Research Paper Commerce

Service Standards

Dr. M. THIRUMAGAL VIJAYA | Head, Department of Commerce, PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore 641 014.

D. SUGANYA | Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore 641 014.

ABSTRACT

This project aims at creation of effective service standards to the customers. The service should be provided to the customer with the time period. The importance of customer service may vary by product, service, industry and customer. A customer service can experience a change in the entire perception of a customer in an organization. Once customer service goals or standards are determined, employees need frequent feedback on their performance so that they know if they are reaching their goal. The service standards should meet the customer needs.

KEYWORDS | Customer service, Customer support, automated customer service, Standardization, Benefits and drawbacks of service standards.

Introduction

Customer service is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase. According to Turban et al "Customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation." The importance of customer service may vary by product or service, industry and customer. The perception of success of such interactions will be dependent on employees "who can adjust themselves to the personality of the guest," according to Micah Solomon. Customer service can also refer to the culture of the organization - the priority the organization assigns to customer service relative to other components, such as product innovation or low price. In this sense, an organization that values good customer service may spend more money in training employees than average organization, or proactively interview customers for feedback. From the point of view of an overall sales process engineering effort, customer service plays an important role in an organization's ability to generate income and revenue. From that perspective, customer service should be included as part of an overall approach to systematic improvement. A customer service experience can change the entire perception a customer has of the organization.

Meaning

A customer service standard is the interaction between a business and its customers. Customer service standards are excellence, response time, accessibility, delivery time and commitment. All business leads back to the customer in one form or another, so it is imperative that companies continuously strive to improve the level of service they deliver. Customer service standards must be constantly monitored and incorporated into the strategic planning of the company. Once customer service goals or standards are determined, employees need frequent feedback on their performance so that they know if they are reaching their goal. Further, to ensure that customer service goals will be met, managers should recognize and reward teams and individuals who demonstrate outstanding customer service or who meet or exceed their customer service goals.

Customer support

Customer support is a range of customer services to assist customers in making cost effective and correct use of a product. It includes assistance in planning, installation, training, trouble shooting, maintenance, upgrading, and disposal of a product. These services even may be done at customer's side where he/she uses the product or service. In this case it is called "at home customer services" or "at home customer support". Regarding technology products such as mobile phones, televisions, computers, software products or other electronic or mechanical goods, it is termed **technical support**.

Automated customer service

Customer service may be provided by a person (e.g., sales and service representative), or by automated means. Examples of automated means are Internet sites. An advantage with automated means is an increased ability to provide service 24-hours a day, which can, at least, be a complement to customer service by persons. Another example of automated customer service is by touch-tone phone, which usually involves a main menu, and the use of the keypad as options (i.e. "Press 1 for English, Press 2 for Spanish", etc.) However, in the Internet era, a challenge has been to maintain and/or enhance the personal experience while making use of the efficiencies of online commerce. "Online customers are literally invisible to you, so it's easy to shortchange them emotionally. But this lack of visual and tactile presence makes it even more crucial to create a sense of personal, human-to-human connection in the online arena. Automated means can be based entirely on self service, but may also be based on service by more or less means of artificial intelligence. Examples of customer service by artificial means are automated online assistants that can be seen as avatars on websites. It can avail for enterprises to reduce their operating and training cost.

Instant feedback

A challenge in working with customer service is to ensure that you have focused your attention on the right key areas, measured by the right **Key Performance Indicator.** There is no challenge to come up with a lot of meaningful KPIs, but the challenge is to select a few which reflects your overall strategy. In addition to reflecting your strategy it should also enable staff to limit their focus to the areas that really matter. The focus must be of those KPIs, which will deliver the most value to the overall objective, e.g. cost saving, service improving etc. It must also be done in such a way that staff sincerely believes that they can make a difference with the effort. One of the most important aspects of a customer service KPI is that of what is often referred to as the "Feel Good Factor." Basically the goal is to not only help the customer have a good experience, but to offer them an experience that exceeds their expectations. Several key points are listed as follows:

1. Know your product – Know what products/service you are offering back to front. In other words, be an information expert. It is okay to say "I don't know," but it should always be followed up by "but let me find out" or possibly "but my friend knows!" Whatever the situation may be, make sure that you don't leave your customer with an unanswered question.

2. Body Language/Communication – Most of the communication that we relay to others is done through body language. If we have a negative body language when we interact with others, it shows that we don't care. Two of the most important aspects of positive body language are smiling and eye contact. Make sure to look your customers in the eye. It shows that we are listening to them and hearing what they are saying. And of course smiling is more inviting than a blank look or frown.

3. Anticipate Guest Needs – Nothing surprises your customer more than an employee going the extra mile to help them. Always look for ways to go above and beyond the expectations of your customer. In doing so, it helps them to know that you care and it will leave them with a "Feel Good Factor" that we are searching for.

Standardization
There are few standards on this topic **ISO** and **The International Customer Service Institute** (**TICSI**) has published the following ones:

- **ISO 9004:2000,** on performance improvement
- **ISO 10001:2007,** on customer service conduct
- **ISO 10002:2004,** on quality management in handling customer complaints
- **ISO 10003:2007,** on dispute resolution
- The International Customer Service Standard **(TICSS)**

There is also an Information Technology service management standard: **ISO/IEC 20000:2005**. Its first part concerns specifications and its second part the code of practice.

Benefits of service standards
The main benefits of good customer service include:

•**Increased sales**–more likely to try out other products/services too

• **Customer loyalty** –more likely to be a source of repeat business and to recommend the business to friends and family

• **Enhanced public image** – helps build a brand and provides protection if there is a slip-up in customer service

• **More effective workforce** – satisfied customers help create a positive working environment. It should be evident from the points made above that the benefits of good customer service are interrelated, i.e. Satisfied customers will lead to more sales from their own repeat business and from the new customers generated by their recommendations

•A positive public image will generate more sales by attracting new customers

• Staff who deliver good customer service receive their customers' appreciation and are further motivated to offer good customer service and so on.

Drawbacks of service standards
The some of the drawbacks of service standards are as follows:

Cost
Customer service standards can be expensive to put into effect--especially considering that service-based industries often experience high turnover, necessitating ongoing training initiatives. Time spent creating lists of standards and training staff equates to time away from those job functions that contribute to the bottom line. The alternative of hiring an external consulting company to assess and implement a customer service program is an added expense. Essentially, if the use of customer service tools does not significantly expand your company's customer base or increase the number of repeat customers, it might well be perceived as an unjustifiable expense.

Resolution Delays
While customer service agents are trained to respond to customer questions, most are not delegated the authority to make billing adjustments or issue refunds without approval from a superior. This can result in a customer having to tolerate wending through multiple levels of customer service and management personnel to resolve a single problem. While the customer service employees are hired to provide efficient service to the customer, their lack of authority to complete certain actions can result in resolution delays, leading to a frustrating experience for the consumer.

Outsourcing
Outsourced customer service personnel can be the answer to some customer service cost concerns however; this option sometimes comes with disadvantages of its own. In many instances, the customer service function is outsourced to overseas locations, which translates to the loss of customer service jobs on home soil. Additionally, when customer service is outsourced to overseas locations, language barriers and lack of complete understanding of the company purpose can create frustration for customers, leading to complaints for the company. Distance can also result in a loss of control with regard to training, resulting in substandard service quality.

Conclusion
Effective customer service involves meeting or exceeding customer needs. However, customer service is not just about what you do for your customers, it also concerns how the service is carried out. The service must be provided with in the time and it should be more efficient. If there is no proper service provided to customer there is a chance to lose a customer. So to attract more customer, service should be in an effective manner.

REFERENCES

http://en.wikipedia.org | slideshare.com | Google scholar