Preface and acknowledgments

Building a customer-centric organization is one of the biggest challenges facing today's companies, from IBM to Amazon. Senior executives and marketing managers claim they deliver a superior customer-centric experience, but most customers do not view it the same way. What is the source of this gap? How can firms build truly customer-centric organizations that managers and customers perceive alike? These questions provide the foundation for this book.

Since the Industrial Age, companies have placed more emphasis on *pushing products* instead of *putting customers and relationships at the heart of their organizations*. Yet in recent decades, a highly competitive, ever-changing market landscape has given rise to pressing demands for customer centricity. Advanced technologies and digitalization trends also provide companies with deeper insights into customer needs and preferences, which make managers better able to tailor and customize their offerings. Furthermore, firms increasingly compete to foster long-term relationships with their customers and provide service bundles rather than just manufactured, easily standardized goods. Increasing customer heterogeneity and divergent demands make most mass marketing strategies obsolete anyway. As the marketplace grows more fragmented and volatile, managers realize their need to get closer to customers, but they lack clear guidance on what true customer centricity means or how to achieve this organizational goal.

The *Handbook on Customer Centricity: Strategies for Building a Customer-Centric Organization* seeks to address these critical issues. In our view, a customer-centric company embraces an organization-wide philosophy that focuses on systematic, continuous alignment of its internal architecture, strategy, offerings, and capabilities with external customers. This Handbook draws on the expertise of its contributors by sharing their in-depth knowledge and practical experience. Through this book, the world's leading marketing strategy scholars offer clear insights into the fundamental features of customer centricity and how firms can develop it.

This book spans comprehensive reviews and syntheses of current customer-centricity literature, as well as managerially-relevant examples and case studies, to serve both academic researcher and business practitioner and student audiences. For researchers, it establishes a foundation for developing and applying theoretical frameworks to customer centricity

domains; they will find visual illustrations of conceptual models and thorough literature reviews. In particular, the universal scope of the book makes it a must-read for doctoral and master's students who intend to investigate marketing strategy topics and/or advance practice in this area.

For practitioners, our book provides rich examples and case studies of firms that have reaped the fruits of customer centricity—or failed. The detailed roadmap thus provided can help managers implement customer-centricity initiatives and make more informed business decisions. In support of our decision to organize this handbook, customer centricity often appears at the top of lists of which topics senior executives want to learn more about.

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