

Case Study

Customer Satisfaction Workshop – Help Desk Team Building and Performance Improvement

The client: Our client, a world leader in business support and continuity, needed to be certain that its Help Desk team was constantly in touch with the changing needs of its ever more demanding customers, delivering the highest possible quality of customer care.

The brief: Office moves, acquisitions and changes in personnel created the opportunity to completely reorganise the team. The client turned to Customer Satisfaction UK to help them in this task, with the objective of developing a team with processes, values, attitudes and skills clearly focused on their customers' needs. In this way, with a clear focus and common goals, team members would be better able to apply their considerable skills and experience to provide an exceptional quality of service to their customers.

The outcomes: After thorough consultation with our client, Customer Satisfaction UK devised a unique one-day customer satisfaction workshop specifically designed to build a consistent approach amongst the Help Desk team. This took into account respective strengths and expertise to achieve a clear, objective understanding of customers needs. This would provide a sound foundation from which to deliver outstanding customer service.

At an off-site venue, free from distractions, an initial brainstorming exercise encouraged participants to see things from their customers' perspective, being asked to identify a range of criteria important to customers when choosing to do business with organisations like our client.

Participants came up with a wide diversity of issues which, after lively discussion, were summarised into seven principal criteria, such as trustworthiness, enthusiasm and empathy. This task succeeded in breaking down preconceptions, developing a more objective point of view and encouraging participants to see customer service as a general state of mind; something more than the simple process of responding to an inquiry or problem.

In the second stage, participants were invited to rate themselves, judging how well they thought their team performed against each of these seven criteria. Once again, lively discussion helped to identify differences in understanding and opinion amongst the group, but ended in creating a general consensus.

The results showed some significant perceived strengths, but also highlighted two significant weaknesses where the team recognised that they fell short of their customers' expectations. This realisation immediately stimulated discussion and initial suggestions about how performance could be improved.

In the third stage, the team was invited to look inwards, considering what they thought to be the qualities and attributes of the ideal team member.

Once again, after lively discussion, the diverse opinions were summarised into seven key criteria, including, for instance, the ability to take ownership of problems, to be flexible and adaptive and to be trustworthy.

Subsequently, the team was invited to rate themselves, scoring how well they as individuals and also as a team satisfied these criteria. Here also, they identified perceived strengths to be exploited in dealings with their customers, specifically in this case, their individual friendliness

and approachability, and also specific weaknesses, particularly gaps in their technical knowledge, which needed to be addressed.

The final part of the session involved individuals developing their own personal improvement targets. Some people were keen to subject these to peer review, discussing their plans with colleagues. Others preferred to keep them to themselves. Additionally, the group agreed four specific improvement actions to be addressed by the team as a whole including for example, a training needs analysis focus on levels of technical knowledge.

Finally it was agreed, with help from Customer Satisfaction UK, to present the results of this session at a forthcoming customer User Group meeting, exploring if customers' perceptions of their needs and of the competences of the Help Desk matched with the results of this session. It also provided a great opportunity for the Help Desk team to demonstrate their practical commitment to customer service by explaining the changes they had made.

Even before the sessions had finished, Help Desk staff developed the understanding and motivation to start changing the way they worked.

A better understanding of customer satisfaction as a culture and way of working, rather than a simple call handling process, enabled staff to better understand customers' needs and experiences and what they must do differently in future.

Better understanding of the respective skills and expertise within the team encouraged closer team work and built collective confidence in being able to deal with problems rather than ignore them or escalate them to other people.

Understanding issues made the Help Desk team and become champions for change in the organisation, encouraging other teams and functions to do things differently in order to satisfy customers' needs more effectively.

A better understanding of customers' needs enabled the team to streamline their service, cutting out unnecessary tasks and satisfying customers' needs more quickly and at lower cost.

Subsequent monitoring of the performance of the Help Desk team saw improvements in several areas of performance, in terms of direct customer satisfaction as well as significantly increasing efficiency through a greater proportion of "first-time fixes".

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