



Will You Allow Customers to Trash Your Brand?

by Curtis N. Bingham

**CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER
COUNCIL**



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Curtis Bingham is the recognized authority on chief customer officers and the first to promote this role as a catalyst for competitive advantage. He is the creator of the CCO Roadmap, a groundbreaking work containing 100+ critical strategies essential for customer centricity. As an international speaker, author, and consultant, Curtis is passionate about creating customer strategy to sustainably grow revenue, profit, and loyalty.

Let's face it. The customer is not always right. And persisting in this belief can have consequences. Sometimes, the best thing you can do for a customer is to [gently and politely tell them, "No."](#)

Airbus, one of the world's largest jet manufacturers, is pushing back on the airline industry trend towards smaller [seats](#). It used to be that nine-across seats were standard, and many airlines are moving to 10-across and thinner seats with [less padding](#). Of course, the airlines are all about saving weight and adding more paying passengers to each flight. Last year nearly [70% of Boeing's 777 planes](#) had an extra seat squeezed into each row. But, this latest push to narrow the seat size from between 18-19" to 16.7" wide has caused a backlash amongst travelers.

Some claim that a "coffin has more shoulder room," or that "airlines might as well do away with seats altogether and use straps like on the subway." Travelers are complaining to the airlines and are even taking out their frustrations on Airbus and Boeing. Airbus, to its credit, is doing consumer research of its own and is advocating a minimum width of 18" as it improves passenger sleep quality by 53% over 17" wide seats (and I would expect 100% over 16" wide!).

In a related vein, a financial services company manages the flexible spending accounts for a number of big employers. Yet each employer sets the standards on how strict to be in examining the employee expenses submitted for reimbursement. Some restrictions are very severe, causing a significant but misplaced customer backlash against this financial services company that might be spilling over and damaging its consumer brand.

A white silhouette of a lighthouse on a white base, with a blue beam of light shining from the top. The background is blue with a yellow curved line.

You work very hard to build and protect your brand. You work hard to create a great customer experience. Why would you let your **customers** ruin the brand and experience for the **consumers**?

The most effective customer executives and brand marketers take ownership of their brand and customer experience all the way through the value chain to the end consumers. Even though it may not be popular (as in the case of Airbus) consider defining minimum service and experience standards. Demonstrate wherever possible the longer-term benefits of customer loyalty and engagement over short-term profits. Or perhaps you can show your distribution channels how to deliver even greater value that far outweighs cost cutting; for example, by putting in power outlets in each row, as Alaska Airlines is doing. Personally, I'll pay a lot extra for standard seats AND power for all my devices, especially now that the [FAA has allowed all devices to remain on](#) throughout the flight!*

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About CURTIS N. BINGHAM

As Executive Director of the Chief Customer Officer Council™, Curtis Bingham is the recognized authority on chief customer officers and the first to promote this role as a catalyst for competitive advantage. He is the creator of the CCO Roadmap, a groundbreaking work containing 100+ critical strategies essential for customer centricity. He has created the comprehensive Customer Centricity Maturity Model used to assess and guide customer-centric organizational strategy, and is a champion of customer engagement as a critical growth engine. As an international speaker, author, and consultant, Curtis is passionate about creating customer strategy to sustainably grow revenue, profit, and loyalty.

About THE CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER COUNCIL

The CCO Council is a powerful and intimate gathering of the world's leading customer executives from widely diverse industries. The Council helps executives achieve objectives faster and more easily by leveraging best practices. It helps validate and refine strategies and initiatives to avoid experimenting at customer expense. Membership is by invitation only, and purposefully cross-pollinated with the most forward-thinking companies, large and small, so as to help customer executives deliver solid, customer-centric business results. For more information, email info@ccocouncil.org or call 978-226-8675.



Eight Imperatives for the Chief Customer Officer – This ***Bingham Advisory*** lays out in detail numerous strategies that enable customer executives to be successful in driving customer centricity throughout their businesses and in creating sustainable competitive advantage, including: six key challenges to CCO success and the means to overcome them, nine metrics that need to be considered for the CCO dashboard, seven critical success factors for CCOs, three necessary characteristics for CCOs, and seven strategies to support customer centric change.

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