

## **Customer-oriented project management: Adding a genuine customer focus to the dominant project-product focus<sup>1</sup>**

**By Alan Stretton**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article is partly prompted by a recent contribution in this journal by Fette 2023, which starts by pointing to an increased focus in business at large in putting the customer first. He goes on to discuss the emergence of Customer Experience (CX) professionals in this context, and describes a number of CX tools which they use to help maximise customer involvement and satisfaction.

The primary concern of Fette's article is with the relevance of this new focus to project management. He demonstrates that it is highly relevant in helping "put the customer at the forefront of the design and delivery of the project". He points out that, in addition to managing delivery of the product of the project, "there's another aspect of project management that can't be overlooked: the customer experience".

This article takes a broader look at some pros and cons – mainly pros – of adding a genuine customer-oriented focus to project management's currently dominant project-product focus. We start with briefly discussing two sets of calls for strong customer-oriented focus in business at large.

### **CALLS FOR STRONG CUSTOMER-ORIENTED FOCUS IN BUSINESS AT LARGE**

#### **Fette 2023: Increased focus on putting the customer first in business at large**

Fette's recent article in this journal is entitled "Putting the customer first: Managing projects from the outside in". He introduces the evolution of the new focus in business at large on the business' customer as follows.

In recent years, a new focus has evolved in business, Customer Experience. ....

He goes on to describe this new focus in a little more detail.

This newfound focus has evolved into a profession and the key component in developing corporate and product strategy. .... Like all professions, Customer Experience professionals have a set of tools and techniques. These tools and techniques provide ways to understand customer behaviour and design solutions with the customer in mind. Businesses are managing the strategy and product development from the "the outside in". Putting customers first is how they operate.

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It was interesting for me to find out about this newfound focus, and the existence of Customer Experience professionals. It was also rather surprising that this is occurring in the context of business at large. I say this because I often associate the latter with such familiar sayings as, “the customer is the business” – and “if you don’t have a customer, you don’t have a business”. If Fette’s comments above had been made only in the context of project management, I would not have been nearly as surprised – as will emerge in following discussions.

However, there is nothing new about calling for a stronger focus on the customer in business – and industry – at large, as now briefly discussed.

### **Levitt 1960: “Marketing myopia”**

In 1960 Theodore Levitt authored an article in the Harvard Business Review entitled “Marketing myopia”, which became rather influential over the next decade or so. Levitt gave many examples where defining an industry in terms of the product it produced, rather than in terms of the needs of customers in the broader marketplace, resulted in severe declines in those industries. Towards the end of his analyses of many different industries over long time frames, Levitt 1960 effectively summarises a key finding thus:

The view that industry is a customer-satisfying process, not a goods-producing process is vital for all businessmen to understand. An industry begins with a customer and his needs, not with a patent, a raw material, or a selling skill. Given the customer’s needs, the industry develops backwards, first concerning itself with the physical delivery of customer satisfactions. Then it moves back further to creating the things by which these satisfactions re in part achieved.

In the context of individual organisations, Levitt summarised the position as follows.

In short, the organisation must learn to think of itself not as producing goods and services but as buying customers, as doing the things that will make people want to do business with it.

### **Lend Lease: 1960 – 1980s**

This last quotation reflects the orientation of Lend Lease, as described in the following quotation by its CEO, and later Chairman, G. J. Dusseldorp, in Clark 2002:92.

‘On the business side, I suppose what made [the Lend Lease group] different (and very successful)’, he told an interviewer in the early 1980s, is that our approach has always been to seek out what the marketplace wants. Most companies tend to be product-oriented. We are not like this. We seek the marketplace needs and then design a product to suit this need’.

Although I do not have the data to support the following, Fette’s article suggests to me that movement towards stronger customer orientations may not have advanced as far as one might reasonably have expected in the sixty plus years since Levitt’s article.

## **A STRONGER CUSTOMER-ORIENTED FOCUS IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT?**

### **Fette 2023: Opportunity to apply the customer-first focus in project management?**

Fette introduces the relevance of this new customer-first focus to project management as follows.

Project Managers have the opportunity to do the same thing. Manage projects “from the outside in” and put their customers or end users first in the design and development of their projects.

One is tempted to ask the questions, “Well, what else?”; “Isn’t that what already happens in project management?” An all-too-common answer to the latter question is “all-too-seldom”. But, before further discussing the situation in project management, I want to make the following note on terminologies in relation to this article.

### **A note on terminologies: Customers, clients, users, and end users**

The last Fette quotation above is about putting “customers or end users” first. Distinctions are often made between customers and end users (e.g. in PMI 2021:S13) – and indeed sometimes between customers and clients on the one hand, and certainly between users and end users on the other.

I do not propose to make particular distinctions in the context of this article. I will not distinguish between customers and clients, nor between users, end users and customers. I will sometimes use the shorthand customers/users to cover either or both the above groups when it seems appropriate to do so.

### **Project management continues to have a dominant product orientation**

*...one of the criticisms often made of the project management literature is its ‘inward-looking perspective...’*  
*(Winter, Andersen et al 2006)*

Over the years, many project management writers have observed that it has an inwards looking perspective, along the lines of the above quotation.

Winter, Smith et al 2006 went a step further. They specifically observed that “product creation [is currently seen] as the prime focus” of project management – an observation which still appears to apply today. The current focus of the project management literature remains strongly on the project itself, and on the product that project management delivers. This has typically been described as a product orientation.

While it is natural for project management to focus on the project and its product, and on continuing efforts to improve performance in this domain, this has the drawback that it tends to inhibit a more holistic appreciation of the wider contexts in which projects are undertaken, and of where projects stand within these contexts.

In particular, such a strong product focus tends to divert attention from the fact that projects are means (which are normally accompanied by other non-project activities) of helping other entities achieve their own goals. These “other entities” are usually described as customers, clients, users, end users, or similar – and their goals as outcomes and benefits. However, in spite of the obvious key importance of the customers/users, their place in project management writings continues to be significantly, and sometimes grossly, under-represented, and undervalued.

## **Comparative neglect of customers and users in the project management literature**

### ***Project stakeholders and customer stakeholders***

If we look at the project management literature, we find that customers and end users are typically regarded as just another group of project stakeholders amongst many. Although there is quite substantial material in the project management literature about project stakeholders, the customers and end users are seldom accorded the prominence that their key importance to all project management processes warrant.

This comparative neglect could be seen as a consequence of a strong product orientation. Project stakeholders are important, but a customer orientation would also add considerations of customers’ stakeholders to the overall picture. This is seldom discussed in the project management literature. However, Winter, Anderson et al 2006 did introduce discussions on the customer’s customers in the context of value creation in what they describe as business projects (e.g. as illustrated in their Figure 2). They also quote from Normann 2001 with regard to reframing perspectives in relation to the customer as follows:

“a particularly fruitful way of reframing in our experience is to focus on the customer of the company as the major stakeholder, and to mentally frame oneself as part of the customer’s business.”

This suggests that adding consideration of the customer’s stakeholders to those of the project has substantial potential to increase value delivered to the customer.

### ***Under-representation of users in project management bodies of knowledge***

Dalcher 2015 commented on the under-representation of users in project management bodies of knowledge quite a few years ago, as follows.

The project management bodies of knowledge offer scant information about dealing with users, understanding their needs, obtaining their feedback, establishing buy in, managing their expectations, or even communicating with users.

This situation does not appear to have changed significantly in more recent times. The current focus of the project management literature remains on the project itself (and the product that project management delivers) rather than on fully understanding and satisfying the needs of the customers and/or end users.

One of the characteristics of the under-representation of customers/users is that they are seldom depicted as being integral components of projects and other work involved in satisfying their needs, and in achieving their outcomes and benefits – let alone put at centre stage, where many would argue they should be placed.

### **Customers/users are sometimes represented as relatively passive recipients of outcomes and benefits bestowed by projects**

Some sectors of the project management literature appear to imply that customers/users are relatively passive recipients of outcomes and benefits bestowed by projects. In recent years there has been a tendency for some project management writers and professional bodies to depict outcomes and benefits as project management responsibilities (e.g. as discussed in Pells 2023).

I regard this as an excessively product-focused perspective, and a misrepresentation of what normally happens in practice – as I discussed in some detail recently in this journal, in Stretton 2023n.

### **However, customers/users are, or should be, heavily involved at all stages**

#### ***Customers/users actively achieve their own outcomes and benefits***

I have consistently argued (e.g. in Stretton 2023n, k, j and elsewhere) that it is customers and/or end users who are responsible for, and are directly involved in, achieving outcomes (and thence subsequent benefits). They actively utilise products of projects, and other non-project work, to achieve their goals – at least in my experience, and as expressed by many other writers, including the following.

....outcomes occur beyond delivery and handover. More critically, benefits accrue over an extended time period as the new or improved asset or system goes into use  
(Dalcher 2016)

... it is use that provides benefits, and not the project ...  
Users are an important, yet often forgotten part of projects – as they are the key to the utilisation of benefits.  
(Dalcher 2015)

Benefits don't get "realised" by Project Managers ..... . Benefits emerge from **Uses**. It is essential for Project and Programme Managers to understand that users of Results are the main actors in any strategy.  
(Driver & Seath 2015)

### ***Customers/users should also be closely involved in project initiation and beyond***

*The project management bodies of knowledge offer scant information about dealing with users, understanding their needs, obtaining their feedback, establishing buy in, managing their expectations, or even communicating with users.*  
(Dalcher 2015)

I have repeated the above quotation from Dalcher 2015 because it very pointedly highlights the absence of any real consideration of customers/users in some of the most important documents in the project management literature.

This contrasts with the position taken by Fette 2023 in his discussions of project management and customer experience, in which he says,

Your customer should have a seat at the table as your project team moves from concept through completion – ..... Without putting the customer in the equation, you may not achieve the best results if you don't provide good service and developing strong working partnerships with the customer base.

As will be seen shortly, this was the approach taken by Civil & Civic with what it called its "Project Management Services", which engaged the customer from concept through completion.

### **A genuinely strong customer focus is desirable, but often not so easy to achieve**

How could project management add genuine customer-focused perspectives to its project-product focus? I don't believe there is any "silver bullet" answer to this question.

I have endeavoured to persuade many project managers to this perspective over many years, but with only limited success. Some believed it was not important. Some others believed that they already had such a perspective, although it was clear to me that they did not understand what a genuine customer focus actually involved. I concluded that this was probably because they had not worked in a genuinely customer-focused environment, and therefore have no direct experiential understanding of what it entailed.

This has led me to the thought that it might be useful to describe the customer-focused environment of Civil & Civic in my quarter of a century plus with it, in the hope that an actual case study of its highly successful undertakings at the time might help illustrate some of the key attributes of such an environment.

However, before doing so, we will distinguish between production-based owner organisations (OOs), and project-based supplier organisations (SOs) like Civil & Civic. In earlier articles in this journal I have defined them as follows.

- **Production-based owner organisations (OOs)** derive most (if not all) of their revenue and/or benefits from producing and selling products and services. They utilize projects to create new, or improve existing, products and services; enter new markets; or otherwise improve or change their organizations.
- **Project-based supplier organisations (SOs)** derive most (if not all) of their revenue and/or other benefits from creating and delivering projects / programs to external customers.

### ***Building genuine customer orientation into production-based organisations?***

Here I am on relatively unfamiliar ground, as I have never actively worked in a typical production-based owner organisation. From an outsider's point of view, one might reasonably expect that production-based organisations would normally tend to have a strong customer orientation, particularly in relation to marketing and selling their products and/or services. However, as noted above, Fette's article clearly indicates that this is not the case in many such organisations. Further, I simply do not know how project managers in OOs identify their customers, or how strongly they focus on them.

However, I have had considerable experience working in project-based supplier organisations, as now discussed.

### ***A strong customer focus comes naturally in many project-based organisations***

Project-based supplier organisations are usually very conscious indeed of the importance of customers in the project context, if for no other reason than if they do not have customers, they do not have a business. However, the way such organisations actually relate with their customers depends a great deal on the type of project-related services they offer.

For supplier organisations that only operate in the construction tender market, the relationship will generally be somewhat indirect, and often adversarial.

On the other hand, if the services include project development and delivery, an entirely different type of relationship is needed for mutual success – one which involves a strong and ongoing focus on the customers/users.

Rather than just talking about this further in generalised terms, I will try to illustrate what is involved in a genuine customer-oriented focus by recounting what actually happened in Civil & Civic and Lend Lease from the mid-1950s through to the 1980s, as a kind of case study.

We first look at how the former developed its operations to focus increasingly on customers and their business needs. We will then look at the impact of a general management education program from 1963 in all Lend Lease companies, and of a marketing education programs from 1965, both of which helped consolidate Civil & Civic's profound customer orientation.

It is hoped that this case study may encourage other project managers and their organisations to genuinely increase their focus on customers, and indeed on marketing management at large.

## **CASE STUDY: CIVIL & CIVIC, LEND LEASE, CUSTOMERS, AND MARKETING**

### **Early Civil Civic recognitions of, and responses to, customers' business needs**

Chronologically, we start with what actually happened in practice with early recognitions by Civil & Civic (C&C) that the design part of the design/tender system was not delivering value to customers; that some customers needed help in clarifying their business needs before committing to projects; and with pro-active C&C responses.

- C&C initially operated as a building construction contractor in Australia from the early 1950s;
- As a builder within, and also occasionally as a client of, the design/tender system, it was recognised that inefficient designs were common, as there were generally few, if any, incentives to encourage more efficient designs;
- This meant that customers were being short-changed in terms of value in the design stages of their projects;
- C&C's entrepreneurial and innovative CEO (G. J. Dusseldorp) began offering a design-and-construct service in the middle-to-late 1950s, with a particular focus on building in value to customers by more efficient design;
- By the early 1960s it was recognised that many customers first needed help in clarifying their basic business needs. This led to C&C developing Client Needs Determination services to help clients clarify their needs. I have discussed this process in several previous articles in this journal, most recently in Stretton 2022k;
- Operationally this led to governance by Project Control Groups (PCGs), which included high level client and C&C managers, in what was effectively a broad partnership arrangement – also discussed in more detail in Stretton 2022k;
- The key to this form of client orientation was that the customers themselves were an integral part of pre-project and project development and execution stages.

One suspects that Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) organisations that supply front end loading (FEL) and pre-FEL services in major project contexts might have developed the latter services in somewhat similar ways, by pro-actively responding to additional perceived needs of customers.

We now move on to look at two major internal education initiatives which partly overlapped the above, and provided additional background support for customer-related initiatives

### **Introduction of broad management education program and framework from 1963**

- Civil & Civic became a subsidiary company of Lend Lease in 1961;
- Lend Lease acquired and internally promulgated the L. A. Allen management education program in all its subsidiary companies from 1963, into the 1980s;
- This established a commonly understood management framework and a common language across all group companies, and across their various disciplines;

- This had particular relevance to C&C projects, which were basically run as separate businesses in its own right. The C&C project managers therefore benefited by having the scope of their education extended to cover general management topics relevant to their role as business managers of their projects;
- The relationship between general management and project management was discussed in some detail in my series of seven articles in this journal on general management functions and activities, and their relevance to the management of projects (starting with Stretton 2015g).

We now come to the more specifically customer-oriented of the two major internal educational initiatives in Lend Lease up to the mid-1960s.

### **Addition of Lend Lease marketing education program from 1965**

The Lend Lease marketing education program was originated and promulgated in-company. The entire package, with an accompanying Manual, was put together by my colleague, the late Barry Rutter, with very substantial support from A. Howard and N. F. Noonan. The marketing education program was put in place in all companies of the Lend Lease group from 1965, and was continued well into the 1980s.

Most of the Lend Lease group companies at the time were suppliers of goods and services within the Australian building industry. It was therefore quite natural for them to be strongly aware of their customers. What the marketing education program did was to provide a coherent structure for these companies to improve and enhance the extent and value of their services to external customers.

Before moving on to discuss this program in a little more detail, I want to make the following distinction between marketing and selling.

### ***Distinguishing between marketing and selling***

One of the first times I publicly discussed marketing in the project management context was in an article in *PM Word Today* (Stretton 2009h) entitled “Adding marketing perspectives to program/project management?”. A reviewer commented that many readers might well associate marketing with selling – perhaps with someone like used car salesmen in mind – and could tend to downgrade it accordingly.

This prompted me to include the following quotation from Levitt 1960, which distinguishes between the two as follows.

The difference between marketing and selling is more than semantic. Selling focused on the needs of the seller, marketing on the needs of the buyer. Selling is preoccupied with the seller’s needs to convert his product into cash; marketing with the idea of satisfying the needs of the customer by means of the product and the whole cluster of things associated with creating, delivering, and finally consuming it.

I have previously discussed an example from Civil & Civic of the marketing approach. Rutter used to include the descriptor “helping the customer make a wise buying decision” as epitomising the marketing approach. This latter descriptor may sound a bit “over the top”, but quite accurately describes the example from Civil & Civic which Clark 2002 described as follows (as I recorded in Stretton 2019c).

In another case, a commission to design and construct extensions to a factory was turned on its head when the Civil & Civic-led project team assigned to the task came up with an alternative plan. By internally reconfiguring the existing premises, the project team discovered, the client’s needs could be satisfied in a more cost-effective way.

I had previously discussed this example in rather more detail in Stretton 2016m, in which I noted that

C&C helped him [the client] plan it, but did not charge the owner for what was a small service, albeit a high value-added one. An (unexpected) outcome was a client who was so satisfied that he became, in effect, one of the best ever unpaid salesmen for C&C!

We now go on to look at the marketing education program within Civil & Civic in a little more detail.

### ***The marketing education program within Civil & Civic***

The original Lend Lease marketing manual was modified and expanded in 1976 to better accommodate the particular circumstances of Civil & Civic as they had evolved to that point. Some further revisions were made in 1978 and 1979. I still have a copy of the latter manual (Rutter 1979), which comprises some 85 typed pages, covering the following main topics.

- The functions of marketing (5 pp)
- Client needs determination (CND) (7 pp)
- Attitude creation (5 pp)
- Securing the order and delivering the goods or services (17 pp)
- Giving satisfaction (5 pp)
- Marketing research (9 pp)
- Marketing planning (22 pp)
- Glossary of terms (4 pp)
- Appendices (11pp)

The CND component basically followed the processes which had already been developed and implemented with C&C, as already discussed above, and as discussed in more detail in Stretton 2022k.

Marketing research had already been under way in some Lend Lease companies for some time. I became closely involved in this for some seven years from 1965, in my part-time role as Secretary of the Lend Lease Group Development Committee – i.e. the top level Lend Lease strategic planning group. I spent a good deal of this time searching for potential opportunities in a wide range of market places, as discussed in more detail in Stretton 2009h.

## **Some perspectives on the Civil & Civic's customer orientation, and marketing**

### ***Extending and formalising marketing planning and management initiatives***

As already indicated under the first subheading of this major case study section, many of the Civil & Civic project managers already had strong customer orientations, particularly via CND services, well before the marketing education program was introduced to the company in 1965. However, beneficial consequences of the latter included a wider understanding of the importance of the customer by many more people in Civil & Civic, and the development of more cohesive and better managed marketing planning and implementation initiatives.

For example, in earlier articles in this journal, I have quoted Clark 2002:93, who described Civil & Civic's involvement in helping a client in the educational sector establish its strategic objectives, supported by structured financial and business plans to achieve them, as follows.

....within a year the Sisters at Loreto Convent, Kirribilli, guided by Dusseldorp [Civil & Civic's CEO] and his team, had come up with an integrated business plan for the school's complete rebuilding and expansion – supported by the first structured financial plan in the Catholic education sector – .....

These actions were taken well before the introduction of the marketing educational program. Subsequently, and overlapping with the latter, as recorded in Clark 2002:94:

.... Civil & Civic put in place a comprehensive marketing plan targeting the private education sector. .... Supported by the good word from satisfied customers like Loreto [see above], this led to some forty more commissions over the next ten years for the design and construction of schools right across the country [Australia].

Similar marketing planning and management initiatives were put in place in many other market sectors, particularly following the marketing education programs. As I recorded in Stretton 2019c,

The extent of the demand for helping clients determine their real needs was such that Civil & Civic developed a substantial team of specialists in various sectors to cater for these on-going demands, including the education, industrial, health, office, retail and leisure sectors. ....

### ***Frequent customer need for help in integrating new ventures in practice***

I was not actively involved in managing any of these new ventures in Civil & Civic. However, as a director of the company, I was a lively observer, and had frequent discussions with key managers in various sectors.

In particular, I recall some discussions with the key manager of the healthcare sector, I.K. Gauld, who made some pertinent observations in relation to extensions to existing hospitals, and to new hospitals, along the following lines. Gauld observed that the healthcare sector was very substantially fragmented, and in one sense was becoming even more fragmented, with ever-increasing areas of specialisation being developed in this domain. This made the task of ongoing management in this sector difficult enough in its own right, let alone the management of new ventures, such as major extensions to existing facilities.

From his point of view in trying to help develop plans for new hospitals, or major extensions to existing hospitals, Gauld and his team found it a very challenging task indeed to try and reconcile different needs of various specialisations, and to come up with solutions which were the most satisfactory for all parties. In his own words, his task was to help integrate the needs of a multitude of different parties most effectively.

This type of customer need for help in integrating new ventures in practice was not confined to the hospital sector – although it was most pronounced in the latter. This could well suggest that, on a broader level, customer needs for help in integrating some aspects of their operations could be quite substantial. If so, project management is well placed to provide such help, in view of the fact that integrative skills are part and parcel of project management.

As will be apparent from the above, Civil & Civic did not regard itself as a project management specialist focused on the provision of projects, but as a facilitator to help customers clarify their business and/or strategic needs, and to help them achieve these needs – as was referred to earlier under the sub-heading *Lend Lease: 1960 – 1980s*.

The fact that this often involved extensions of its services into the broader domain of assistance with organisational strategic planning was a win-win situation for both Civil & Civic and its customers.

I don't have any doubt that Civil & Civic's strong customer orientation, and its ability to provide customer satisfaction, was a key factor in its becoming a premier organisation in Australia from the 1960s through the 1980s. Civil & Civic was often described as "the university of the Australian construction industry". Many of our staff were "poached" by competitors, but their contributions to their new employers were typically constrained by the fact that our competitors did not normally have such a strong customer orientation, nor many of the attendant procedures aimed specifically at customer satisfaction.

These examples of pervasive customer-focused orientations in Lend Lease/ Civil & Civic, and of the benefits that both parties derived there-from, may hopefully encourage others in the project management community to seek to add a genuine focus on the customer/ user to their assets – together with an appreciation of their potential for adding correspondingly broader ranges of services to benefit their customers/users, and the community at large.

## **SUMMARY/DISCUSSION**

This article was partly prompted by Fette 2023, who pointed to an increased focus in business at large in putting the customer first, and discussed the emergence of Customer Experience (CX) professionals in this context, and a number of CX tools which they use to help maximise customer involvement and satisfaction. I also noted that Levitt 1960 had long ago pointed to a need for industry, and organisations, to put customers first, but that Fette's observations indicate that there is still some way to go.

We then discussed the relevance of a stronger customer-oriented focus in project management, starting with Fette's thoughts about the opportunity to apply the customer-first focus to project management. It was shown that project management continues to have a dominant product orientation, and that the project management literature continues to grossly under-represent the roles of customers and users. Indeed, the latter are sometimes represented as relatively passive recipients of outcomes and benefits bestowed by projects. However, others, including Fette contend that customers /users are, or should be, heavily involved at all stages from concept through completion.

From this, it was contended that a genuinely strong customer focus is desirable, but that it is often not so easy to achieve. I was unable to contribute anything from direct experience in relation to production-based organisations, but could offer some thoughts from extensive experience in project-based service organisations, which happen to better lend themselves to developing a strong customer-oriented focus.

I elected to use a direct case study of the customer focus which was developed in Civil & Civic and Lend Lease to put the case for the advantages of adding a genuine such orientation to an organisation's assets.

We looked at Civil Civic recognitions of, and responses to, customers' business needs from the mid-1950s – an approach which owed much to its innovative and entrepreneurial CEO of the time. We then looked at the introduction of a broad management education program and framework in all Lend Lease companies from 1963, and then at the addition of Lend Lease marketing education program from 1965.

After distinguishing between marketing and selling, we looked in a little more detail at the marketing education program within Civil & Civic. Although there was already a strong customer focus in the company, the marketing education program helped provide a consolidated structure for Civil & Civic to improve and enhance the value and extent of its services to external customers.

With regard to the latter, I expanded a little on the range of additional marketing planning and management initiatives that were opened up, and particularly mentioned the frequent need of customers for help in integrating new ventures in practice

Overall, I can only hope that some may find this article, and this case study, persuasive enough for them to take positive steps towards adding a genuine customer/user orientation to their toolkits and services. Judging from our experience in Lend Lease, increased knowledge of basic marketing skills could well facilitate such an outcome, and is broadly recommended as one type of positive step towards this end. But, however it is done, the most basic step is to facilitate an appreciation that all projects exist to help customers/end users achieve their objectives, and that the latter should therefore occupy centre stage.

When this has been achieved, Fette 2023 has pointed to the following Customer Experience (CX) tools that project managers can then leverage.

- Design thinking: *Empathise; Define; Ideate; Prototype; Test*
- Customer journey mapping: *(Six steps)*
- Measuring success: *Net promoter score (NPS), Customer satisfaction score (CSAT), Customer effort score (CES)*

But, the first major step is to develop and consolidate a genuine customer-oriented focus amongst all members of project management teams, which has been the primary concern of this article.

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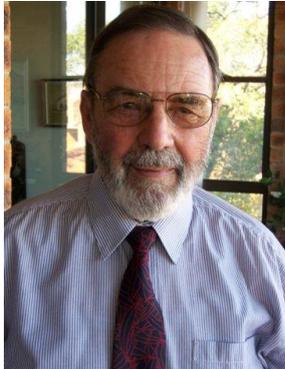
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## About the Author



### **Alan Stretton, PhD**

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**Alan Stretton** is one of the pioneers of modern project management. In 2006 he retired from a position as Adjunct Professor of Project Management in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), Australia, which he joined in 1988 to develop and deliver a Master of Project Management program. Prior to joining UTS, Mr. Stretton worked in the building and construction industries in Australia, New Zealand and the USA for some 38 years, which included the project management of construction, R&D, introduction of information and control systems, internal management education programs and organizational change projects. Alan has degrees in Civil Engineering (BE, Tasmania) and Mathematics (MA, Oxford), and an honorary PhD in strategy, programme and project management (ESC, Lille, France). Alan was Chairman of the Standards (PMBOK) Committee of the Project Management Institute (PMI®) from late 1989 to early 1992. He held a similar position with the Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM), and was elected a Life Fellow of AIPM in 1996. He was a member of the Core Working Group in the development of the Australian National Competency Standards for Project Management. He has published 250+ professional articles and papers. Alan can be contacted at [alanailene@bigpond.com.au](mailto:alanailene@bigpond.com.au).

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