

Position
Paper

A background image showing several hands holding and fitting together blue puzzle pieces. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue shape that frames the text.

Enhancing customer centricity *with* staff

Brought to you by
Dominique Vanmarsenille

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Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff

The voice of the customer defines your context

Customers today have a louder voice than ever before. Customers have access to more information on you and your competitors than ever before and as a result, customers expect an increasingly awesome experience.

Competitors are launching new products and services faster than ever before and are consistently raising the bar on CEX.



Voice of Customer

Listening to the voice of the customer is a requirement for continued loyalty and increased share of wallet by satisfying or even exceeding your customers' needs. Even when your scores appear satisfactory, the customers' needs evolve and your competition keeps improving. It therefore requires a continued effort to improve ad infinitum.

Listening to the voice of the customer will help improving the customer experience through better products/services, a customer-oriented service culture and organisation and a stronger brand.

For doing so, you need input and cooperation from staff and a concerted strategy, involving all staff.



Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff







Staff can therefore be either catalysts or destroyers of your customer service.

Not only are their opinions and convictions important to streamline your service offer, but they are also the ones who will have to implement your action plan for enhancing customer relations. In any case, you need their involvement and cooperation.



It is therefore key for every customer-centric organization to involve staff in the CEX research process from the very start.

Not only can staff provide valuable information for designing or refining the CEX-survey, but it is essential to listen to their voice to find out to what extent ...

-  ▶ They understand the **needs** and **issues** of the customers
-  ▶ They are **confident** about their own and other divisions' **performance**
-  ▶ Their opinions and experiences are **in line** with customers' experiences
-  ▶ They **value** the **brand** as they should
-  ▶ They **act** in line with corporate **values**
-  ▶ They are **happy** in their company and value the employer.





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Involving your staff in the CEX-research process by interviewing them and sharing the results (thereby showing possible discrepancies between their convictions and customers' experiences) will encourage them to accept the results more easily and motivate them to act upon them.

This is why we created a cost-effective tool called **MirrorSM** as a valuable addition to your CEX-research.

Our tool allows you to detect whether staff is aligned or not.

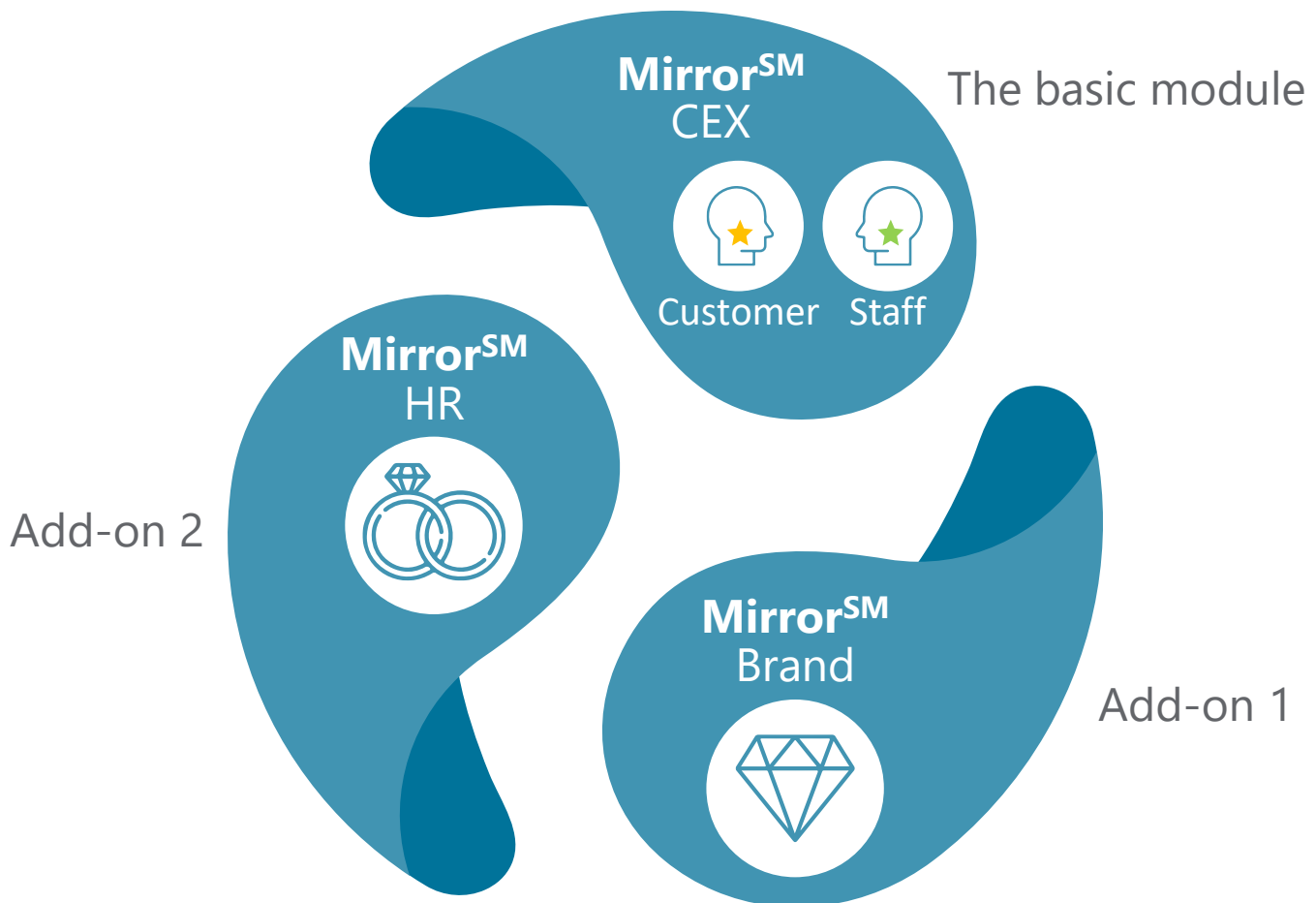




Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff

How MirrorSM is set up

b²sense's MirrorSM-tool consists of 3 modules:



Only when you reach alignment at all 3 levels, you will succeed in gaining full customer centricity.

Nonetheless, you can decide to run the CEX-module alone or combine it with one of the add-on-modules or decide to integrate all 3 modules in one holistic and complementary survey.



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The MirrorSM -CEX-module



MirrorSM-CEX will reveal to what extent staff's convictions differ from what customers experience, resulting in pain points which will require different alignment strategies.

In the **ideal** situation, staff and customers are aligned in their opinions and experiences in a positive way ... both staff and customers agree in saying that account management, touch points and processes are performing well, and customer centricity is at the core of each staff member's behaviour.



In a less ideal situation, you will face the following **challenges**:

Customer ★★★★★
Staff ★☆☆☆☆

Staff UNDERestimates your customers' scores

- Staff is not confident enough
- Risk of demotivation and negativity, spilling over to customers

Customer ★☆☆☆☆
Staff ★☆☆☆☆

Staff confirms POOR customer scores

- Staff risks reacting fatalistic
- Customers and staff risk escalating their mutual aversion and spread negative WOM

Customer ★☆☆☆☆
Staff ★★★★★

Staff OVERestimates your customers' scores

- Staff is overconfident
- Can be perceived as not listening, not caring and arrogant
- Staff lacks motivation to improve



Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff

We touch on the following topics in this module:



Value proposition

- What are the company's USP's?
- Why do customers buy from your company and not others?

Internal conviction

- Are brands differentiated in the market or is the brand operating in a commodity market?
- Is our brand the best in the market? Why (not)?
- Which brand(s) stand out?

Customer experience

- Can staff correctly assess customers' evaluation in terms of satisfaction, promotorship, loyalty, share of wallet, problem experience and resolution, etc? Where do they over-/underestimate?
- What should be done to enhance customer's experience?
- Which generic or non-generic brand sets an example in the market?

Customer centricity

- How is customer centricity defined in the company?
- How customer centric is the company?
- What can staff do to become more customer centric?
- What can the organization do to be more customer centric?

Internal assessment

- How well does the company perform in staff's eyes in terms of its products/services, pricing, touch points and processes? Is staff's opinion or experience better or worse than the customer's evaluation?

Internal organization

- How effective, efficient and collaborative is the organization?
- What should be done to do better?

Change opportunities & readiness

- What changes would staff see for themselves to improve customers' experiences?
- What actions are they ready to invest in?
- What changes do they suggest for their colleagues, their managers, the organization?



All relevant descriptive variables to clarify staff's reactions such as department, internal/external, seniority, etc. The categories should not be too narrow as to allow identification of individual responses.

Next, you will find a few typical output examples, illustrating what the CEX-module will reveal...



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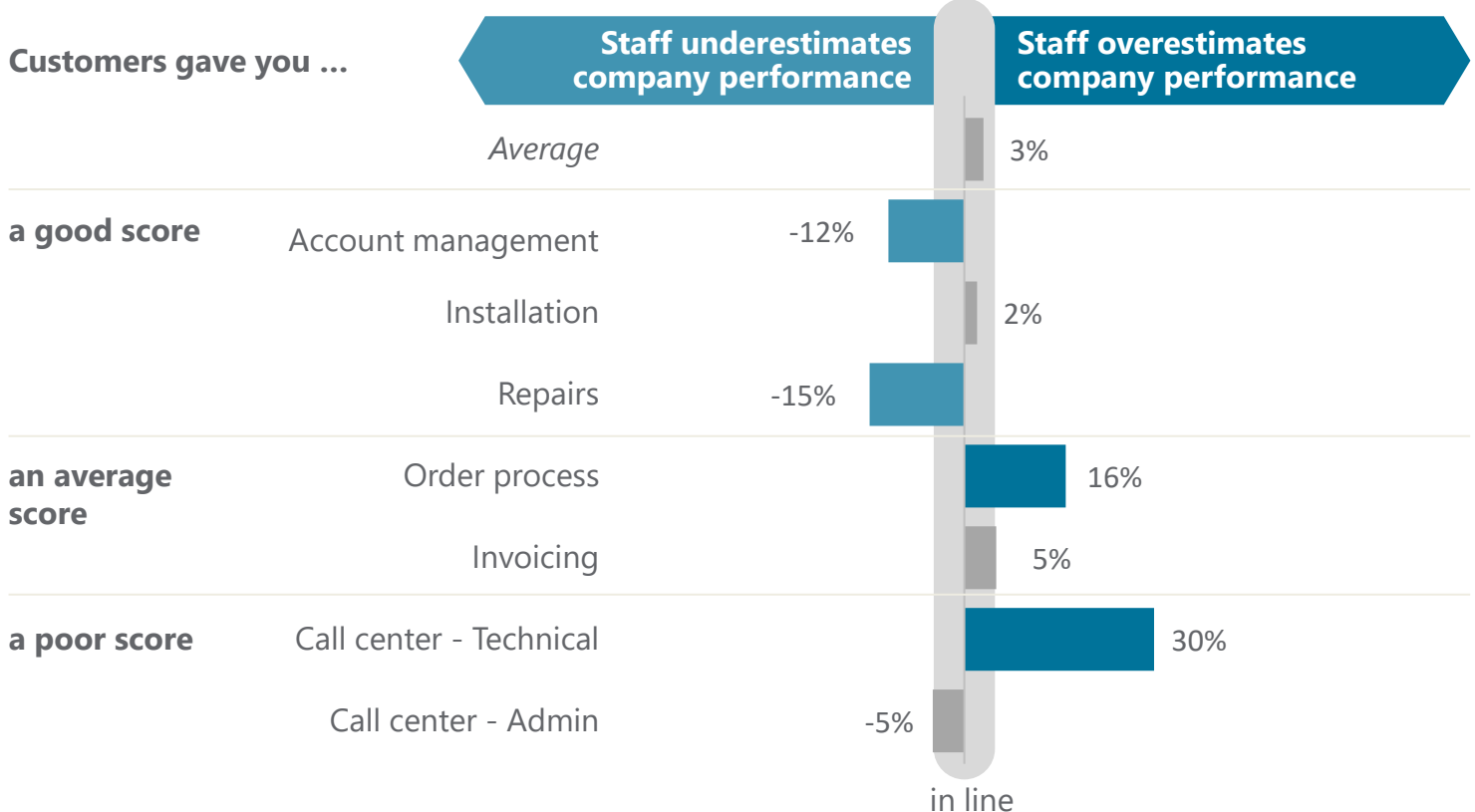
MirrorSM



The objective here is to confront staff's opinions with customers' experiences and detect over- and underestimates.

CEX

Staff scores vs. Customer scores



On average, the staff evaluation is in line with the customers' evaluations, but there are significant differences by touch point.

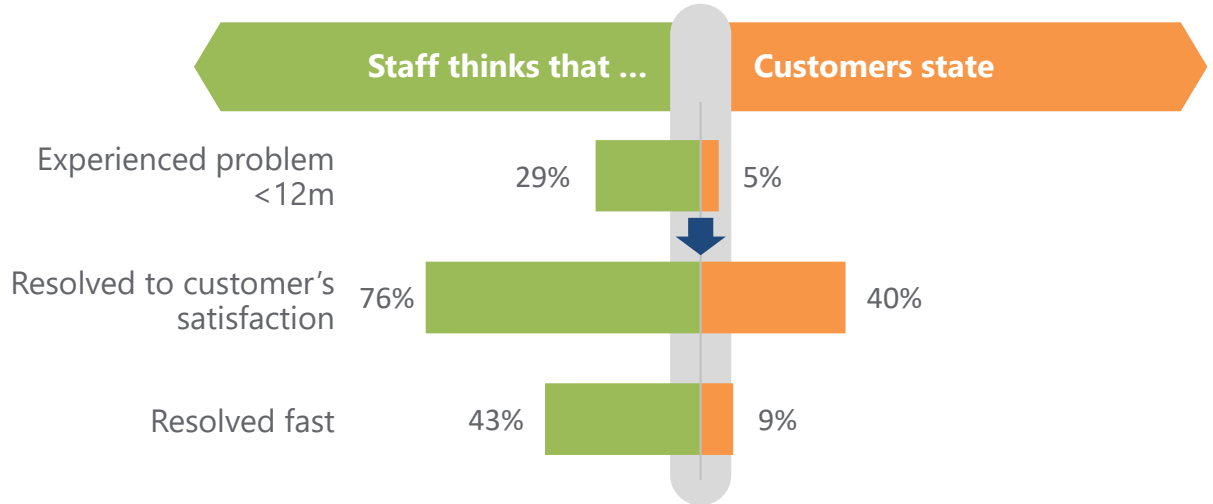
Customers evaluated the call center negatively and staff agrees when it comes to the call center, dealing with admin issues. The risk is here that customers and staff will escalate their mutual aversion and spread negative word of mouth.

But staff is overconfident regarding the call center, dealing with technical issues, where customers are very critical whilst staff considers the service is good. The risk is here that staff lacks motivation to improve.

The reverse is true for account management ... customers are delighted but staff gathers that it less good. The same goes for repairs. Here we should avoid that demotivation spills over to customers.



Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff



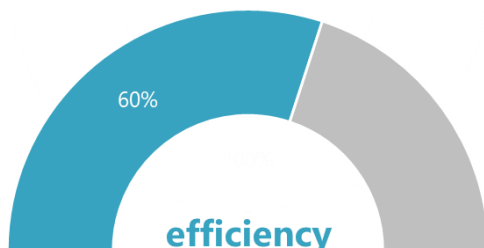
Staff considers that 29% of your customers experienced a problem in the past 12 months, whilst this was only 5% in reality. *Were they able to disguise the errors?*

But they were convinced that 76% of these customers did receive a satisfactory solution, whilst only 40% of the customers believed so. *This is a serious matter because non-resolution of problems has a serious detrimental impact on the relationship and word of mouth.*

Only few customers with complaints consider that the problem was resolved quickly, whilst 43% of staff believe that they brought a solution to customers' problems fast (enough).



When evaluating the organization, they work in, staff is definitely convinced about their own and their colleagues' effectiveness. They have the right skills to conduct their work well.



They are already less convinced about the efficiency within the organization. Many consider that the tools they are handed, are insufficient. Even more consider that procedures are too complex.



Most employees consider that divisions insufficiently communicate and collaborate and consider that this is detrimental for customer service and resulting customer delight.



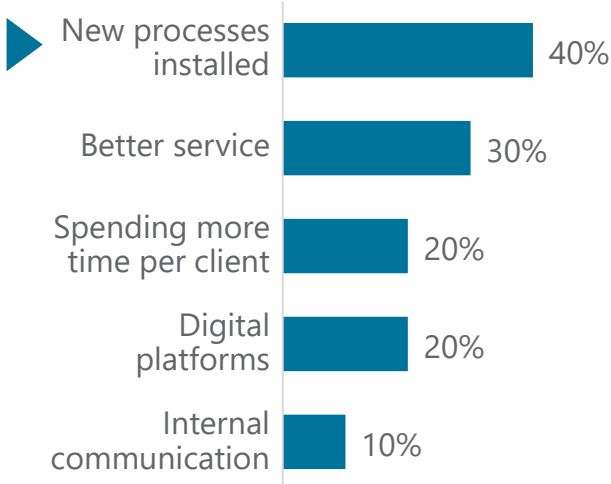
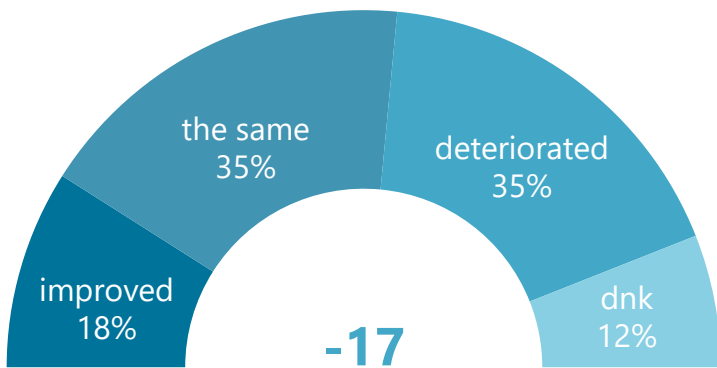
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MirrorSM

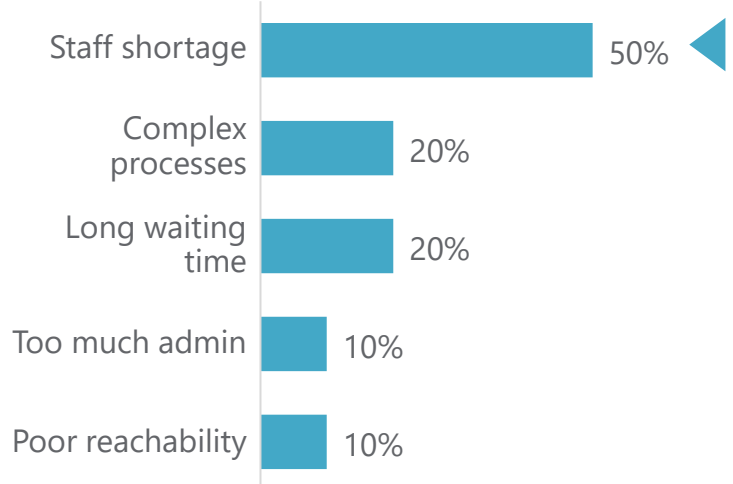
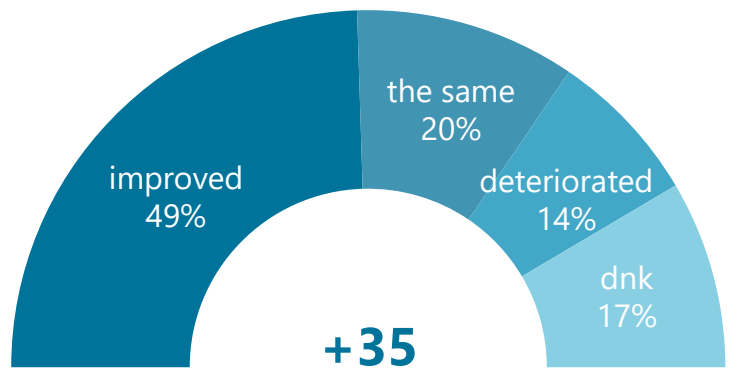


CEX

Customer group A



Customer group B



The majority of staff, serving Customer group B considered that things had well improved in serving customers thanks to new processes and better service by spending more time per client.

The reverse was true for staff, serving Customer group A. They considered that things deteriorated due to staff shortage, complex processes and long waiting times.



Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff

The MirrorSM -Brand-module



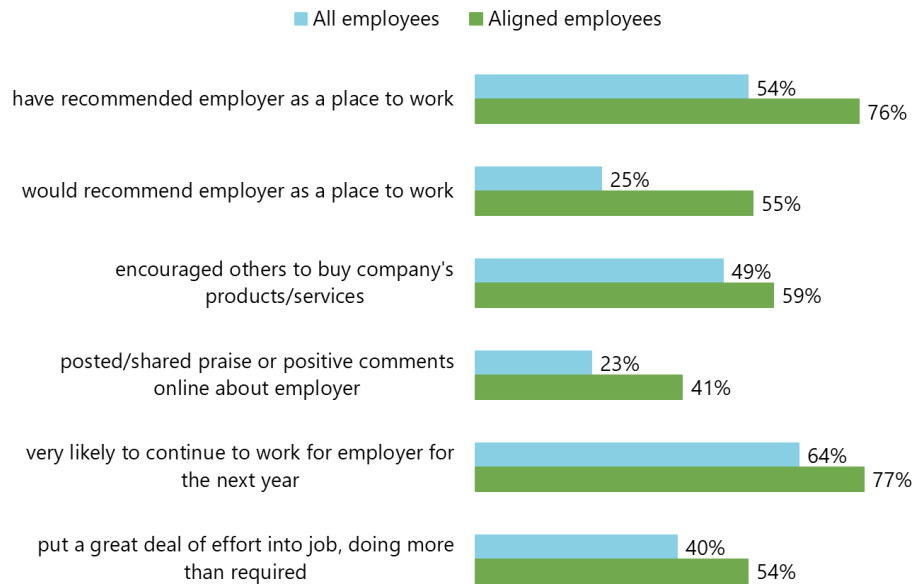
MirrorSM-Brand will expose the gap between internal and external brand evaluation and how well staff knows the market.

Staff does not value the brand

Staff does not see the strength of the brand, its reputation and value proposition	Staff does not abide corporate values	Staff does not know the customer, its opinions and needs well enough	Staff does not value the customer enough

Why is it important to include brand strength in MirrorSM?

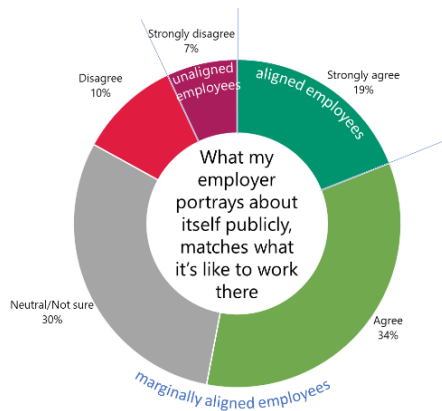
From the book "The employer brand credibility gap", we learn that employees, whose thoughts and actions are aligned with corporate brand values, are the company's best promoters as a brand and as an employer. Moreover, aligned employees tend to be more loyal to their employer and to go the extra mile for the company.





Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff

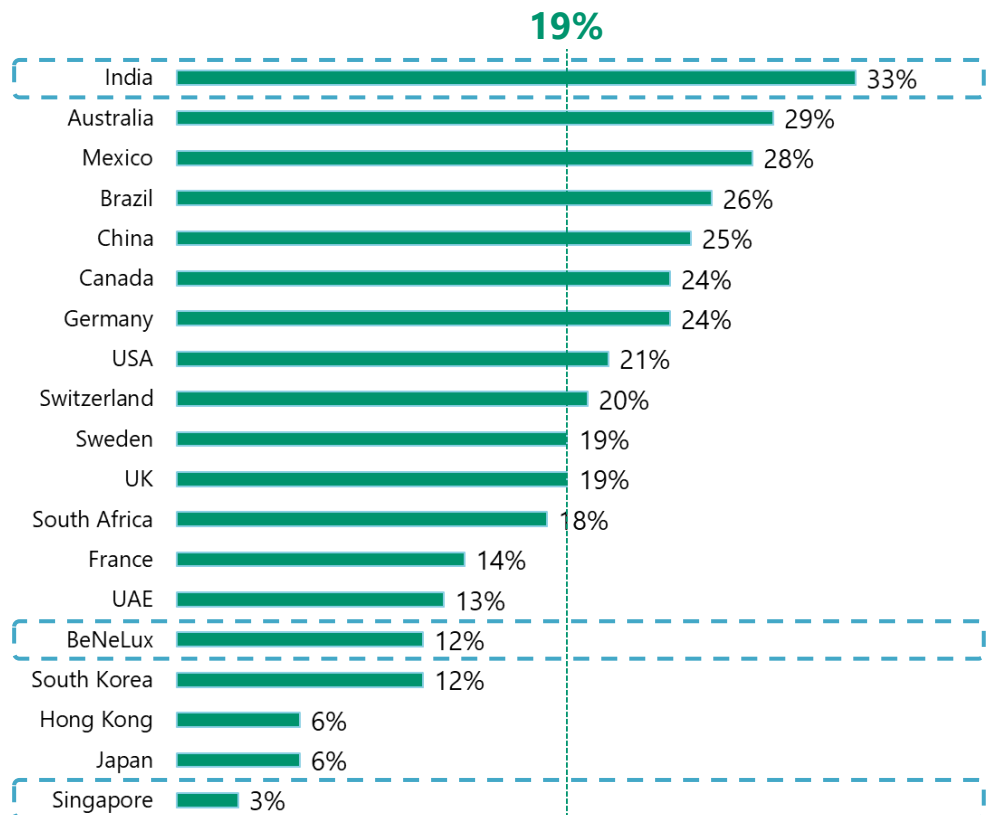
Whilst such alignment is highly beneficial, the situation is currently far from perfect according to the book ...



Overall, only **19%** of employees confirm that they are strongly aligned with the brand and only 1 in 2 are strongly or moderately aligned.

The situation differs significantly by country, ranging from merely **3%** in **Singapore** to **33%** strongly aligned employees in **India**.

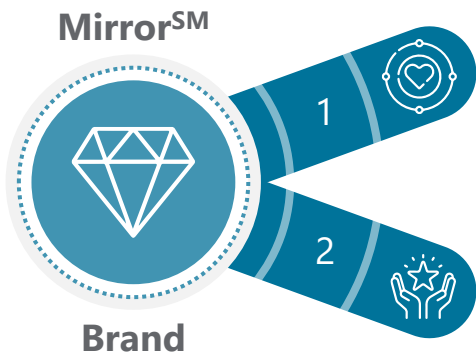
Merely **12%** of **BeNeLux**-staff confirm that there is full alignment between the publicly portrayed brand and reality behind the scenes.



A **MirrorSM-Brand** survey will clarify to what extent your internal and external brand values are in line with each other.



We touch on the following topics in this module:

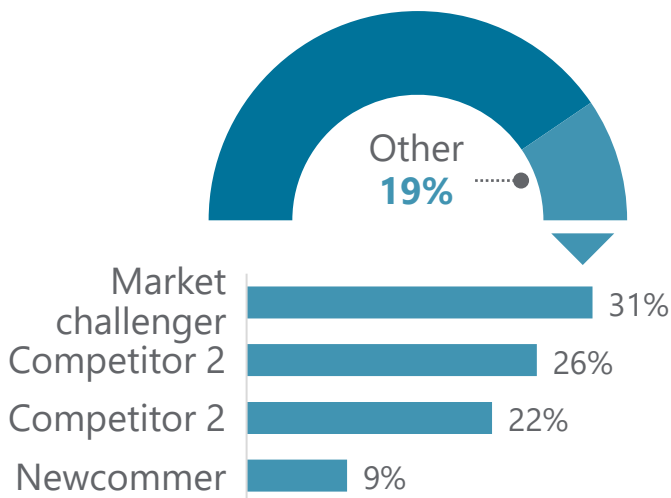


Corporate values

- Is staff familiar with the corporate values?
- Do they act accordingly?
- Does the organization abide by them?

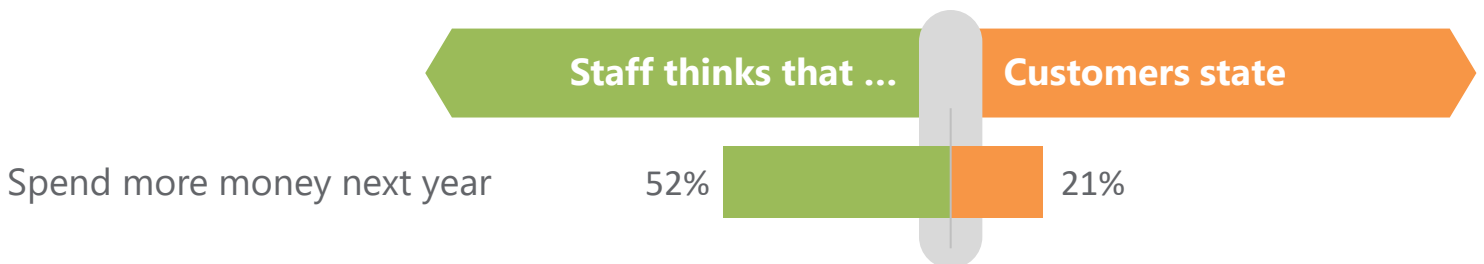
Corporate reputation

- How does the brand perform, compared to its competitors in terms of products, service culture, innovation, marketing & sales effectiveness, transparency, ethical business practice, business performance, management quality, social responsibility, employment attractiveness, etc.



Over 80% confirmed that your brand was the best in the market but nearly 1 in 5 considered that other brands performed better ... growing to 1 in 3 in the sales department!

The market challenger is considered the best by 31% of these non-believers. The newcomer in the market already persuaded 9% of your staff!



Staff overestimates the power of the brand, considering that 52% of the customers will spend more money with your company next year, whilst only 21% of customers intent to do so.



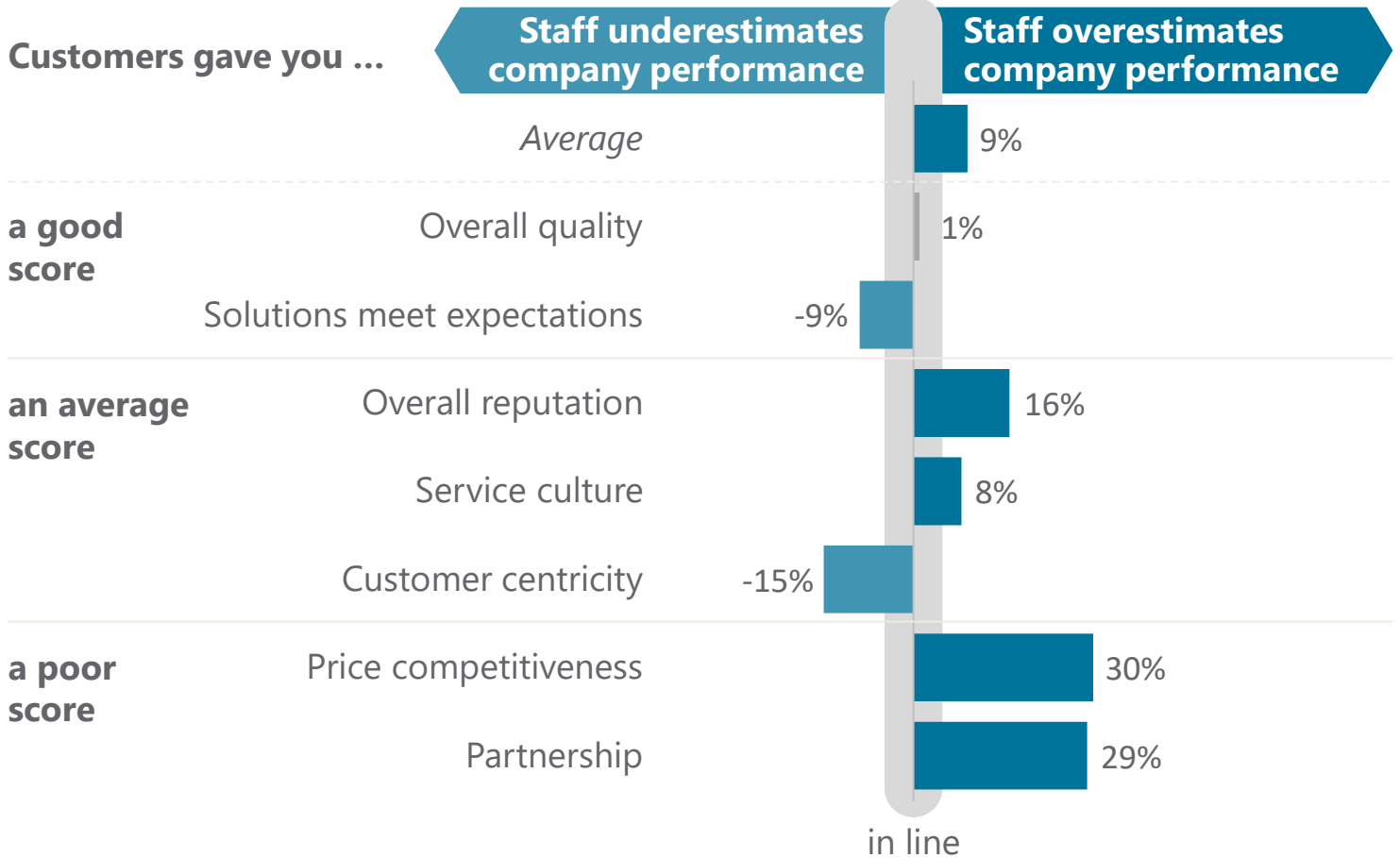
Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff

MirrorSM



Brand

Staff scores vs. Customer scores



Across the board, staff overestimates your brand performance by 9 points and is clearly over-confident when it comes to price competitiveness and partnership ... brand features for which your customers gave you a poor score.

Staff is however not confident enough when it comes to the solutions offered and the extent to which your company puts customers first ... *do they see otherwise behind the scenes?*



Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff

The MirrorSM -HR-module



MirrorSM-HR unveils whether you are valued as an employer and what challenges lay ahead in this field.

Staff does not value the employer



Staff feels unhappy



Staff is not engaged



Staff does not feel valued enough by the employer



Staff does not feel enabled enough by the organization to perform well

Why is it important to include employee engagement in MirrorSM?

Research points out that employee engagement is higher in companies that excel in CEX. Here is what a survey among 500 mil\$+ companies in the US showed:

% of engaged employees among companies which score **worse** on CEX than competition  **49%**

% of engaged employees among companies which score **better** on CEX than competition  **79%**

Engaged employees are very much interested in how successful the company is. They see their employer as a reflection of themselves, what they believe in, who they are and how they are perceived.

Engaged staff figures things out faster, solves problems faster and innovates better. When staff does not feel connected, productivity will decrease, employees will disengage, and profit will tumble. Engagement is directly related to trust in leadership, connection to the company and working in a stimulating environment.

A **MirrorSM**-survey will tell you whether staff is engaged, what measures need to be taken in order to enhance employee engagement and are a good reason for getting HR involved in the process.

A research by Tempkin Group (part of Qualtrics) revealed that when HR is significantly involved in CEX, the organization is 50% more likely to be a CEX-leader in the market



We touch on the following topics in this module:

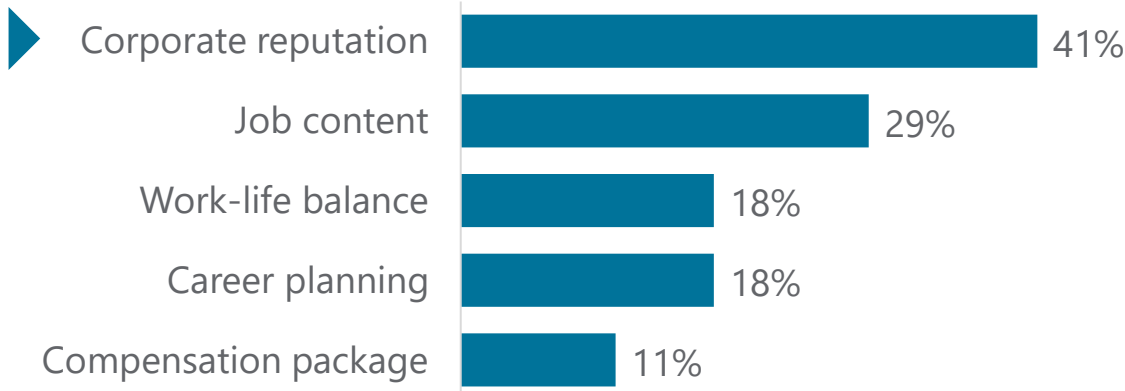
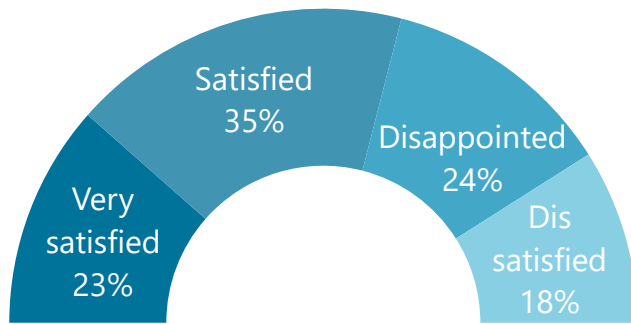
MirrorSM



Employee engagement

- Is staff satisfied with its current employer and employment?
- How do they assess their position, work environment, compensation package, career planning, work-life balance, training offer, internal communication, management quality, employment attractiveness, HR, etc?

Employee satisfaction



Overall, 58% of staff are satisfied with their work (environment). The company's market reputation and the job content contribute most to their satisfaction. Career planning and compensation score weakest. Employee satisfaction and brand alignment correlate for more than 80%, implying that they go hand in hand.



Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff

MirrorSM in practice

Question

Answer



Who?

- We suggest to ask all staff in direct contact with customers, staff having client responsibilities and management to cooperate in the **MirrorSM**-survey.
- We hope that you can motivate a maximum number of staff members to participate, so that all divisions, functions and responsibilities are well represented in the sample to draw conclusions for various staff types, serving various customer segments.



When?

- A **MirrorSM**-survey is linked to a CEX-survey.
- When you organise a one-shot CEX-survey, then staff is ideally interviewed in the same timeframe as your customers. When you have a continuous tracking survey running, then it is recommended to organise the **MirrorSM** -survey 1 or 2 months prior to your annual recap reporting.
- In both cases, it allows you to integrate results from staff's opinions into the conclusions and recommendations from your CEX-survey.



How?

- We will prepare an online questionnaire, accessible with unique links for every staff member.
- We invite you to notify staff of the **MirrorSM**-exercise and motivate them to participate within the imposed timeline.
- The survey will be e-mailed out, accompanied by a letter from a senior-level management person. It is important to emphasize to your staff that all results will be treated confidentially and that no one will be able to detect "who said what". You can do that in your message to staff and we will confirm this to reassure them.
- To guarantee staff's anonymity, we recommend that the survey sits on our servers rather than yours. In case you cannot export employee e-mail addresses to us, we can provide unique numbers to you. The mail-out and reminders will then be sent by you, but the anonymised results will end up on our servers for processing. This way e-mail addresses are treated confidentially, and we can guarantee that employee responses remain anonymous.
- We usually keep the response period short (1 week, including a weekend) and send out a reminder after 3 days.
- In case online access should be limited for part of the staff (e.g. non-office jobs), the survey can also be administered on paper, distributed via internal post and collected either by you or sent to us by mail.




Enhancing Customer Centricity *With* Staff

Question



Results?

- We will first confront your staff's and customers' results and prepare a full report in which results are looked at from different perspectives and for different staff- and customer target groups.
- We will share insights and our views on the results in an interactive workshop at your company. The audience is one of your choice, but I would not yet involve all participating staff at this stage. It is important for management to digest the results, put them into perspective and prepare action points.
- We can assist you in summarizing the main insights and management's input into an infographic to share with staff or assist in setting up workshops with various divisions to discuss the results, draw conclusions and prepare an improvement action plan from the staff's perspective. We would organise these workshops in close cooperation with our sister company  **minds&more** (www.mindsandmore.biz) in view of their extensive experience with CEX-optimization in a wide variety of sectors.



b²sense?

- It is not necessary that your CEX-projects sit with b²sense to run a **MirrorSM** –survey. We just need access to your current CEX-questionnaire to design the CEX-part of the questionnaire and your CEX-report to compare the staff's results with.



- Prepare employees to provide honest and open feedback
- Assure anonymity of their answers
- Assure that their insights will be the basis for real initiatives
- Ensure active support from management
- Motivate staff to participate to guarantee high response rates
- Thank staff for their participation
- Provide feedback to staff.



Our Mission

We foster a caring spirit and a result-driven objective: to **deliver impactful insights via a tailored research approach aimed at easing our clients' business challenges beyond the operational level.** Via inventive solutions, vast multi-sector experience and a drive for efficiency we continue to meet the evolving expectations of local and global business communities of tomorrow. **Because when people thrive, so do their businesses.**



Our Vision for the future

To become the go-to-reference for resolving **challenging queries across the customer chain**, for both local & global businesses through inventive research and impactful insights.

B2B2C

With end-consumers playing an increasingly important part, the need for integrated **b2b** and **b2c** research is on the rise. Our roots in b2b research combined with our capabilities in end-user and consumer research means we can help our clients with any b2b2c requirements.



Our research team brings a wealth of methodological- and sector **expertise** in **Brand, Customer experience, Innovation** as well as **market opportunities**. Combined with an inventive and forward-thinking approach, it is important to us to think with our clients and find **solutions** that work for them.



Via our in-house call center and our extensive **eco-system** of local and global research partners, we can cover **any** type of research in just about any market that our clients require.



We work as part of a larger community where like-minded partners like **Minds&More** and links with academic communities provide additional tools and opportunities to stay up to date with, teach and **make sense** of our business and social environments.

Our enthusiastic team built legion experience in numerous **industrial** and **services** sectors. We know how to reach the relevant **target** groups and retrieve relevant **insights**, using our own data-collection capabilities and trusted fieldwork partners and applying research **methods** and **models**, aligned to target groups in each country.

Building & construction	Business services	Energy
Food	Finance & insurance	Health Wellbeing
Industry & Technology	Telecom & ICT	Transport & Logistics

Our DNA leads to satisfied advocates

- Connect**
Understand your challenges business issues and needs for insights
- Customize**
Blank page approach, identifying the best solution to your problem. Sharing our experience and expertise
- Commit**
Senior project management team with pro-active, can-do and "team" attitude, committing to full customer satisfaction



About the Author



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Based in Belgium, Dominique is a founding member of b²sense after a management buy out from Kynetec. With more than 35 years' experience in BtoC- and BtoB-market research, Dominique is widely experienced in domestic and international market research working for many reputable companies across a wide range of sectors.

Dominique is a marketer and researcher with a wide spectrum of interests. Research has drawn his attention since the very beginning of his career, being very eager to learn, understand, grasp, collide ideas, develop, trigger, listening and advising. He had the opportunity to work for a whole series of great international clients and government bodies, gaining knowledge about a wide pallet of sectors and solutions. For Dominique, research should translate into actions and that is what he promises to deliver at the end of each piece of research ... data- and marketing driven action points.

His mission is to help businesses achieve their business goals and protect their long-term assets: their customers, their employees and their brands. To accomplish this, he subscribes to a set of core values: maintain the integrity of the data, protect the confidentiality of client information, aspire to the highest standards of intellectual honesty, remain flexible to new ideas, achieve the epitome of client service and fulfil our promises with exemplary research.

With a thirst for innovation, Dominique has developed numerous programs in the area of customer and employee engagement surveys for blue-chip companies and international bodies such as the European Commission.