

# AS A LEADER IS YOUR APPROACH TO CUSTOMERS INTENTIONAL... OR TRANSACTIONAL?



Let me ask you something direct.

*Are you leading your customer strategy with intent?  
or are you simply managing transactions?*

## The Transactional Leader

A transactional approach isn't wrong. It's just limited. It sounds like:

- “Did we deliver what we promised?”
- “Did we close the deal?”
- “Did we resolve the complaint?”
- “Did we hit the KPI?”

When the mindset is transactional, customers become:

- Revenue units
- Jobs to process
- Metrics to report
- Contracts to renew

The focus is heavily on efficiency, output and compliance where when something goes wrong, the issue gets fixed. However, this does not necessarily strength the customer relationship. Over time, this creates something dangerous: Technically satisfied customers who are Emotionally uncommitted to the brand. And emotionally uncommitted customers are the first to leave when a competitor makes the business easier, faster or cheaper.

What makes this risky for a business is that most business dashboards still look ‘okay’. Functionally, numbers are in the green, the graphs are going up, revenue is flowing in. Obviously, leaders don't feel any urgency to step-up and focus on retention of customers from an emotional perspective.

*Until churn quietly accelerates like a whirlpool, silent but lethal.*



**Christopher Roberts**

BRAND INTERVENTIONIST  
Author of "10 Reasons Why CX/NPS Programs Fail & Your Surefire Solutions to Succeed"



## The Intentional Leader

Here is how Intentional Leaders operate differently. They don't just ask, "Did we deliver well?" They also ask:

- "How did we make the customer feel?"
- "Where are we unintentionally eroding customer loyalty?"
- "Would every customer advocate for us in a room where we are not present?"
- "Are we building customer loyalty by engaging with customers emotionally? Or are we just solving problems to prevent complaints?"

Intentional Leaders strongly believe that customers are not transactions. They are long-term economic relationships. This is why Intentional Leaders never leave loyalty to chance. They design it.

They:

- **Define the moments that matter.**
- **Align behaviours to those moments.**
- **Empower frontline teams to exercise judgement and go above and beyond.**

- **Review customer feedback at the leadership level — not just at an operational level.**

But here is what separates 'good intent' from 'real intent'. Intentional Leaders crystallise three things clearly and deliberately:

### 1. Their Customer Value Proposition (CVP)

*Why should customers choose you over your competitors, and why should they stay with you — beyond price and convenience?*

### 2. Their CX DNA

*What are the functional and emotional elements that define how your experience must consistently feel?*

### 3. The Processes That Empower Staff

*Do your systems, policies and governance enable your people to deliver great experiences?*

Without those three anchors, 'intentional' remains 'aspirational'. But with these three, it becomes the foundation on which Intentional Leaders engineer reasons for customers to stay with their brand and recommend their brand to others.



## The Real Difference

18+ years of applied work has shown us that customers rarely leave because of one bad interaction. They leave because of repeated unintentional experiences:

1. **Touchpoint experiences that are either bland or cause irritation to customers.**
2. **Policies that override humanity.**
3. **Processes that prioritise internal efficiency over external loyalty.**

This is why I insist that Intentional leadership eliminates accidental erosion.

**Transactional Leadership** is delivery-focused.

**Intentional Leadership** is relationship-focused.

**Transactional Leadership** is efficiency-led.

**Intentional Leadership** is value-led.

**Transactional Leadership** says:

*"We met expectations."*

**Intentional Leadership** asks:

*"Did we strengthen the relationship?"*



## The Economic Reality

Intentional Leadership isn't soft thinking. It is a commercial strategy in every sense of the term.

When you operate transactionally:

- You rely heavily on acquisition.
- You absorb silent churn.
- You compete harder on price.
- You miss referral momentum.
- Your cost to serve quietly increases.

**But when you operate intentionally:**

- Lifetime value grows.
- Referral behaviour compounds.
- Retention becomes predictable.
- Margins stabilise.
- Acquisition dependency reduces.

Remember that Advocacy compounds, but transactions don't.

Similarly, many organisations measure their CX or NPS, but don't use it strategically. They treat it as a survey or a score, but not as an organizational discipline to improve operations and the customer experience they offer.

They collect feedback, but they don't redesign processes and products around it.

They report metrics, but they don't govern the behaviour through them.

That's the difference between having a program... and having a discipline.

## How Intentional Strategy Is Built

The shift from transactional to intentional is achieved by strategic design. At Engaged Strategy, we guide leaders through four interconnected disciplines:

### 1. Customer Strategy Development

- Customer journey mapping
- Clarifying and Strengthening the Unique Customer Value Proposition
- Defining your unique CX DNA

### 2. Survey Strategy & Strategic Insights

- Designing the right listening architecture
- Asking the right questions
- Targeting the right audiences
- Linking insight into business economics

### 3. Organisation-Wide Engagement

- Top-down strategic action planning
- Bottom-up local ideation
- Governance processes that ensure execution

### 4. Empowering Staff

- Neutralising detractors and converting them into Promoters
- Training managers to facilitate sessions to create Promoters
- Executive alignment workshops to drive organisation-wide change

Intentional Leadership is all about redesigning the system that produces the experience.



## Leadership Reflection

Leader to leader – here are some self-reflecting questions:

- As a discipline, do you start all Executive Meetings with a customer reality check, such as a customer story, complaint or a reason for customer churn?
- Do you personally read customer verbatims?
- When was the last time you spoke to an irate customer directly?
- How often do you go to the frontline to understand customer challenges directly?
- Do you know exactly which touchpoints cause friction?
- When was the last time you reviewed your company's policies to critically analyse those that don't make sense to your customers?
- Do you obsess over Customer Loyalty Economics to the extent where you know off-hand the lifetime value of your Promoters and Detractors?
- Do you know what percentage of your sales come primarily from referrals?
- Is customer engagement among the Top 5 KPIs?
- Do you spend at least 10-15% of your time every month on customer-related issues?

If customer experience sits in a silo, it will behave transactionally.

If customer experience sits at the leadership table, it becomes intentional.

***“We are what we repeatedly do.  
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”***

**— Will Durant**  
*(often attributed to Aristotle)*

In the context of a customer-obsessed CEO, that's the punchline.

You become a customer-centric leader because you:

- **Listen to calls every week**
- **Read verbatims consistently**
- **Spend time on the frontline**
- **Open meetings with customer reality**

Over time, those behaviours become the brand's identity under your leadership.

## The Real Question

The real question isn't whether you care about customers. Instead, ask whether your approach is deliberate or merely transactional. Remember that organisations that thrive over the next decade won't be the ones who 'deliver'. They will be the ones who design customer experiences.

***So where do you think your organisation truly sits right now?  
And more importantly — are you leading transactions... or architecting loyalty?***