

Winning companies are those that get under the skin of their customers. This requires a real understanding of those customers; why they buy, where and when they buy, why they prefer you to other suppliers and the issues and challenges they face in their markets. To gain such insight into your customers you need to "Live In The Customer's World"

Some thoughts:



## Ask for help

Ask your existing customer contacts who else might need your products and services. You may find that there are other parts of the customer's organisation that could give you business.



## New products

Help your customers when they are developing new products and services. You will learn a lot about how they think and operate.



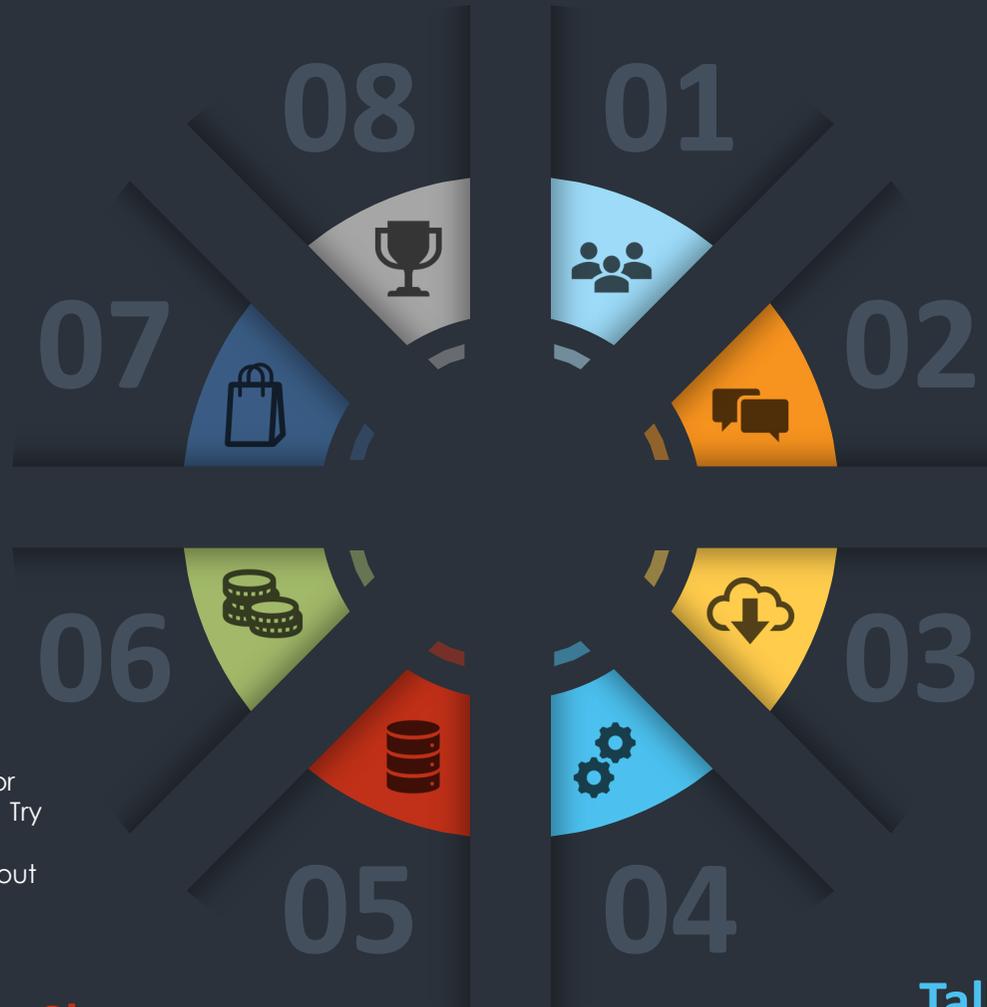
## Use your eyes

Insist that all your staff use their eyes and ears! In other words they listen for any comments made by customers. Try to capture ideas for improving your offerings as well as any concerns about doing business with your company.



## Mystery Shop

Conduct a 'Mystery Shopper' exercise - find out what its really like for a prospective customer to contact your company.



## Customers



Spend some time talking to new and existing customers. They know your products and services and what it is like to deal with your company. They can tell you what you need to do in order to secure more orders from them and from other prospects.

## Observe



Observe how your customers actually use your products and services - you might identify how they can be made more user friendly.

## Key People



Get to know all the key people in your major accounts. In other words everyone who has influence on the purchasing decision - the actual users, their technical people and whoever signs the cheques!

## Talk



Talk to your customers when you are starting to develop new products or services - they know better than you what really hits the spot with customers.

**WINNING** Pitch