

A Checklist for the Cult of Uncertainty

Customers say: “What’s going to happen?”

Employees say: “We aren’t sure.” There is no consistency.

If you check any of the following, you are at risk of being in the cult of uncertainty.

- Service is inconsistent.
- Internal processes and communication are inconsistent and disorganized.
- Customer retention is not where it should be.
- Employees aren’t sure what the company’s vision and brand promise are.
- Customers aren’t sure what the company’s brand promise is.
- There is occasional dissension or lack of trust within staff ranks.
- Employees and customers are unable to access upper management.
- There is no system in place to share best practices.
- There is little or no celebration of success.
- Employees may be in the wrong job.
- Employees feel a lack appreciation.
- Training is inconsistent or sporadic. It is an occasional add-on versus a part of the company culture.
- There is little or no soft-skills training in communication skills, customer service skills, or the like.
- Performance reviews are not executed regularly or with relevance to employee or company goals.
- Employees don’t feel as though they are part of a team.
- Employees have little or no authority to act independently to help the customer.
- There is a company-wide lack of motivation and an attitude of indifference.
- The company is operations-focused instead of customer-focused.

This is the cult you do *not* want to belong to. Employees and customers tend to have little or no confidence in their experience with the company. Most companies, whether they know it or not, operate inconsistently. Even the great ones occasionally drift into this cult. It takes constant attention, especially to the details, to get out of this cult and stay out.

A Checklist for the Cult of Alignment

Customers say: “Okay, I hear what you’re promising. Prove it to me.”

Employees say: “Okay, I understand what we’re promising. Prove it to me, so that I can prove it to the customer.”

If any of the following are not checked, you may not be in the cult of alignment. (Note: Not all need to be checked for you to be in alignment. Some of the following statements may not be applicable to your company or your situation.)

- The organization has created a simple and clear vision—a brand promise and/or a mantra.
- All employees understand and are able to repeat the mantra and/or brand promise.
- The company is hiring and promoting the right person for the right job.
- Employee training is not conducted as an afterthought, and it does not focus solely on product and service details. Soft-skills training is included, and a separate and comprehensive training regimen focuses on fulfilling the brand promise to customers.
- The organization continuously assesses itself by surveying employees and customers.
- Everyone wants to improve. Business as usual is not good enough.
- Members of the company commit to improving the experience not just for customers, but for employees as well.
- The organization is moving toward being customer-focused, rather than operations-focused.
- Both employees and customers know where they’re supposed to be going.
- Both employees and customers *like* where they’re supposed to be going.

When you start focusing on how to repeat *experiences* that support both customers and employees, you are moving out of the cult of alignment and into the cult of experience.

A Checklist for the Cult of Experience

Customers say: “I had a good experience. What will happen next time?”

Employees say: “Wow! It works. I created a good experience for my customer.”

If any of the following are not checked, you may not be operating in the cult of experience. (Note: Not all need to be checked for you to be in experience. Some of the following statements may not be applicable to your company or your situation.)

All that you checked in the cult of alignment *plus...*

- Employees have a personal sense of mission that relates to the job.
- The organization has created an experience that relates to that mission.
- Employees know what the organization’s mantra and/or brand promise is, and they’re getting reinforced at some level for fulfilling that mantra.
- Employees are starting to feel empowered.
- Employees receive positive feedback for trying to do the right thing.
- Employees who are involved in creating the organization’s virtual or online experience find ways to make the process easy for the *customer*, not just for internal staff members.
- Significant numbers of employees are now customer-focused. The customer has begun the process of expecting more from the organization or, at a minimum, expecting more of the same.
- Typical day-to-day customer and employee experiences are positive.

When these positive experiences become the norm, confidence starts to build. Once these experiences are predictable and expected, you are moving out of the cult of experience and into the cult of ownership.

A Checklist for the Cult of Ownership

Customers say: “Wow! I had another great experience . . . and another one. There’s a pattern here. It’s predictable. I like this company.”

Employees say: “I know what to do. I have confidence. This is where I belong.”

If any of the following are not checked, you may not be operating in the cult of ownership. (Note: Not all need to be checked for you to be in ownership. Some of the following statements may not be applicable to your company or your situation.)

All that you checked in the cults of alignment and experience *plus...*

- Strong levels of employee engagement are the norm (not the exception) in the organization.
- Higher-than-average retention numbers exist among frontline employees.
- Formal internal processes have been implemented to empower employees to fix problems.
- Regular discussion of Moments of Magic types of stories takes place, and there is substantial praise/reward for people who contribute to those discussions.
- Regular discussion of Moments of Innovation types of ideas occurs, and there is praise/reward for people who contribute to those discussions.
- Questions that resemble Acceleration Questions are regularly posed during team meetings.
- Proactive, habitual preparation for those questions takes place among employees.
- Deep concerns at all levels of the organization for the quality of the customer experience are voiced regularly.
- Employees have developed the ability to bounce back and recover quickly in situations where there’s a challenge with a customer by fixing the problem with a sense of urgency and with the right attitude.

When customers come to expect not just positive, but above-average responses from you, and start recommending you to others as a result, you are moving out of the cult of ownership and into the cult of amazement.

A Checklist for the Cult of Amazement

Customers say: “This company is great. You *must* do business with them!” They become your evangelists!

Employees say: “I love working here!” They tell everyone how great the company is. They become your evangelists!

If any of the following are not checked, you may not be operating in the cult of amazement. (Note: Not all of these need to be checked for you to be in amazement. Some of the following statements may not be applicable to your company or your situation.)

All that you checked in the cults of alignment, experience, and ownership *plus...*

- Your customers act as evangelists for the organization.
- Your employees act as evangelists for the organization.
- The experience you deliver may not be perfect, but it is consistently and predictably *good*—typically above average and sometimes even amazing!
- Customers and employees expect you to meet your own standards, and they trust that those standards are high.
- You have high employee-retention numbers.
- Your organization exceeds people’s expectations in its own unique way.
- Ultimately, your real competition is yourself.

Being in the cult of amazement means you have mastered alignment, experience, and ownership. *Staying* in amazement is the true test; it is very easy to fall out of amazement once you have entered it. One employee or one mistake can make a customer uncertain. Should that happen, you must restore confidence. When customers know they can count on you, even if there are problems, you will always have their loyalty. The customer loyalty formula is:

Great Service + Confidence = Loyalty

And loyalty can eventually turn into evangelism.