



UNIT-5

Customer Relationships

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Describe the various quality management tools.
- ✓ Describe the importance of customer relationships in a quality organization.

Unit 5

Customer Relationships

In this session, you will have a discussion look at customer satisfaction and develop a customer satisfaction questionnaire using the ServQual model.

Customer Satisfaction

Poor customer-supplier relationships kill businesses.

When people think of customers generally they think of the person coming into the shop to buy something or have something fixed. These are the direct customers. However, many more customers exist. Some of the most important customers are internal ones (different functional groups within the company). Internal squabbles between purchasing and engineering or HR and the management group can sink a company just as fast as disgruntled external customers.

Based on the Pre-Assignment, use the space below to consider the ways that your company promotes good customer satisfaction.

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Obtaining Customer Feedback

Effective customer feedback is important for any company but more companies do it poorly than well. A few things to keep in mind when developing feedback tools include:

- Have a clear understanding of the purpose of your satisfaction measures.
- Continually assess whether the measures are meeting your expectations.
- Use the information you receive. If you are not going to make changes based on the feedback, don't seek the feedback.
- Get back to your customer. Let your customer know you value their input and that you are going to use it. Some companies send a newsletter or a nice card with the company's annual report.

Most companies already collect the data necessary to gauge customer satisfaction, but do not think of it that way. Things like warranties, customer complaints, product returns, information from trade associations and direct information/feedback from customers are usually readily available. These can be supplemented by customer focus groups, questionnaires, and surveys to give a company an excellent idea of the satisfaction of their customers.

Done properly the information you receive can let you know key customer requirements and can also allow you to identify and track shifts in customer requirements. They are also important in identifying dissatisfaction, unmet expectations and also what makes customers satisfied.

But always remember - use the information to improve company performance. When developing a customer satisfaction metric it is important to include every function of your organization. It is not only your product or service but also your help-desk, sales people, HR, IT personnel, etc.

Once you know the areas that need to be measured the task of developing a tool (most times a survey) must be undertaken. A widely used model for measuring customer satisfaction was developed by Valarie A. Zeithaml, A. Parasuraman and Leonard L. Berry in the 1980s and is called the ServQual Model. The main aspects of service quality are RATER: Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, and Responsiveness.

Let's look at some of the questions that could be associated with each category of RATER:

Reliability

- Are we meeting customer expectations?
- Do our products work right the first time?
- Are our services accurate and complete?

Assurance

- Do our people demonstrate competence?
- Are support materials up-to-date?
- Is our service honest and trustworthy?
- Are our contact people courteous and polite?

Tangible

- Are our products and services easy to use?
- Are our help manuals easy to understand?

Empathy

- Is our support team easily accessible?
- Do our support team demonstrate understanding of issues?
- Does our support team demonstrate an understanding of customers?
- Do our people have good communication skills?

Responsiveness

- Are our responses timely?
- Do we meet our commitments to responsiveness?

Based on the Customer Satisfaction information presented here, and your own knowledge, develop a customer service questionnaire based on RATER for your organization.

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Further Reading:

- ✓ *Managing The Professional Service Firm*(01/2003),David H. Maister