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For Immediate Release

CUSTOMER-DRIVEN DISRUPTION
Five Strategies To Stay Ahead of the Curve

By Suman Sarkar

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“Suman Sarkar redirects the focus back to what made your business a business: its customers . . . this book is a handy guide to shaking up your innovation strategy.”

—Crystal Kadakia, author of *The Millennial Myth*

“Customers *will* tell you how to make your business thrive and win the future—if you learn how to listen. This book explains how to open your ears.”

—Jeanne Bliss, President, CustomerBliss

**EVOLVING CUSTOMER NEEDS – NOT TECHNOLOGY –
DRIVES DISRUPTION AND INNOVATION**

**In CUSTOMER-DRIVEN DISRUPTION, Expert Suman Sarkar
Provides Five Strategies for Anticipating, Innovating,
and Profiting from Customers’ Changing Demands**

The rise of the smartphone, fast fashion, and ride-sharing. The decline of industry stalwarts like GE, IBM, and Coca-Cola. Conventional wisdom says that technology is propelling the disruption that is roiling the markets. But business expert Suman Sarkar says this belief is dead wrong. Sarkar contends that disruption is, in fact, driven by changing customer needs – and that only those companies that truly understand their customers can succeed. In his new book, **CUSTOMER-DRIVEN DISRUPTION: Five Strategies to Stay Ahead of the Curve** (Berrett-Koehler, September 2019), Sarkar presents a road map for anticipating, innovating, and profiting from customers’ ever-shifting demands.

“If you’re not focused on your customers, they will leave as soon as they find a viable

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alternative, and their departure is only a matter of time,” warns Sarkar, who has advised leaders at dozens of Fortune 500 companies. He asserts that too many executives concentrate on short-term performance. This often means mergers and acquisitions, incremental innovation, marketing, and global expansion – which, over the long-term, only widen the gulf between the company and its customers.

These ill-fated approaches are built on an outdated understanding of the market – a time when baby boomers were swayed by advertising, when developing nations wanted whatever was “American,” and when consumerism was the rule of the day. In

CUSTOMER-DRIVEN DISRUPTION, Sarkar discusses the very different ways in which millennials and Generation Z approach the world and the marketplace – influenced by peer reviews, driven by the desire for personalized products and service, and unwilling to delay gratification.

Illustrated with examples from companies such as Amazon, WalMart, Under Armour, Tesla, Sephora, Zara, and Qatar Airways, as well as from his own clients in such industries as wireless, medical devices, banking, and retail, the author details five strategies that any company can adapt in their own push to connect with, and capitalize on, customer needs.

They are:

Win With Current Customers Before Chasing After New Ones – New customers are expensive to acquire, and typically produce less revenue than would current, satisfied customers. Yet, when faced with declining revenues, most companies focus on finding new customers. Advising against loyalty and customer retention programs, Sarkar explains how to encourage existing customers to buy more. It comes down to identifying customers by segments (not the way most companies currently do); determining what services are valued by each segment; creating a range of services based on these differing needs; and pricing the new service appropriately.

Personalization Is Not A Luxury – Mass-produced products aren’t on anyone’s wish list anymore. Today, customers want personalized products and services at reasonable prices. To make personalization affordable, leaders must think completely differently about offerings, create flexible operations – like distributed manufacturing and separate supply chains – and reduce waste. “Whoever masters the art of producing affordable, personalized products will enjoy a significant competitive advantage in the future,” writes the author.

Customers Won't Wait – Most companies spend an inordinate amount of time designing products or services. Indeed, the whole cycle can take so long that by the time the product launches, customer needs have changed or more nimble competitors have captured the market. Sarkar explains how firms in all industries can learn to quickly develop products or solutions that address customers' changing needs, speed up the supply chain, reduce sales promotion, and produce what their customers really want to buy.

Good Enough Is No Longer Good Enough – Now that the public judges products based on reviews and peer recommendations, quality is more critical than ever before. This means offering a level of performance customers can't resist and the competition can't beat. The author addresses how to achieve quality without prohibitive cost by thinking outside the box, and argues that quality control shouldn't happen at the end of the manufacturing process, but all along the route – including across the supply chain.

Disregard Strategies 1 Through 4 – “What makes you great today won't necessarily keep you great tomorrow, unless you and your strategies evolve with your customers. That applies even to these first four strategies,” writes the author. He explains how successful companies constantly reinvent and reimagine using 360 triangulation and partner workshops, empowering employee teams, and encouraging attention to detail, and points to such continuous reinvention success stories as Disney and Haier, the Chinese manufacturer.

“Disruption can be a death sentence to a business, but it doesn't have to be. You can use the threat to focus on what's important—your customers,” says Sarkar. **CUSTOMER-DRIVEN DISRUPTION** provides a blueprint for triumphing over disruption by retooling your organization's entire approach – from products, services, and operations to incentives, organization, and culture.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SUMAN SARKAR, author of **CUSTOMER-DRIVEN DISRUPTION**, is a partner with Three S Consulting, located in San Francisco. He has worked with clients internationally in financial services, pharmaceuticals, technology, consumer goods, retail, outsourcing, and government. Before launching his consulting practice, he was a management consultant at A.T. Kearney and worked at Procter & Gamble. He holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from IIT, Kharagpur, India, and an MBA from UCLA in strategy and finance. He is the author of *The Supply Chain Revolution*.