



# BRAND SPOTLIGHT

## Target



In this insightful Brand Spotlight with John Caldwell, Senior Director of Team Member Service Centers at Target and an Execs In The Know Advisory Board Member, readers will discover how his leadership philosophy, shaped by decades of experience, centers around the belief that when you take care of your team, everything else falls into place. John also sheds light on how Target is leveraging early-stage artificial intelligence (AI) to support team members and improve customer service efficiency while remaining thoughtful about the balance between automation and human connection. Additionally, he shares his perspective on the future of customer experience, emphasizing the importance of addressing root causes to enhance employee and guest satisfaction.



### **John Caldwell**

Senior Director Team Member Service Centers at Target

**Execs In The Know (EITK): You started your career at Target in stores and are currently the Senior Director of Team Member Service Centers. How has your early store experience shaped your leadership approach in the service centers?**

**John Caldwell:** My time in stores was so foundational to how I lead today. If you take care of the team, they'll take care of the guest, and everything else will follow. For me, that is true, no matter where you sit in an organization or what your level or role is on a team. Take care of those around you, and the rest will follow.

**EITK: Target is known for its customer-centric brand identity. How does the work of the Team Member Service Centers contribute to enhancing Target's overall customer experience?**

**John:** My team plays the role of helping our team members in the field (our Stores and Global Supply Chain and Logistics teams) solve problems so they can focus on our guests. Whether it's technology not working or changing a trailer delivery, our team wants to fix the issue so our field teams can get back to their number one priority: helping our guests.

**EITK: Your team supports multiple areas, such as technology, facilities, supply chain, and travel services. What are some unique challenges and opportunities of overseeing such diverse service areas within a large organization like Target?**

**John:** I mentioned that one of our focuses is solving problems, but another that's just as important is providing insights back to the enterprise to fix the root cause. Everyone is focused on that across the company. It can be challenging to connect insights and trends across all those domains so that as a company, we can better prioritize what to pursue next. That's also an area of exciting opportunity.



**EITK: AI and automation are rapidly transforming service centers. How is Target leveraging AI in its service centers, and what impact have you seen on team performance and customer satisfaction?**

**John:** We are in the very early stages of leveraging AI in our Service Centers, but the early learnings are exciting. For our teams, we see the potential for faster and better access to the information they need to help our guests. Automation has always been important to us, but we are really thoughtful about where and when. It can't be only about our efficiency. It has to help our teams and guests do things easier. We'll continue to focus on that.

**EITK: You've led teams through significant transformations. What strategies have been most effective in driving team engagement and delivering exceptional service?**

**John:** I'm a huge believer that transparency, clarity, and honesty are critical to the trust that allows teams to thrive in change and deliver results. Even the simple act of admitting we don't

know is powerful. When we are clear about our mission and create safe spaces so that everyone in the organization can seek clarity about what we are trying to accomplish and their role in that mission, the results will follow.

**EITK: Customer satisfaction (CSAT) is a critical metric in service operations. How do you ensure that Target's service centers consistently meet or exceed CSAT goals, and what role does customer feedback play in this process?**

**John:** Our Service Centers have three areas of focus: Experience, Value, and Team. CSAT is a critical objective in the Experience bucket. Each of our Service Centers have robust plans and strategies to not just meet but exceed the experience expectations of our guests. CSAT is an important way we hear from our guests about how we are doing, but it isn't the only way. We use it along with other listening methods, including call listening, focus groups with our front-line teams, visits to our stores and supply chain facilities, and more.

**EITK: Target has a reputation for innovation in retail and operations. Can you share any recent technological advancements or innovations within the Team Member Service Centers that have positively impacted customer and employee experiences?**

**John:** The most recent innovation for us is to leverage the technology we use to capture guest sentiment to now capture team member sentiment when interacting with Team Member Service Centers. This will also help us to better understand where we can focus to improve the experience for our team members.

**EITK: With over 32 years at Target, you've witnessed substantial changes in customer expectations. How have Target's service centers adapted to evolving customer needs, particularly in today's digital-first world?**

**John:** One of the biggest changes I've observed is the evolution of guests' options and preferences to get help, just as their expectations of support have evolved. They

want to get help in the way they prefer, have access to more information than ever, and expect companies to live up to their brand promise. We are all-in on that evolution by offering multiple channels for support, ensuring our teams have the correct information, tirelessly working to restore our guests' faith in Target, fixing the root cause of the issue, and preventing it in the future.



**EITK: What strategies do you use to balance staffing and service quality, particularly in a fast-paced retail environment like Target?**

**John:** This is a real challenge everyone who cares about customer experience faces. Of course, we do many of the things others do, like having the right partner relationships and the right locations and navigating the tradeoffs between cost and quality. Our strategy that focuses on the demand lifecycle serves us well: focus on fixing the root cause of the issue and automating resolution to reduce demand; this provides the capacity to invest in a highly talented team that is uniquely equipped to help our guests and provide the insight back to the enterprise that enables partners to eliminate issues.

**EITK: As you look ahead, what excites you the most about the future of customer experience at Target, and how do you see the role of Team Member Service Centers evolving in the next few years?**

**John:** Our Service Center teams are an extension of our front line teams in the field clear – brands and we continue to work together to solve problems for and delight our guests. That has been a great journey, and I'm excited to see it continue to evolve as our teams in Team Member Service Centers elevate their role in providing insight to solve the root cause, identify issues before they are noticed, and make it really easy for our team members to get the help they need.

**EITK: Looking back on your career journey at Target, what has been the most rewarding experience or accomplishment that stands out to you?**

**John:** Without a doubt, logging in daily or walking into a store and seeing the best team in action. The connections I've made over the years, the mentors who have helped me, and the smiles and laughs I'll carry with me forever. Finding a company that aligns with my values and leadership style is something I'm thankful for every day.

**EITK: How would you describe your leadership style?**

**John:** I believe everyone is trying their best and as a leader it's my role to help them identify and remove the roadblocks getting in their way. I want people to come to work faster than they go home. I want their dinner table conversations about where they work to be joyful. I work really hard to create a culture that brings all that to life.

**EITK: As an Execs In The Know Advisory Board Member, you're part of a community of leaders shaping the future of customer experience. How has your involvement with Execs In The Know influenced your work at Target?**

**John:** Being part of this community of leaders committed to improving the customer experience has been amazing and humbling. It's equal parts validating our approach and pushing me to think differently. For example, hearing about a company that is all-in on customer-facing GenAI made me challenge my more conservative point of view around its readiness there. 🌟



**Execs In The Know**

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Thank you to John Caldwell and the Target team for contributing to the Execs In The Know Brand Spotlight.

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