



**Wharton MBA Program for Executives
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Customer Centricity at the Leading Edge of Analytics and Technology: Learning from the Nordic Countries

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The concept of “customer centricity,” i.e., that not all customers are created equal, is gaining credibility and traction. Many firms – and entire industries – are coming to the realization that understanding and leveraging the behavioral differences across customers can potentially be more sustainably profitable than the more conventional product-centric thinking that continues to dominate today’s business landscape.

At the heart of this transformation are three critical ingredients: *data*, *analytics*, and *technology*. Using granular customer-level data is allowing firms greater visibility into customer interactions, their use of social media, biometrics, geolocation, etc., as mechanisms to enhance existing business models and to create new ones. These resources and skills allow a firm to make careful, data-driven decisions about which customers to go after and what kinds of services to provide them. The resulting tactics can and should extend beyond marketing to virtually every other part of the organization, e.g., R&D, accounting/finance (through the emerging notion of “customer-based corporate valuation”), supply chain management, and HR policies. Thus, for many companies, the key to profitable growth lies in successfully harnessing and further developing the tools, organizational structures, and corporate culture that can facilitate these capabilities.

Companies in the Nordic region have been developing/adopting these approaches aggressively, and in ways that are quite different relative to other parts of the world. The unique cultures there are a key to creating new organizations that can flourish right out of the gate, and to help established ones adapt and change successfully. The business environment in these countries, which includes corporate operations as well as government and non-profit entities, has encouraged this kind of firm behavior. We will meet with a wide variety of companies and other organizations in Helsinki and Stockholm to learn what they are doing and how they are embracing customer centricity (and the data, analytics, and technology that drive it). Companies in new and old industries excelling at this approach (or at various stages of moving towards it) are prevalent in both cities.

Ultimately, the course will examine how customer centricity enables companies to change their interaction with consumers, vendors, government, and other ecosystem players in facilitating these changes. Our takeaway learnings will be fresh and new, and will provide us with many broad strategic

ideas as well as specific tactical ones that will be worthy of consideration for our own organizations when we get back home.

Requirements:

- 45% - Individual final paper – more details below.
- 35% - Individual participation in lectures, discussions, and company visits.
- 20% - Pre-trip assignment – Canvas quiz on customer centricity.

Pre-trip assignment:

I will post a Canvas quiz very soon – details to follow. You must complete this quiz by September 4, and collaboration is not permitted.

Final paper:

Each student should choose any three organizations that we visit during the trip (with the constraint that there must be at least one from each country) and discuss their commonalities in how they approach the spirit and specifics of customer centricity. What are the CC-related themes that set them apart from the other organizations? How are these themes/commonalities conveyed through tactics, metrics, internal/external communications, and other tangible details? How are they viewed in their respective sectors, and how do they compare to equivalent firms in the US (and elsewhere)?

The paper should be 8-10 pages (double-spaced), excluding tables, displays or references, using Times New Roman 12 point font, and it will be due October 11th.

This is strictly an individual assignment. Of course it's fine (and encouraged) for students to talk about the various organizations in general, but determining these core themes and the subset of companies that illustrate them should be done purely on your own.