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Module Nine:
Practical CSM Framework Phase 7: Engagement Evaluation
Workbook One

Module 9, is all about the seventh and final phase of the Practical CSM Framework, namely Phase 7: Engagement Evaluation. In some ways this first workbook is a continuation and an extension of our previous conversations in Module 8 which of course was all about customer value realization. In Module 8 we looked at *what* to say to the customer in terms of what information is useful and relevant to them. In this workbook we will be looking at when and how often to say those things, and in particular we will be examining the concept of the Executive Business Review or EBR.

In our second workbook for this module we will be breaking fresh ground by reflecting on and evaluating the relative success of the engagement not from the perspective of customer value but from two other perspectives, namely those of the CSM's company and of the CSM him or herself.

Before you watch the videos, please make sure you have read Chapter Eleven: Practical CSM Framework Phase 7: Engagement Evaluation from your training manual.

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Practical CSM Framework Phase 7: Engagement Evaluation – Video One Agenda

➤ Executive Business Review...
   ➤ Overview
   ➤ Cadence and Attendees
   ➤ Structure
   ➤ Executive Business Review Best Practice
   ➤ Getting Senior Stakeholders to Attend

The topics for discussion in the first half of Workbook One are all related to the Executive Business Review or EBR and they are as follows:

Overview of the Executive Business Review

Cadence and Attendees for the Executive Business Review

Structure of an Executive Business Review

Getting Senior Stakeholders to Attend

Practical CSM Framework Phase 7: Engagement Evaluation – Video One Agenda

➢ The Engagement Evaluation Process...

  ➢ Why Evaluate What We Do?

  ➢ What Value has the Customer Received?

  ➢ What Value has the Supplier Received?

  ➢ What Value has the CSM Received?

  ➢ Using the Engagement Evaluation Tool

  ➢ Don't Forget to Celebrate!

In the second half of the workbook we take a look at the engagement evaluation process, and in particular we discuss the following:

Why Evaluate What We Do?

What Value has the Customer Received from this Engagement?

What Value has the Supplier Received from this Engagement?

What Value has the CSM Received from this Engagement?

Using the Engagement Evaluation Tool

Don't Forget to Celebrate!

Overview of the Executive Business Review

➢ In Phase 6: Value realization the initiative's cadence will change from intensive activity levels over short timescales to mild activity levels over long timescales

➢ The new cadence requires a new communications plan

➢ The "executive business review" (EBR) provides regular contact between key business decision makers and the supplier's Account Manager and/or CSM

Once the initiative has moved beyond Practical CSM Framework Phases 1 to 5 (where as we know from our previous training the greatest share of the CSM's work with a customer is completed over a relatively short timescale) and is now into the typically much longer timescale associated with Phase 6 (where things have steadied up a little and the customer is now using the CSM's company's solution to generate business value on an ongoing basis) the CSM needs to agree a new cadence of contact and communication with the customer's key stakeholders.

Historically the cadence has been a quarterly one, and so one common name for this ongoing meeting is a QBR or Quarterly Business Review. However, whilst once per Quarter might be the appropriate cadence, equally it may not. Sometimes an annual review is all that a customer will require or have the appetite for, and sometimes other periods might make sense, so rather than defining the cadence within the name, let's use the term EBR or Executive Business Review to describe this meeting, as that leaves the cadence open to discussion and negotiation between CSM and customer stakeholders each time.

The purpose of the EBR is to provide a regular touchpoint between the customer's key business decision makers and the supplier's Account manager and/or CSM. This touchpoint enables both parties – customer and supplier – to come together to share information and to determine any needs or requirements that come out of this information sharing process.

Overview of the Executive Business Review

➢ The purpose of the EBR is to brief executives (ie senior decision makers within the customer's organization) on to progress to date and apprise them of major upcoming activities

➢ It should be kept at the strategic level and should focus on business related information that is useful to the intended audience – senior decision makers

Note that the concept here is very much meant to be of a meeting that has an executive business focus to it. This is not necessarily the time therefore to provide in depth technical information on a new service feature, or to delve into the specific training requirements of a particular impacted user group, or to analyze each individual step in a business process. Rather it is to overview the general progress made towards ultimate outcome attainment since the last EBR meeting, to uncover any major changes from either party that might need to be taken into account when considering what needs to be done in the upcoming period, and then to agree what does need to be done in the light of this information.

Cadence and Attendees for the Executive Business Review

➢ To determine the appropriate frequency of EBRs, CSMs should consider the informational and decision making needs of the customer's senior leaders

➢ It is also worth considering best use of the CSM's own time in preparing for and conducting EBRs

➢ Keep the attendee list short and at the senior level, with others only invited as necessary

The way to determine the appropriate cadence for EBRs is to consider the relative value that both parties (ie both the customer and the CSM's own company) will gain from each meeting. It could be argued that as a general rule, "the more time you spend in front of your customer's business decision makers the better", however this is not entirely true. Certainly the CSM will need to meet them and to stay in touch with them, but at the same time the CSM does not want to become nuisance or even a burden to the customer's senior stakeholders, so care should be taken to only propose an EBR cadence that can be justified as bringing genuine value to those stakeholders and therefore as being a wise and judicious use of their time. For some situations that might indeed be quarterly, but for other situations the cadence could be substantially longer – for example every six months or even on an annual basis. On rare occasions it may even require more frequent meetings with executives, although this is more likely to occur during the more intense bouts of activity associated with Practical CSM Framework Phases 1 to 5 than after Phase 6: Value Realization has commenced.

In addition to thinking about wise utilization of the customer's senior stakeholders' time, it would also be perfectly appropriate to consider the wise utilization of the CSM's own time. As we have said several times already, most CSMs are very busy and there is generally speaking a long list of valuable things that the CSM could do from which they must choose just those things that they have time to do and that will generate the maximum value both for their customers and for their own company.

In terms of who to invite, the general rule for meetings is that the more people you invite the longer the meeting will need to last in order for everyone at that meeting who wishes to have an input to have that input. As has already been said, the CSM does not want to waste the customer's senior stakeholders'

time (nor their own for that matter), so the general recommendation is to try to keep meeting attendee numbers to a minimum. From the supplier's perspective obviously the CSM should attend, and usually the Account Manager will want to receive an invitation. Anyone else from the supplier's side might only be invited to attend for a specific topic, so that they can provide their subject matter expertise, but then not necessarily be invited to remain for the meeting's duration.

The customer's SPL would of course be invited to attend, plus those senior stakeholders whom the CSM in discussion with the SPL and possibly the AM as well determine as needing to be there. This may typically amount to somewhere around two to five people in total, including the SPL.

AGENDA

Welcome:	5 mins
Progress Review:	20 mins
Customer Update:	20 mins
Solution Update:	10 mins
Documentation of Next Steps:	5 mins

Structure of an Executive Business Review

CSMs will need to determine the right structure that works for them and that works for their customers' stakeholders, as this will vary from company to company and even perhaps from customer to customer. Whilst specific meeting agendas can be individually developed each time, it makes good sense to have a set structure to the EBR meetings that can be reused each time, as this saves time and effort reinventing the wheel every time another EBR comes up.

A typical EBR meeting might last around an hour and might include the following sections:

Welcome (and introductions if anyone new is attending) – 5 mins

Progress Review: A report delivered by the CSM (or AM) on progress made towards business outcomes attainment since the last EBR, including any challenges encountered and any requests for changes to plans that need to be considered and sanctioned – 20 mins

Customer Update: The opportunity for the customer's stakeholders to update the CSM, AM and other supplier stakeholders present on any decisions made, changes to their requirements, changes to their personnel, challenges or obstacles encountered and anything else that has happened since the previous EBR that they wish the supplier to be aware of – 20 mins

Solution Update: A brief summary of any changes to any product or service included within the provided solution together with a high level description of the (positive or negative) impact this might have on the customer's initiative and any planned or proposed activity that stems from these changes – 10 mins

Documentation of Next Steps: Agreement on next steps and documentation of what (if any) actions have been agreed, who will be responsible for each action and any agreed deadlines or outputs from these actions – 5 mins

Of course in reality, the overall length of the EBR would be determined based upon the amount of information that needs to be discussed, and likewise the duration of each topic would similarly be designed to be sufficient to cover the topic but without wasting time unnecessarily.

1: Select the Right Platform for the Meeting

Executive Business Review Best Practice

An on-site, physical face-to-face meeting is of course the "premium" option for any customer meeting. However this may be unrealistic both for the customer's stakeholders (who will no doubt have very busy schedules and may not be geographically close to each other) and for that matter in terms of the additional costs associated with travel times etc. You might therefore be wise to reserve face-to-face meetings for just those occasions and those clients that warrant it. The online video collaboration tool may be a second best option but could well be an option that provides a more realistic capability to attend the meetings in the first place for all concerned, and whilst it may not be as good as being physically present it is substantially better than a phone call in terms of relationship management and enhancement.

2: Keep to Business not Technical

Executive Business Review Best Practice

As previously mentioned, keep the review meeting focused on the general not the specific and on business outcomes not technical minutiae. Execs will soon get bored if you allow the meeting to drift away from their area of concern which is managing business outcomes and/or if you allow it to get bogged down in the weeds of "how to do it" too much, so try to keep to the level of "what needs to be done" as much as possible. These are only guidelines not rules – sometimes it's fine to drop down to the detail, but if you do it make sure you're aware of it and also make sure you come straight back up again afterwards.

3: Let the Customer Take the Lead

Executive Business Review Best Practice

The customer is the customer, and none less so than the customer's senior business leaders. If they want longer or shorter meetings with a greater or lesser cadence between them, and/or with a particular format to follow then as a general rule the CSM should do their best to meet these requirements – so long of course as it doesn't interfere too much in the CSM's abilities to perform their other duties.

4: Allow the Customer's Stakeholders to Talk

Executive Business Review Best Practice

This is such an obvious point, but still it's so important. When a customer stakeholder wants to talk, the CSM should let them do so. Allow the stakeholder to fully express themselves without interruption, and if necessary to repeat themselves as many times as they desire. Likewise make sure you are paying attention to them, and not just *actually* paying attention but also *looking like* you are paying attention. Do not multi-task on your laptop or smartphone whilst they are talking. Trust me, I have seen it happen many times!

5: Be Brief, Be Visual and Invite Questions
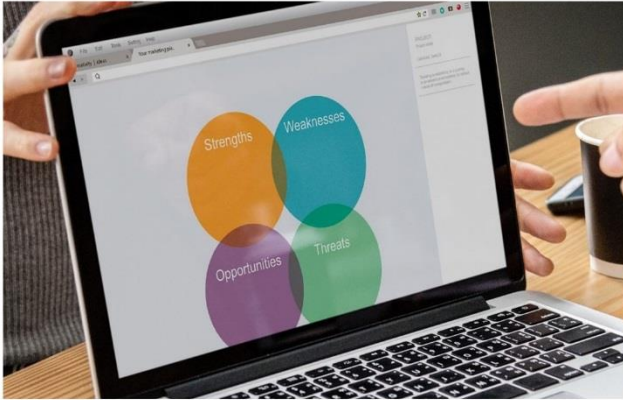
Executive Business Review Best Practice

Try to summarize the points you wish to make in any presentations that you or a colleague plan to give so that you take as short a time as possible. It is often a lot harder to deliver a five or ten minute presentation than a thirty or sixty minute one, as it requires careful thought and creativity to get everything across in a shorter time span. If possible use diagrams, charts and other illustrations and try to avoid large tables of data that might be confusing. Finally, always invite the customer's key stakeholders to ask questions.

6: Subdivide Longer or more Complex Subjects

Executive Business Review Best Practice

Remember that the whole point of the exercise is to communicate information, so make sure that everyone really has understood the matter under discussion, and if necessary break a difficult topic down into a number of shorter subsections which you can then deal with separately one by one.

7: Check Progress Regularly

Executive Business Review Best Practice

Check in regularly with the customer's stakeholders to make sure that the meeting is progressing well from their perspective. When you're ready to move from one topic or agenda item to the next, make sure the stakeholders are ready to move on as well, because otherwise you risk them still thinking about something related to the last topic whilst you are presenting the new topic.

8: Confirm Agreements and Next Steps

Executive Business Review Best Practice

This is just a general rule for all meetings of any kind. Leave enough time towards the end of the meeting to summarize what has been said and in particular what has been agreed and committed to. List the actions or next steps that will be taken and confirm who it has been agreed will perform these actions or steps, by when they will do so and who they will inform once completed.

Getting Senior Stakeholders to Attend

> ➢ Work with others to identify which senior decision makers are the right ones to invite to an EBR
>
> ➢ Use your understanding of key stakeholders' viewpoints to ensure that your meeting is relevant and useful
>
> ➢ Keep the meeting brief
>
> ➢ Consider inviting your own company's senior executives to attend as well

There are no clever secrets to getting senior attendance for your business reviews but there are a couple of tips that may help:

Firstly you need to work with your customer's SPL and perhaps also with your own Account Manager to identify which senior decision makers are the right ones to invite to the EBR in the first place, and to determine each exec's "viewpoint". The "viewpoint" in the context it is used here, refers to each executive decision maker's own point of view about what is important, which in turn will largely be based upon their own perspective. For example the VP Sales & Marketing is likely to have a different viewpoint to the Head of Production, and these two viewpoints might be more or less aligned or sometimes might even be quite different. When developing both the agenda initially and then the content subsequently for the EBR, you can use this understanding of the different key stakeholders' viewpoints to ensure that your proposed meeting is relevant and useful to each stakeholder you intend to invite.

Another good idea (and I know we have touched on this point already, but nevertheless) is to keep the meeting brief. It is far easier for a busy executive to find a 30 minute window in their schedule than a 60 minute one, and a lot easier than a 90 or 120 minute one. Remember that you can always have a pre- or post-meeting with the SPL if there's more to discuss than you have time for in the EBR.

Finally, if the occasion warrants it, do not be shy of inviting your *own* company's senior executives to attend as well. This provides an invitation for peer-to-peer contact that many senior executives enjoy and find value from. Naturally this is a technique that you need to keep back for judicious use rather

than for every EBR you organize, but when used wisely for the right circumstances it can be a valuable tool to employ.

In summary then, keep the EBR brief and ensure it is relevant to the specific executive stakeholder whom you have invited, and where necessary consider inviting your own execs as peers, and you will maximize the chances of getting the type of customers' senior executives' buy in you are looking for.

Why Evaluate What We Do?

➢ CPD or Continuing Professional Development helps
   enable CSMs to:
   ➢ become more productive
   ➢ increase the quality of their outputs
   ➢ be more relevant to their customers' needs
➢ CSMs should take responsibility for their own career
   development needs

In Customer Success as in so many other professions it's very easy to spend all of our time working *in* our role and forget to leave time to work *on* our role. What do I mean by that? What I mean is that just like all the best businesses have a process of continuing development that helps them to refine and improve what they do in order to become more productive, to increase the quality of their outputs, to be more relevant to their customers' needs and so on, so should the individual CSM take this same attitude of CPD or *Continuing Professional Development* seriously. To take it seriously means to schedule time for it. It doesn't necessarily need to be a long or onerous task, but I do recommend that CSMs sit down either by themselves or (better still) as a team to discuss and review their activities over the preceding period and to evaluate what lessons can be learned, what best practices can be shared and what assets can be templated for re-use in future engagements.

Some companies are excellent at providing opportunities for further training and career progression etc, others are less so. But regardless of how much help might be available, it is my belief that every CSM should take ownership of and full responsibility for the development of their own career.

Why Evaluate What We Do?

➢ Three questions for CSMs to ask themselves at regular

intervals throughout each customer engagement are:

  ➢ What value is the customer getting?

  ➢ What value is my own company getting?

  ➢ What value am I and my team getting?

Essentially, what CSMs need to ask themselves at regular intervals throughout their customer engagements are three questions: "*What value is the customer getting from this engagement?*", "*What value is my own company getting from this engagement?*", and "*What value am I and my team getting from this engagement?*". As to how often these questions should be asked – in a sense the CSM could be asking these questions inside their own minds all of the time, but in terms of a more formal approach, I would say that it makes sense to ask these questions after each major milestone. So for example the CSM might decide to sit down and evaluate the value from the engagement for all concerned (ie customer, supplier and CSM) after onboarding has been completed, after adoption has been completed (or after each major phase of adoption has been completed if appropriate), and again on a routine of once per quarter, half annum or annum as appropriate once the value realization phase has commenced.

What Value has the Customer Received from this Engagement?

"The purpose of Phase 7: Engagement Evaluation is to consider our own activities in the light of the progress made by the customer, and to ask ourselves whether we are doing the right things in the right way, or whether in fact there are improvements we can make that might help us to better serve both existing and future customers from this point forwards."

Before discussing this question, it's worth making the point that although it sounds (and indeed to an extent is) similar to the questions posed in Practical CSM Framework Phase 6: Value Realization, it is actually not the same. In Phase 6: Value Realization we are asking about value from the perspective of progress towards the attainment of the customer's outcomes through their adoption and utilization of our company's products and services. Here we are being much more specific, and we are asking the question "In what way has engaging with a CSM helped them in this process?". To put it another way, the purpose of Phase 6: Value Realization is to determine how best to report back to the customer on their progress and to agree how to work with them on whatever needs to be done to continue this progress. The purpose of Phase 7: Engagement Evaluation however, is to stop and consider our own activities to date and to an extent those of our colleagues in the light of this progress made by the customer, and to ask ourselves whether we are doing the right things in the right way, or whether in fact there are improvements we can make to either what we do or how we go about doing those things that might help us to better serve both existing and future customers from this point forwards.

What Value has the Customer Received from this Engagement?

➢ Are customers getting the help that they need in the form of both advice and practical assistance in order to attain the outcomes they were hoping for?

➢ How should this value be measured?

➢ Is the customer aware of this value?

➢ Is my own company aware of this value?

➢ What difference is this information actually making?

The whole point of the entire exercise is for customers to get the help that they need in the form of both advice and practical assistance in order to attain the outcomes they were hoping for from the purchases of products and services that they have made. So… what value *did* they get out of all your hard work? It's a reasonable question to ask yourself, and it's also a reasonable question for those within your own company who have funded your efforts in terms of paying for your salary, your equipment, your training, your energy use, etc to also be asking. What's more, it's also a question that it is highly likely that the customer's stakeholders are asking themselves as well. And the answer they conclude with may will impact their decision as to whether or not to renew services and/or to make additional purchases moving forwards. Aside from all these considerations, would it also be nice to know whether or not you have been actually contributing any value to the world in general or simply wasting your time? All in all then, asking what value the customer has received from your customer success activities is a fairly important question to ask.

Important though this question is, it's not the only question we could ask, since there are also some very related questions whose answers might also be very interesting. So alongside "What value has the customer received from this engagement?" we might also ask "How should this value be measured?", "How *is* this value being measured?", "Are the customer's key stakeholders aware of this value?" and "Are my own company's key stakeholders aware of this value?". Finally we could also ask "What difference is this information actually making?" or to put it another way "How is information about value being used to make changes that lead to greater levels of value being attained in the future?"

What Value has the Supplier Received from this Engagement?

➢ Helping customers attain their outcomes is a means to an end rather than being the ultimate end in itself

➢ From a business leadership perspective, CS is an investment from which a return is required

➢ CSMs should therefore be measuring and reporting on the progress being made towards the attainment of their own company's outcomes

As we have stated above, the whole point of engaging with the customer as a CSM is for customers to get the help in the form of both advice and at times actual assistance that they need in order to attain the outcomes they were hoping for from the purchases of products and services that they have made. But of course as we already know, whilst this is true in one sense, it is also not the entire story since in fact all of the above is essentially not "the end in and of itself" but rather a "means to an end" when regarded from the perspective of the CSM's company's senior executives. From their standpoint, CS is an investment from which they need to see a return. As a result then, the CSM needs not just to be taking measurements and reporting to customers on the progress being made towards the attainment of each customer's outcomes, but also to be taking measurements and reporting to their own managers on the progress being made towards the attainment of their own company's outcomes.

The process for doing this very much follows the same pattern as that for measuring and reporting on the customer's outcomes. As with the customer, the start point is for the CSM to ascertain and document what their own company's outcome requirements are, and should make sure that these are described meaningfully – in other words each outcome should contain all three aspects of a quality, a quantity and a deadline.

What Value has the CSM Received from this Engagement?

➢ Aside from my salary, what else have I got from working through and ultimately completing a customer success engagement?

➢ What have I learned about my own company's products and services that I didn't previously know?

➢ What have I learned about my own company's systems and processes that I didn't previously know?

Moving beyond purely the concept of receiving a salary for the work that has been performed, what *else* in terms of value does or could the CSM get from working through and ultimately completing a customer success engagement?

That's actually not a bad question to stop and ask yourself occasionally. Here are some further great questions you can ask yourself about your engagement that might help to define what value you yourself have attained from it…

"What have I learned about my own company's products and services that I didn't previously know?"

"What have I learned about my own company's systems and processes that I didn't previously know?"

What Value has the CSM Received from this Engagement?

➢ What have I learned about this customer's overall business capabilities, strategies, challenges and opportunities that I didn't previously know?

➢ What have I learned about the customer's specific initiative that this engagement was supporting that I didn't previously know?

"What have I learned about this customer's overall business capabilities, strategies, challenges and opportunities that I didn't previously know?"

"What have I learned about the customer's specific initiative that this engagement was supporting that I didn't previously know?"

What Value has the CSM Received from this Engagement?

➢ What have I learned about this customer's key stakeholders and/or end users that I didn't previously know?

➢ In what ways have I improved my overall understanding of the customer success management role?

➢ In what ways have I improved my specific technical knowledge and expertise?

"What have I learned about this customer's key stakeholders and/or end users that I didn't previously know?"

"In what ways have I improved my overall understanding of the customer success management role?"

"In what ways have I improved my specific technical knowledge and expertise?"

What Value has the CSM Received from this Engagement?

➢ In what ways have I improved my specific people management knowledge and expertise?

➢ In what ways have I improved my specific project management knowledge and expertise?

➢ In what ways have I improved my specific change management knowledge and expertise?

"In what ways have I improved my specific people management knowledge and expertise?"

"In what ways have I improved my specific project management knowledge and expertise?"

"In what ways have I improved my specific change management knowledge and expertise?"

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What Value has the CSM Received from this Engagement?

➢ What personal knowledge and expertise gaps have I uncovered?

➢ What assets (eg tools, templates etc) have I created or customized?

➢ What else have I learned that I have not yet documented?

"What personal knowledge and expertise gaps have I uncovered?

"What assets (eg tools, templates etc) have I created or customized?

"What else have I learned that I have not yet documented?"

What Value has the CSM Received from this Engagement?

➢ Each of these questions can also be followed by additional questions, which are:
  ➢ How will this knowledge help me in the future?
  ➢ What if anything do I need to do now to ensure this value is fully realized?

Each of these questions can also be followed by additional questions, which are:

"How will this knowledge help me in the future?"

and

"What if anything do I need to do now to ensure this value is fully realized?"

Don't Forget to Celebrate!

One final point. In evaluating performance over the past period since your previous evaluation, don't forget to recognize your own and your colleagues' achievements over this time. Take the time to celebrate the major successes, commiserate over any hardships endured and generally make sure you put some effort into ensuring that you and your colleagues feel rewarded not just in a financial sense from the remuneration package, but in the sense of being appreciated for having done a great job in no doubt sometimes difficult circumstances!