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Young Europeans to meet in Turkey

ISTANBUL
Hürriyet Daily News

The European Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs, or YES, is to gather in Istanbul for its EXECOM meeting from Sept. 24 to 26.

Turkey's YES member federation, called the Young Businessmen Association of Turkey, or TÜGIAD, has prepared a conference for YES members, addressing a key current issue under the title "Face the changes: New and Renewable Business." The event will precede the YES Annual Summit, which will take place on Nov. 20.

Speakers include TÜGIAD Chairman Lütfü Küçük, Minister and European Union Chief Negotiator Egemen Bağış, and Turkish Minister of Industry and Trade Zafer Çağlayan. Kaan Terzioğlu, managing director at Cisco; Ferda Kertmelioglu, managing partner of MOBILERA Informatics and Communication Technologies; and Hande Ardane, corporate communication manager of Turk Henkel are also among the speakers. The YES Presidency meeting will take place on Sept. 24, and the EXECOM meeting on Sept. 25.

Launched in 1998, YES, the pan-European organization representing up to 40,000 individual entrepreneurs, aims to support and improve the economic and social performance of young entrepreneurship in Europe. The confederation currently comprises 16 associations located in "old" EU countries: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain as well as in new EU member states: Hungary, Slovenia, Cyprus and Montenegro. TÜGIAD had joined YES before Turkey became the candidate state to the EU. Non-EU members include Albania and Ukraine. In 2007, Kazakhstan became part of the YES family.



SHIELD: The small and medium sized enterprises, or SMEs, in textile, apparel, agriculture and the industries based on agriculture are the ones that need to unite first in the face of the rivalry against the foreign firms that are entering Turkey, says Serdar Altınok, professor at the Ankara-based Gazi University.

A call for enterprises

KONYA
Anatolia News Agency

With major brands entering Turkey, small- and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs, need to unite to sell more goods and compete, an academic has urged.

According to the latest statement from World Bank officials, the bottom of the crisis has passed and the healing process has begun, said Serdar Altınok, professor at Gazi University, based in Ankara. However, some authorities expect that another bottom may come in the second half of the year, he added.

"Nobody is able to say definitely where this crisis will lead or where it will end. However, according to the esteemed international economy institutions, Turkey is among the countries that would leave the crisis behind at the earliest. This situation injects hope for our country," said Altınok.

Noting that as a major product supplier of the European market, Turkey is particularly affected by the market's considerable contraction, he said: "As Turkey is likely to

As many European giants invest in Turkey, which is expected to overcome the turmoil before many others, experts urge small- and medium-sized enterprises, or SMEs, to join forces in order to stand strong in the new wave of competition. The SMEs that have weak capital and do not unite may go under they say

be one of the first countries to overcome the crisis, giant retail firms that sell quality goods to the European market have focused on Turkey. We know that some of those firms have recently opened stores in Turkey and some are preparing to invest in our country."

Altınok said because the Turkish market is expected to revive earlier, SMEs will begin to sell their products earlier. "This is a very important opportunity for the SMEs, which have faced a decline in production and sales. The SMEs should join forces as the giants of Europe have begun investing in our country. Otherwise, competing with these big capital foundations does not seem likely. The SMEs that have weak capital and do not unite may bankrupt."

The SMEs that cannot unite in terms of production in the short term should at least collaborate in marketing, he said.

The sectors that need to unite first include textile, apparel, agriculture and the industries based on agriculture, he added.

SMEs in Konya

Meanwhile, Aslan Korkmaz, Konya branch president of the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association, or MÜSIAD, said that there are approximately 30,000 SMEs operating in the central Anatolian city of Konya.

Defining SMEs as the locomotive of the country's economy, he said that the SMEs think of nothing but overcoming the crisis as soon as possible. "We, the SMEs, want nothing but stability and democracy," said Korkmaz. "We can not whine. Right now, the SMEs should find ways to sell as many products as possible with low profits. The firms that have a robust financial structure are in a better position. We have always

signaled the firms should focus on creating brands instead of contract manufacturing. Today, we are unfortunately suffering due to having delayed creating brands."

Stressing the importance of producing goods that have high added value, he said, "We would like to see more support for mergers of SMEs amid this critical period." The SMEs to unite by the end of this year will be supported, he said, requesting the process to be extended. "These mergers are a matter of culture. We need time for this culture to emerge."

He also expressed a request for the restructuring of the Small and Medium Industry Development Organization, or KOSGEB. "As the service sector is included under the roof of SMEs, its budget should increase. Credit guarantee funds and development agencies should also launch activities as soon as possible."



FATMANUR ERDOĞAN

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You are not really customer-centric

I see it happen all the time. Companies think they are being customer-centric, but the actual experience they offer their customers does not back that up. Sure, companies offer statistics suggesting that 95 percent of their customers are happy with their service, but we all know the qualifications in the fine print would make this an empty boast. When it comes down to it, the reality is that most companies wish they were customer-centric, but they cannot stop thinking about themselves.

For example, let's take a look at Web sites of a couple of local airline companies. These companies boast about the ease of buying tickets online. But look closer at the process. Go to one of these Internet sites, try to key in your destination, select the dates, and start a search for a flight. Then, pretend you do not like the results the search came back with, so hit the back button to try your search again, but with different dates. Oops, the system does not remember your original choices, so you have to start over, from scratch, and key in all your information again.

Now, from the company's perspective, this might not be a big deal. The company's perspective is, "Look at the big picture, we put up a Web site where you can buy your tickets, you should be pretty happy about that." But from the customer's perspective, the company only went 80 percent of the way. It made the customer come the remaining 20 percent. From the customer's perspective, if the company were truly customer-centric, it would go 100 percent of the way.

Changing the mindset for customer satisfaction

Going all the way for your customers requires a change in mindset. It requires taking the energy your company spends bragging about how customer-centric it is, and redirecting that energy into actually being customer-centric.

Because the fact of the matter is, the degree to which you THINK you are focusing on your customers is probably 10 times greater than the degree to which you actually ARE focusing on your customers.

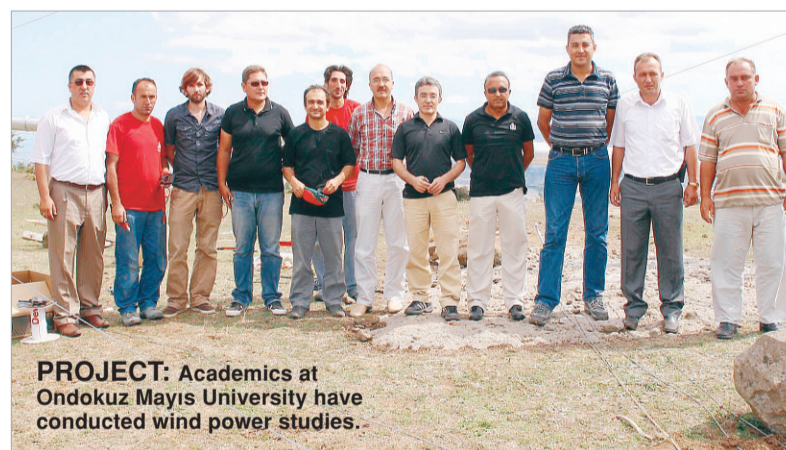
To really focus on providing a great customer experience, you don't have to be particularly creative or innovative. Usually you can just look around and see what others in your industry are doing, and you can try using their tools yourself, from a customer's perspective. For example, if the airlines looked at expedia.com, they would find plenty of ideas to help them improve their own sites. They would see a system that has been built from the bottom-up with a superb customer experience in mind.

Let's look at another Web-related aspect of customer-centricity, collecting customer data. Years ago, many companies realized they could sell more if they asked for less information from their customers. Yet today, if you go to the Koç and Ulusoy passenger bus Web sites and try to buy a ticket online, you'll find it is still impossible unless you register as a member of the site. Koç and Ulusoy are putting their needs to collect marketing information above their customers' needs to buy tickets. If their online reservation systems were truly customer-centric, customers could buy tickets without handing over unnecessary personal information.

Offering an easy way proves rewarding

Customers reward companies that are genuinely thinking about them. They reward them by handing over their hard-earned money, and coming back often. So, if you provide an experience your customers like, don't worry, you won't have to collect much of their personal information, because they will come back naturally. And if you make life difficult for them, it won't matter how much data you collect, because they are not going to want to receive your unsolicited spam emails anyway.

Don't fall into the trap of believing that you are as customer-centric as you think you are. In fact, the moment you hear yourself say you are customer-centric, you should be afraid, because if you were really customer-centric, you wouldn't be spending energy talking about it, you would be spending energy being it. Only your customers can be truly, 100 percent focused on themselves. The best you can do is assume you are not customer-centric enough, and then figure out how you can do a better job of it tomorrow than you are today.



PROJECT: Academics at Ondokuz Mayıs University have conducted wind power studies.

School to generate electricity on its own

SAMSUN
Ihlas News Agency

A Turkish university based in the Black Sea city of Samsun will produce its own electricity using wind power.

Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University launched wind power studies due to the advantages it offers, such as being inexpensive, environmentally friendly and contributing to energy safety, as well as increasing local employment and development. The wind power station will be built on the top of the university's Dedebezağı Hill.

Commenting on the subject, engineering department associate professor H. İbrahim Zeybek said, "We have decided using wind power would be advisable so that we could cover 500,000 Turkish Liras worth of the university's electricity expenses. Therefore, the university will be able to reduce its high energy bill and use this source in other fields. "Moreover,

it is clear it will contribute to our graduate students," he said. "Accordingly, we first need to determine the wind power potential. For this purpose, we have decided to raise a 60 meter-high measuring stick on the university's 588 meter-high Dedebezağı Hill to measure wind potential for at least one year." Zeybek said that relative humidity, heat and pressure will also be measured.

"After these measurements, a wind map of the region will be created and the location of the wind stations to be built will be determined. It is known that Dedebezağı Hill, where the station is going to be built, is always windy due to its topography. It is expected that the wind power values will be above the minimum value of 5.4 meters per second that is required for building a wind power plant. After determining the wind potential, an application for a license will be made."



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