

Press Release

BBDO Consulting study: Crisis deeply changes customers' expectations

Management Consulting examines the impacts of the crisis on value concepts and customers' expectations/65% of the persons questioned think German society is profit-oriented/57% wish more credibility/95% expect "reliability" of the ideal enterprise /Change from profit maximising to a "human capitalism" requires entrepreneurial rethinking along the whole value generation chain.

Düsseldorf, 15 May, 2009 – In the context of the global financial and economic crisis, fundamental structural and societal changes are taking place in Germany, too. The basic needs of the customers change deeply and, as a consequence, their expectations towards enterprises, institutions and brands. This is the essential result of a study carried out by the international strategy consulting company BBDO Consulting which enquired, within the framework of a representative questioning, into the impacts of the crisis on the value concepts of the population, the customers' expectations towards the ideal enterprise and the customers' expectations towards the financial services sector.

Societal Change

As to assessing the present societal situation, the most frequently attributes used were profit maximising (65%) and power (56%). In contrast, there is the wish for credibility (57%), for security and a sense of responsibility (56%), as well as for equality of opportunities (54%) and family friendliness (53%). The main societal objectives are: Health, jobs provision and assuring economic security and prosperity. The population is increasingly favouring the family, care and simplicity while the "elbow mentality", performance and property play a minor role. 94% require "more responsibility in our relationships to each other". As for the personal values, honesty (71%), security (65%) and confidence were rated highest. The result is a withdrawal into privacy. Partnerships and social networks give the impression of a secure future while everything that escapes from the personal sphere of influence seems to be insecure and uncontrollable. Individuality (22%) and social recognition (16%) become less important. The willingness to take risks lies at merely 3%: Even religion, representing just (9%), cannot afford real hold.

Expectations towards the ideal enterprise

The expectations towards the “ideal enterprise” expressed by the persons questioned show that, within the two last years, a distinct change has taken place. Here as well, the attribute “humaneness” takes the first rank with a 95% approval, an increase of 6%, whereas performance orientation suffers the biggest loss representing a 4% fall down to 40%. Humaneness, closeness to customers and confidence see the biggest increase in significance. So, the ideal enterprise is a “part of the family”. Furthermore, from the customers point of view, the ideal enterprise focuses on a good price-performance ratio (88%), on high quality (87%) and on attending customers needs.

Expectations towards the ideal financial service provider

57% of the persons questioned rated the following traits under the top five: “trustworthy and honest” (42%), “competent and reliable”(40%), “sincere” and “close to customer” (25%). Apart from a good price-performance ratio, what distinguishes the ideal financial services provider is closeness to the customer, a high degree of transparency and good counselling, whereas only 7% of the persons questioned value a great variety of services as particularly important. In the last two years, a shift of the financial priorities can be observed, too: the need of keeping savings for emergencies (56%, a plus of 16 percentage points), as well as for the financial backing of the family (35%, a plus of 11 percentage points) show the highest rises. Expenses, e.g. for a long holiday trip, are postponed for now (20%). In addition to favourable conditions, customers wish reliability and confidence concerning consulting, personal attendance and the simplicity of the offers, but one third does not accept extra charges for good attendance and personal advice.

Conclusion

The enterprises must set the course for essential changes: Away from the pure profit maximising to a “human capitalism” positioned at the corporate governance level and considering the customers as equal partners. Because understanding the customers needs becomes an absolute key qualification. Another success factor is complexity reduction. In the crisis, consumers are overstrained, confused and seek orientation. Less, clearer and more honest are the terms of the years to come. Moreover, the point is to regain confidence via a competent, reliable and sincere dialogue. Above all, financial services providers should use their knowledge of the change of values to develop new products and provisional programmes for emergencies - not just for retirement provisions - because life does not proceed linearly.

These essential findings must be taken into consideration along the whole value generation chain, must be syntonised to all stakeholder groups in the marketing and communication policy, as well as controlled throughout the acquisition process. In addition to this, the development of new appropriate acquisition instruments is just as required as a fundamental remodelling of customers’ partnerships, a new “taking-care-of” instead of a trivial CRM.

“The crisis bears the chance of putting the customers’ relationships on a new footing. Enterprises seizing the calls for honesty, security and confidence and entering into a serious dialogue with their customers take a real chance of distinguishing themselves and of differentiation. The point is to develop and implement quickly sustainable measures derived from the findings,” Udo Klein-Bölting, CEO BBDO Consulting, commented on the study results.

Study design

Based on a representative online questioning, BBDO Consulting asked 1,000 persons, aged 16 years and more, about their value concepts, their expectations towards the ideal enterprise (today and two years ago) as well as about their expectations towards the financial services sector in times of crisis. All persons questioned have a private bank account. The survey took place in April 2009.

BBDO Consulting

BBDO Consulting is the international management consultancy for market-oriented business management. Together with its clients, BBDO Consulting develops and implements strategies for market adaptation and translates them into tangible, behaviour-influencing principles and systems. International blue chip clients and market leaders have trusted its unparalleled expertise in the areas of strategic brand and customer management since the company’s inception in 2000. BBDO Consulting builds upon the comprehensive know-how of its staff from both consultancy and industry. Excellent knowledge of local markets combined with a global outlook contributes to their success in offices in Düsseldorf, Johannesburg, Madrid, Moscow, Munich, Shanghai, Tel Aviv and Zurich. BBDO Consulting is part of BBDO Worldwide, one of the leading international agency networks with over 300 offices in 77 countries.

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