

Major Causes of Poor Customer Relations in Organisations

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Article History

Received: 10.11.2017

Accepted: 26.11.2017

Published: 01.12.2017



Abstract: Good customer service is the lifeblood of any business. You can offer promotions and slash prices to bring in as many new customers as you want, but unless you can get some of those customers to come back, your business won't be profitable for long. Good customer service is all about bringing customers back. And about sending them away happy - happy enough to pass positive feedback about your business along to others, who may then try the product or service you offer for themselves and in their turn become repeat customers. If you're a good salesperson, you can sell anything to anyone once. But it will be your approach to customer service that determines whether or not you'll ever be able to sell that person anything else. The essence of good customer service is forming a relationship with customers – a relationship that that individual customer feels that he would like to pursue. How do you go about forming such a relationship? By remembering the one true secret of good customer service and acting accordingly; "You will be judged by what you do, not what you say. "I know this verges on the kind of statement that's often seen on a sampler, but providing good customer service IS a simple thing. If you truly want to have good customer service, all you have to do is ensure that your business consistently does the right thing for its customers.

Keywords: Major, poor, relations, organisations, relations

Crises with customer

There are several features which are essential to secure and maintain a firm bond with a customer. Denison (2014) provides a list of these below:

- Remember the customer is always right even when it is obvious that the company or an individual is not to blame.
- Taking the blame relieves the tension, it makes the customer feel partly satisfied immediately and it relieves indignation.
- Aim to solve the crisis quickly but do not make promises that are impossible to keep.
- If there are difficulties, typically when someone is not available or the essential information is missing, admit the problem and promise to telephone back or contact again soon. If there is a face to face confrontation in the circumstances, arrange for tea or coffee and make sure the customer is comfortable. Do not leave him or her standing at reception like an intruder.
- Take all the short cuts to find the answer and to satisfy the customer immediately.
- Remember to apologise and assure the customer that if anything else happens they should contact the company without hesitation. The aims are to please, to rectify the situation, and if possible to give a little token to bond the relationship, such as a sample.

Major causes of poor relationships

Although outdated management (below) adequately explains the basic broad problem, the other sections may help to locate immediate causes of discontent. Wood [1] postulates that a number of variables interplay to produce poor relationships between an organisation and its customers as discussed in detail below.

Outdated Management

Managers who have not moved with the times and fail to use modern approaches towards employees will cause general resentment, increasing friction and possible strikes. Good intentions are insufficient if competence is lacking.

Employees expect to hear the truth, to be trusted and be given credit when it is due. There is a strong need for ethical behaviour from managers, especially when the interests of others should be taken into consideration.

Employees' Traditional Outlook

As Adam-Smith[2] posits, inherited feelings towards management are tenacious and often correct. The view that management would quickly revert to its cold ways if given the opportunity is difficult to counteract. This is reinforced due to increasing world competition forcing management to take unpopular decisions.

Inadequate Collective Bargaining

Steward [3] argues that unless collective bargaining and the art of consultation are taken seriously, there will be a strong suspicion of management. True recognition of a trade union is non-existent until consultation becomes a regular, acceptable form of communication. Moreover, the conflict of loyalties tends to strengthen if the union, management and employees do not work together as a team. All three groups have a similar interest in survival.

Divided Loyalties

The industrial situation is confusing and irritating to many employees, especially those who are conscientious and strongly desire satisfaction from work. Loyalties seem to lie in many directions, considering colleagues, the group, the supervisor, management and the union. Other pressures complicate the problem, and it is understandable to see some people reach a confused state where they are prepared to submit to anyone's absurd schemes, which may mean abandoning their own principles to secure peace of mind. Others withdraw from industry and seek employment elsewhere to relieve the stress[4].

Poor Communication

Insufficient attention to the art of communication causes suspicion, distrust, antagonism, misunderstandings and a general feeling of neglect. The grapevine takes over if all the formal channels are not used, often with disastrous results. Employees feel management has no faith in them and that they are of little importance.

Misunderstandings

Misunderstandings occur all the time; simple conversations are easily distorted and written communications are often a complete failure. The main reasons are the sender's difficulties, poor choice of communication channel, the receiver's difficulties, problems of expression and general situational problems.

Personnel Policy Malpractices

According to Wisniewski [5] an excellent personnel policy is often treated in an absurd way by senior managers. Numerous examples of malpractice in all fields of personnel policy are obvious to employees. No one is fooled; often the personnel department is treated as a joke by managers, supervisors and employees; and personnel procedures become a façade. Typical areas of complaint are selection, appraisals, working conditions, unfairness, injustice and pay anomalies.

Conflicting Viewpoints

The views of management and employees are often opposed on questions of pay, output, working conditions and terms of employment. One group is thinking in terms of profitability, of cost and output, whereas the other group is thinking of sharing the profit by receiving more pay and benefitting from stability of employment.

Low Incentives

The neglect of appropriate financial and nonfinancial incentives leads to severe frustration and low motivation[6]. Such a policy causes deep resentment, a poor external reputation, and effective prospective employees are difficult to recruit.

Inadequate Education and Training

Employees expect to receive appropriate education and training for the job. Some also expect to be developed further for possible promotion. Certainly there is a strong feeling of the need for a mentor, a trusted and experience advisor, who will support them unselfishly.

An Unsound Organisation

The incorrect use of specialists who appear to come between employees and supervisors upsets even a friendly atmosphere. Similarly, unsound application or disregard of the essential principles of organisation leads to confusion and agitation when conflicts occur. Working harmony is lost until a sound organisation is established and understood by everyone.

Cultural Variation

A multiracial society encompasses differing cultures, which have varying effects on individual behaviour in the workplace[3]. Values, beliefs, customs, moral codes and ethical conduct vary and arouse strong, hostile feelings if managerial philosophy does not coincide with established standards.

Cultural conflicts at national and organisational levels are difficult to assess and resolve. They may include concepts of democracy, power interpretation, career stability and dominant value concepts associated with money, human relationships, concern for others and quality of life.

Conclusions

In the commercial world, the importance of retaining existing customers and expanding business is paramount. The costs associated with finding new customers mean that every existing customer could be important. The more opportunities that a customer has to conduct business with your company the better, and one way of achieving this is by opening up channels such as direct sales, online sales, franchises, or use of agents. However, the more channels you have, the greater the need to manage your interaction with your customer base. Customer relationship management helps businesses to gain an insight into the behaviour of their customers and modify their business operations to ensure that customers are served in the best possible way. In essence, customer relationship management helps a business to recognise the value of its customers and to capitalise on improved customer relations. The better you understand your customers, the more responsive you can be to their needs.

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