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# THE CUSTODIAN OF Choice

Police Credit Union is committing itself to delivering a customer experience that is second to none with strong community involvement and vital values and metrics.

Images by David Evans

**W**hen Police Credit Union (PCU) was developing and implementing its long-term strategic plan in 2000, the company realised that its core differentiator and competitive advantage was its dedication and commitment to its customers. As the company has thrived over the years, this difference has remained at the core of its success and purpose.

A man who played a part in developing this strategy and implementing it was Costa Anastasiou, who joined the company in 2002 and became CEO and company secretary in July 2007. As part of PCU's strategic plan, Costa and his team established a set of clear corporate values based on service, honesty, integrity, and financial prudence, which were intrinsically intertwined with their core focus on customer service.

These were aligned and balanced with a set of five key metrics that have been adopted and maintained to this day. Costa says that, naturally, one of the key metrics had to focus on the member. "We always talk about member relationships because we believe it's a two-way measure, as in how

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- Costa Anastasiou

effectively we can satisfy the customer in terms of the customer experience, and, at the same time, how effectively we can impart products and services as part of the engagement. The metric of member relationships is centred on service excellence, brand leverage, product penetration, and the effectiveness of channel access.

"The second metric is around continuous improvement, which is all about efficiency, cost management, and innovation. We are firmly of the view that innovation is fundamental to business success—whether it relates to product packaging or digital touchpoints.

"The third critical metric focuses on our people and incorporates knowledge, learning, engagement, and teamwork. It also incorporates risk and compliance, which may seem like an odd element to throw into the people metric, but we believe that as an organisation that's the custodian of people's money, it is fundamental that we take risk and compliance seriously and embed the responsibility within our culture and the way we think and make decisions.

"The key metrics around people measurement include a dynamic index incorporating four key

measures: the strength of culture and staff engagement, the effective imparting of knowledge and learning, the ability to retain talent, and aggregated individual performance outcomes.

"The remaining two metrics include financial prudence—which underpins profitability, growth, strength, and community and environment, which is all around corporate social responsibility and environmental impact.

"Looking first at financial prudence: As a highly regulated institution, the successful achievement of long-term financial outcomes is considered fundamental to our business integrity. Financial stability and success not only inspires confidence among all stakeholders; it also ensures that we are able to achieve desired growth outcomes, enhance operational capability, build shareholder value, invest in key areas of innovation and infrastructure, and, importantly, successfully implement our strategy."

Costa and his team understand that actions speak louder than words when engaging with local communities. For its 44 years in business, meaningful and relevant contributions to community and >



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environment have always been considered an important objective in measuring PCU's success.

“By way of example, we proudly sponsor the Credit Union Christmas Pageant. It's an iconic annual event that engages some 350,000 people who line the streets of Adelaide to watch the parade, and it's telecast to an audience of about a million people. It's a significant community event we've supported in collaboration with a number of other local credit unions, and is now in its eighteenth year.

“Our commitment to foster social and community progress is steadfast; we contribute a fixed percentage of profit before tax to community spend every year. We also remain firmly committed to our environment, and are on target to neutralise our carbon footprint by 2020.

“We make balanced decisions around ensuring that we can achieve those metrics across the long term. We avoid unnecessary short-term decisions where there is a likely negative impact on other interdependent metrics.”

It's this disciplined approach, coupled with the passion and integrity that PCU's people display every day, that has created a long-lasting reputation for the company and its brand. Costa states, “We have a strong brand that we leverage from, and which has underpinned our successful growth strategy. Recent research has found that we sit in the top six financial institutions that South Australians can name; we're at 65-per-cent spontaneous awareness as a financial institution; and we consistently rate as the number-one recognised credit union in South Australia.

“So while we carefully protected and preserved the important affinity with our heritage police-based communities, we've leveraged our brand strength in the broader market with value propositions which position PCU as a customer-centric alternative to

the major banks. And I think, at the end, you develop trust and reliability through your actions. We've consistently demonstrated the attributes around our core values, which have served us well, particularly in terms of building our goodwill around a reputation of competitive value propositions and an awesome customer service experience.”

While PCU has lofty aims and strategies, it's the people behind these objectives that ensure their success. Costa states that every single person within the PCU team understands the organisation's goals, both big and small. “We undertake and implement ongoing programs of learning and development around our major goal. We've formulated that goal with clarity so that it reflects what we're deeply passionate about, what we want to be the best in the world at, and what drives our economic engine. We believe that delivering exceptional and consistent customer experience outputs is firmly aligned to our strategy.

“First and foremost, everyone within the organisation at every touchpoint understands that they have a role to deliver this customer experience output, whether it be internal or customer-facing. I think a large part of it hinges around the effectiveness of our delivery of communication to every single employee, as a starting point.”

These outputs include such perceptions as convenience, choice in access and payments, reliability, relevance, professional appearance, getting it right the first time, responsiveness, and speed—and Costa explains that all staff play a vital role in replicating these critical features across all touchpoints, both physical and in the digital space. “So the design of our world-class mobile banking app needs to be just as compelling as our in-branch service and phone centre operations. We aim to continuously transform and adapt our business model to meet the market so the customer feels inspired by the brand, trusts our



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advice, appreciates the simplicity, and ultimately becomes an ambassador because of the exceptional service experience.”

As PCU continues to evolve in coming years, Costa says, his fundamental focus will remain on the customer, which in the case of PCU happens also to be the shareholder. “Customers of mutuals deserve more from their organisation than their listed counterparts; after all, they are the owners, and profits should be re-invested efficiently back into the business and deliver clear points of difference. The legacy I want to leave behind is to have been part of building a sustainable, world-class organisation that delivers a customer experience that is second to none. I think that's absolutely vital for our business success, and entirely supports the principles espoused in our core values, purpose, and vision.”

Police Credit Union will continue to help a multitude of South Australians and Territorians reach their financial goals in the decades to come through its unwavering dedication to delivering exceptional customer service and innovative products. ●