dense physical footprints. You don't get there by accident.

They know who they are

They have a clear vision for how they want customers to experience them, how they want to be distinct from competitors and alternatives

They manage expectation, not just experience

Apple and Virgin set very high expectations. When they miss, the gap is visible. The top five keep that gap small – by design.

Scan the QR Code to download the report

THE FOUNDATION


The customer-led growth consultancy

The Human Experience Advantage

How organisations turn being more human into a competitive advantage

April 2026

Discover more: the-foundation.com



Session takeaways

1. Why being customer-led matters
2. Customer-led definitions
3. Taking an outside-in perspective
4. Customer Immersion
5. Parallel Immersion
6. The Human Experience Advantage



We are the Customer-Led Growth Consultancy

An independent growth consultancy that, since 1999, has helped brands and businesses pioneer on behalf of customers.

Being customer-led is not just doing what customers ask.

**It's understanding the problems they need to solve or the outcomes they want...
...then finding new and better solutions.**

This is the foundation of sustained success.



We help brands and businesses pioneer on behalf of the people they serve, creating sustainable, commercial success as a result



Developing Pioneering Propositions and Experiences

Creating trailblazing products, services and experiences that make life better for customers, achieving lasting success as a result



Building Pioneering Organisations

Growing the leadership, culture and capabilities to make customer-led decisions from the boardroom to the front line

We create the conviction to get into action by connecting the hearts and minds of people across organisations to what customers really value and then find new and better ways to create that value

Customer Immersion

Understanding and empathising with what matters to customers no matter how inconvenient. Achieved through direct, first-hand experience of their lives and personal conversations, adding impact to conventional research.

Samworth Brothers

QUALITY FOODS

Recognised the limitations of 'ready meals' after accompanying customers on a weekly shop then cooking and eating dinner with them, exploring the future of convenience food

They saw for real people's well-meaning claims to eat healthily while in practice doing much that contradicted, for good reasons the Samworth team now understood



Recognised big problems with investment propositions after each 'adopting' a customer in a month-long online community, confronting them with challenging perceptions of banks and investment institutions

The team saw decision-making was fundamentally emotional not functional, unlike their own.

Parallel Immersion

Getting new ideas and, crucially, belief that they can work, by listening in person to honest stories from leaders from organisations in other sectors who have successfully tackled challenges with similarities.



Recognised that building a relationship with customers is a matter of earning trust over time and doesn't mean things always need to go well

... after hearing from psychologists, scientists, and ex-military intelligence offices



Recognised that returning the company to health relied on embracing distinctiveness not following the industry...

... after hearing from leaders at Lego, O2, Pret a Manger, Jaguar Land Rover, Metro Bank and IKEA

Our work helps organisations earn more customer decisions in their favour, creating significant commercial value



Going beyond the regulator to build trust with a customer-led growth plan

Leading to a 70% reduction in complaints, and #1 ranking among utilities companies in the UKCSI 2020



HARVEY NICHOLS

Inspiring fearless style not fashion followers through a new customer-led brand strategy

Contributing to 9% revenue growth to £210m for the year to March 2018 following the rebranding



Supporting a successful turnaround through a strong proposition, an energising purpose and a service model with Foodmakers and Shopkeepers at its heart

From four years of like-for-like sales decline to 14 consecutive quarters of growth, operating profit of £432m in 20/21 and a private equity sale for £9.97bn in mid-21



HSBC

Creating an 'empathy training programme' for 700 Mortgage advisors

Increased NPS by 10–15 points, halved repeat call volumes, and increased colleague engagement by c.15%




As a result, we're trusted by leading brands and businesses with critical and ambitious growth challenges

 <p>How do we put customer centricity at the heart of our strategy in a meaningful, competitive way?</p>	 <p>How can we create a compelling global customer experience in a vast and complicated global bank?</p>	 <p>What's the future of individual giving and how do we become supporter not product-led?</p>	 <p>How do we grow belief that a failing business offers unique customer value and has a purpose worth fighting for?</p>
 <p>How do we create a great experience for our eclectic range of B2B customers?</p>	 <p>How can we reach out to supporter communities in ways they value, earning more decisions to support?</p>	 <p>How can we decisively increase retention across our global customer base, and catch up our German competition?</p>	 <p>What's the real meaning and value in having an 'emotional connection' with customers, and how do we do it?</p>
 <p>How can we be more valuable to people, in a world where the NHS is under such pressure?</p>	 <p>How can we create Europe's most loved travel service?</p>	 <p>How can we grow genuine relationships with our merchant partners from a start point being seen as arrogant?</p>	 <p>How do we become a true customer pioneer in a troubled and unloved category?</p>

the Foundation

 The Foundation - The Consumer-Led Growth Company

 www.the-foundation.com

 +44 (0)20 7255 8720

 hello@the-foundation.com