

**UserTribe.**  
CUSTOMER EMPOWERED BUSINESS™

# 6 Lessons in Customer Centricity

We learned from our customers

Featuring case stories from these global companies



**QVARTZ**

**VELUX®**

ReSound



*Danfoss*

# There is so much you can learn by working more closely with your customers.

We know this is true because every time we deliver a project we learn something new. Each customer session we facilitate contributes to our knowledge of research methodology, recruitment, data collection, analysis and delivery.

The importance of customer feedback is also highlighted by a recent [McKinsey report](#) showing that companies that invest in customer centric practices earn up to 15% more in revenue while simultaneously reducing costs by more than 20%.

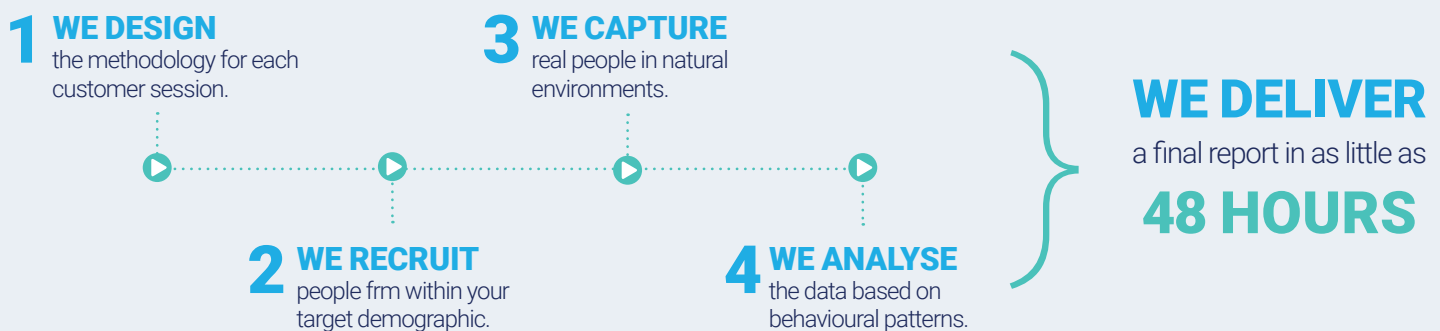
We love talking to our own customers about how working together has helped their organisations become more customer centric.

Below are six lessons in customer centricity that we've learned by partnering with some companies who are seriously committed to working with their customers every step of the way. We think these lessons are universally applicable, no matter what industry you're in or what project phase you're working on.

## About UserTribe

UserTribe facilitates customer involvement, making it easy for companies to align and collaborate with their most important stakeholder: the customer. UserTribe enables companies to validate ideas, hypotheses, prototypes, products and services with their customers at every stage of development. With UserTribe, companies can connect to customers in any segment, in any language, and generate useful insights in as little as 48 hours.

## How we work: the UserTribe Platform



## LESSON 1

# Once is never enough.

Many companies we work with involve their customers on an ad-hoc basis. They reach a point in their development cycle (typically quite late) and decide to see what their customers have to say about it. The results of that feedback loop inform the rest of the process and then it goes to market.

Not so with Santander.

Santander's digital development processes emphasise recurring customer involvement sessions. They begin and end with customer feedback, and they build it in at numerous checkpoints along the way.

When Santander noticed a large number of customers dropping off during their online loan application process, they knew they had strayed too far from their customers' needs.

Santander's team decided to revamp the flow, but before they designed a new process, they conducted a series of UserTribe customer sessions to learn more about why customers were abandoning the current solution and what they were looking for in an optimal flow.

**“ It's important to do it as a process, more than a project. Because the world is changing all the time...and you never know when you are out of date.**

Usko Manninen, Santander Consumer Finance

We helped Santander connect with three groups of people: current customers; non-Santander customers who were considering applying for a loan; and internal Santander stakeholders. These three perspectives combined to give the team an incredible depth of insight into the entire loan application journey.

With these three groups, Santander was able to get feedback on each component of the process, from the language they use, to the layout and design of the tool, to the backend management of the collected data.

We are inspired by Santander's commitment to customer involvement throughout the project lifecycle and agree with them wholeheartedly: once is never enough.

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# QVARTZ

## LESSON 2

# Deep, specific knowledge beats broad, general knowledge.

“How can you derive valuable insights from so few customers?”

This is probably the question we get asked the most. And it’s fair – most people are used to research in the form of large, quantitative studies that use statistical analysis to generate results.

We do things a little differently, focusing on qualitative research in order to offer more context understanding and greater depth of insight in our results. In practice, this means conducting customer sessions with as few as five or ten participants at a time.

Qvartz, one of Scandinavia’s leading management consultancies, works with UserTribe to get early, rapid insights into new markets. When they are preparing a pitch for a new account, they need to gain both deep industry insights and broad, global understanding of people from the different key markets.

To prepare for a big pitch, Qvartz worked with UserTribe to conduct a series of customer sessions in order to gain an initial understanding of their client’s customers’ needs.

“ **In all pitch situations it’s great to have the voice of the customer.**

Jens Friis Hjortegaard, Partner at Qvartz

Qvartz identified the five key geographic zones – Kenya, Thailand, France, Brazil and the USA – and we recruited participants from within the industry. We connected with 34 people in total, using local anthropologists to conduct in-person interviews and provide culturally-specific analysis.

Qvartz was able to use these insights to craft a pitch showcasing their local knowledge of the client’s key markets. In the end, Qvartz won the pitch and secured a big new account.

The lesson here is fundamental to UserTribe: the difference between talking with zero customers and talking with five customers is enormous. That initial burst of understanding can lead to incredible insights and drive big results.

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## LESSON 3

# It's never too soon to talk to your customers.

If you take away one thing from this report, we'd be happy if it were this: it's never too soon to involve your customers.

Every creator has struggled to decide when they are ready to share their work with the world. VELUX, the global leaders in roof windows and skylights, really show how valuable it is to gain customer feedback early in the process.

Every project begins with a variety of assumptions and hypotheses. Imagine if you could improve your decision-making by getting information on how your customers react to your ideas, concepts and sketches.

This is exactly with VELUX does for each new digital tool they create. VELUX came to us with multiple ideas for how to build a new solution. We conducted a series of customer sessions to explore how different key groups of people – end users as well as architects, builders and resellers – would respond.

The beauty in soliciting early feedback from customers is that you are still in a position to design the project around the knowledge you gain.

**“When you test a sketch, you can see if the customers really do not like it early on... [and] then you can stop and save a lot of money.**

Lene Alice Bate, Senior Manager in VELUX

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The further into development you go, the harder (and more expensive) it is to pivot.

On the flip side, sometimes sharing an idea or early-stage prototype has the opposite effect: customers hate it. To that we say: what luck! Isn't it better to avoid months or years of costly development only to release a product no one wants?

Rhetorical questions aside, we really believe in the power of ideating alongside your customers. Done well, this yields more creativity and nuance than any in-house process, plus it speeds development, reduces cost and helps ensure a high quality result.

Really, it's never too early to involve your customers.

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## LESSON 4

# (Non)customer involvement is key.

A lot of the companies we work with already have mechanisms in place to connect with their customers. There's web analytics, digital surveys, customer service records, NPS reports and so much more.

One thing they're all missing, however, is an understanding of the people who *aren't* customers yet. Have you ever wondered why someone chose a competitor over your company? Or why someone squarely in your target demo would choose to ignore your brand?

This was the problem ReSound, a global hearing aid provider, had when they came to us. Their Relief app, designed to help people manage tinnitus symptoms, was popular amongst its users, but growth had stagnated. To prioritise new development, ReSound wanted to understand what prospective users expected from such an app.

The challenge was that, by definition, ReSound only had access to its own customers. At first the ReSound team tried to recruit people themselves, but after struggling to connect with the right profiles, they decided to UserTribe it.

**“The whole process from ‘I have an idea, can you help me?’ to actually getting results and insights we can act upon was really smooth. It would have taken us ages to do that.**

Juan Jose Romano, Product Manager at ReSound

UserTribe helped by recruiting 30 people in the USA who had tinnitus and were not using the Relief app.

The results we found were surprising. The ReSound team was able to reprioritise new features development to better address customer needs as well as reposition their key selling points to communicate the app's offerings more clearly.

Understanding your customers is key – all your customers, that is. Past, present and future. The key to growth is staying close to the market, and that means anticipating the needs of your newest customers, even if they haven't bought your product yet.

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## LESSON 5

# Think big. Start small.

Are you a design thinker? If so, then you already know that customer feedback and validation is a fundamental component of the innovation process. Design thinking is all about challenging assumptions and gaining a deeper understanding of the end user.

The ISS Corporate Garage, an autonomous start-up lab focusing on service innovation, uses design thinking to rapidly generate and evaluate new ideas. As a part of ISS, one of the world's largest private employers, the Garage has big goals and broad customer groups to satisfy.

Success for them might mean a new software or digital tool that impacts hundreds of thousands of employees worldwide. But before they commit to any idea, they follow design thinking methodologies to gather customer needs and determine concept fit.

One such idea was the WorkID project — a digital tool to help blue collar workers share official documents with employers via a secure and easy-to-use platform. The Garage team UserTribe, running a pilot session with 10 blue collar workers in Mexico who had changed jobs within the last year.

**“Our point of departure is always empathy, which is the first bit of classic design thinking.**

Ulla Riber, Head of ISS Corporate Garage

Though 10 is a relatively small number (compared with the thousands who might ultimately use the tool), the Corporate Garage team always starts small. The goal is to start refining the concept as early as possible — not by letting a small group dictate every feature — but by working iteratively to develop a tool that has a clear place in the market.

Ultimately, the validation the team received from this initial feedback inspired them to keep working, keep building and keep listening to their customers. The WorkID project is still in development, and it's exciting to see how one spark of understanding can snowball into a powerful tool with global reach.

[READ THE FULL CASE](#)



## LESSON 6

# Good answers need good questions.

We admit it - we're methodology nerds. UserTribe is based on anthropological principals, highest of which is the idea that behaviour trumps opinion. We're also grounded in the idea that for insights to be relevant, they must be fresh. That's why we've streamlined our research methodologies, standardising our interview guides and session templates based on our most common use cases.

So when Danfoss, one of the world's leading manufacturers of energy-efficient technologies, told us they weren't getting the results they needed from their user research, our first thought was, "What questions are you asking?"

Research design is so important because it defines the goals, participation requirements, data collection and analysis methods of the entire session. This is how we control for bias.

Consider the difference between these two questions:

- a) Why do you think a hydraulic transmission is better than an electrical transmission for a scissor lift?
- b) How would you describe the difference between having a hydraulic or an electrical transmission for a scissor lift?

**“Usually we would get the answers we were looking for. And that’s not always a good sign – that means either we were leading the customers in that direction, or we hadn’t gotten them to open up completely.”**

Jonas Hansen, Director of Strategic Development

The first question is clearly leading the participant to a specific type of answer. The second question is much more neutral, and the phrasing will likely lead to a great depth of response.

Of course, the question is just one piece of the puzzle. It must also be asked in the right context, in the right environment and by the right person. These are all variables that we have experimented with in order to generate the most effective task designs based on specific goals.

At the end of the day, if you're not getting the information you want, you should question your questions and ask yourself: "Am I asking this in the best way possible?"

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Get in touch to learn more.  
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