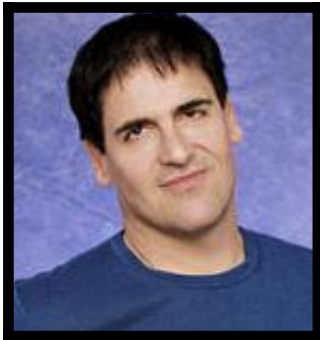


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# **Rebuttal to Mark Cuban: Listen to Your Customers, But Smartly and With a Grain of Salt**

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Here I go again disagreeing with Mark Cuban....

On his blog yesterday the Dallas Mavericks owner advised his readers to never listen to their customers, to shut them out completely from the decision-making process. He says not following this advice and letting customers in gets entrepreneurs caught up in a game of cat and mouse with their competitors, which can undermine their "competitive positioning."

I actually think Cuban is right when he says that customers don't know everything, and that it's not their job "to know what they don't know." Still, business leaders need to strike a balance and at least keep their ears open.

I don't think, after all, that 800 out of 1,000 U.S. adults recently surveyed by Opinion Research – who say they want companies to tell them what's in their products and explain their development process – are wrong. Think about what shutting out 80% of your potential market share would do to your bottom line.

**Instead of ignoring customers, I think companies are better served by developing processes for listening smartly to them**, and also incorporating their feedback – when warranted. Sometimes it won't be applicable.

Effectively listening to customers is such a strong best practice that it's a viable business model. Try convincing Diane Hessian, CEO of Communispace Corporation, otherwise. The Winning Workplaces Best Boss has built a \$26 million dollar business designing market research online communities (aka, *listening* tools) for more than 130 clients, according to Forrester Research.

Finally, I think it's important to mention, as I've written about before, that there's a definite through line to increased customer engagement and satisfaction that starts with great employee engagement and team building, which relies on *listening* as the catalyst.

**Whom do you agree with more, Mark Cuban or me? Why?**

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