

## Analysing relationship between employee job satisfaction and motivation

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### Key words

Grocery retailers, customer satisfaction, employee job satisfaction, employee job motivation

### Abstract

*Customer service is an integral part of doing business today. Customer service providers must have adequate preparation to interact effectively with the customer. The preparation is a result of a commitment to increase understanding of the customer service industry, the knowledge of current trends, the ability to interpret those trends and the development of the fundamental skills necessary to achieve excellence. The aim of this is to analyse perceptions of job satisfaction levels at grocery retailers in South Africa and establish whether there is a relationship between job satisfaction and motivation of retail employees at grocery retailers in Pretoria, South Africa.*

*It is evident from the research that the majority of respondents 43 percent strongly disagree with the statement that employee attitude is commendable, a view that is disputed by management. Management is of the impression that it is doing enough to address customer satisfaction problems. The research also established that the customer's perception is that there is little empowerment to the frontline staff. The conducted research finally has established that there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and motivation of retail employees of grocery retailers.*

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### 1. Introduction

Customer service is an integral part of doing business today. Customer service providers must have adequate preparation to interact effectively with their customers. The preparation is a result of a commitment to increase understanding of the customer service industry, the knowledge of current trends, the ability to interpret those trends and the development of the fundamental skills necessary to achieve excellence (Deeprise, 2006). The aim of this is to establish whether there is a relationship between job satisfaction and motivation.

Two types of customers are identified, external and internal customers. The former type of customers is the paying customer who comes to your company from outside. They respond to your business by arriving at your doorstep, telephone line, or mailbox ready to exchange their money for your goods and services. On the other hand, internal customers are people who work in your organization and do business with each other –the employees of the company.

This idea of referring to employees of the company as internal customers gives co-workers a sense of responsibility in the customer process, argues Deeprise (2006). This research will concentrate on the latter type of customers as a focus of study. To further clarify the concept of the internal customers, Blem (2005) argues that to the people who work in the patrol department, the entire company is their customer, the man who delivers the interoffice mail has a whole room full of customers; the woman who answers the telephone order lines is served by the company's operations department, the billing centre and the creators of the mail order catalogues. Employee's feeling about their jobs is contingent on the nature of the work but also

on the background, values and needs that they bring to the job. Whether employees are satisfied with a given job thus depends to some extent on what they hope to get out of it.

## 2. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this is to establish whether there is a relationship between employee job satisfaction and motivation.

### The objectives of this paper are to:

Execute a study of employee's attitude relating to levels of job satisfaction and motivation, Collect front line staff's perceptions on service provided by the company based on factors such as motivation levels, effective communication systems, organizational culture, and rewards.

To attain the objective of this paper, the following hypothesis was formulated.

H<sub>1</sub> There is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and motivation of employees at grocery retailers

## 3. Research Methodology

This section will look into the methodological paradigm to be followed, giving reasons for the preferred choice. The chosen research design shall be discussed. This includes the relevant population, sampling methods, and data collection methods to be used. This will follow in the next section.

### Population

It is useful to distinguish between the populations for which the results are required- the target population, and the population actually covered - the survey population. To collect information covering all aspects of the research in question that is to analyse perceptions of job satisfaction levels at a retailer and establish whether there is a relationship between job satisfaction and motivation. The data shall be sourced from two populations, namely:

- 157 Employees and
- 1600 Customers

### Sampling Method to be used in this research

The sample method to be used in the customer population is incidental sampling. Although this technique of sampling is widely used, it is prone to bias and influences that are beyond the researcher's control since the cases only appear in the sample because of the ease of obtaining them.

- The sample will collect data from 25 employees, and
- The second population, 100 customers will be sampled.

### Data collection methods

The researchers used questionnaires for both populations and asks the questions face-to-face is small enough for the researcher to administer the interviews, it offers a high level of confidence that the right person has responded, it has a high response of 50-70 percent, it is suitable for both open and closed questions including complicated questions, it enhances respondent participation in guiding the respondent through the questionnaire and answering the respondent's questions (Saunders et al 2007).

Face to face questionnaires will be used to collect data from customers. This type of questionnaire has been chosen over the others since the sample from this population is rather large as compared to the sample from the other populations. It has a moderately high response rate of 50 percent. The total relevant population meeting this requirement of the study is 25 employees and a total 25 questionnaires were distributed.

All data was collected from the 1 to 16 May 2010.

#### 4. Literature Review

Job satisfaction is a complex concept, which can mean a variety of things to different people. Carr (2008) defines it as a more of an attitude, an internal state. It could for example, be associated with a personal feeling of achievement either quantitative or qualitative. Although most people are satisfied with their jobs overall, they are not necessarily happy with all aspects of their jobs. Job satisfaction has been defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job; (Locke, 1976) cited in Brief & Weiss (2001); an affective reaction to one's job; Cranny, Smith & Stone, 1992 cited in Weiss, (2002) and an attitude towards one's job. Weiss (2002) has argued that job satisfaction is an attitude but points out that researchers should clearly distinguish the objects of cognitive evaluation which are affect (emotion), beliefs and behaviours. This definition suggests that we form attitudes towards our jobs by taking into account our feelings, our beliefs, and our behaviors

People certainly have a feeling about different aspects of their jobs, such as co-workers, pay, the nature of work and supervisory level thus job satisfaction refers to people's feelings about the different aspects of their job. As the revenue stream is sourced from customers, this makes them potentially the most important strategic stakeholders. The volatility of revenue levels is driven by customer demand, reflecting business cycles, which requires an understanding of customers and the nature of their situations. It is therefore of great importance to build a relationship with your customers since they are the users of the service or product you make, and their needs are varied and forever changing.

According to a report from the Harvard Professional Group (2005) organizations that aspire to creating a work environment that enhances job satisfaction need to incorporate the following:

- Flexible work arrangements, possibly including telecommuting
- Training and other professional growth opportunities
- Interesting work that offers variety and challenge and allows the worker opportunities to "put his or her signature" on the finished product
- Opportunities to use one's talents and to be creative
- Opportunities to take responsibility and direct one's own work
- A stable, secure work environment that includes job security/continuity
- An environment in which workers are supported by an accessible supervisor who provides timely feedback as well as congenial team members
- Flexible benefits, such as child-care and exercise facilities
- Up-to-date technology
- Competitive salary and opportunities for promotion

Services are a rapidly growing and increasingly important part of today's economy. Since services are customer-driven, pleasing the customer is more important than ever. Service quality strategies emphasizes that it is no longer enough simply to satisfy the customer. The strategic service challenge today is to anticipate and exceed the customer's expectations. For the purpose of this research, to analyse perceptions of job satisfaction levels at grocery retailers in

Pretoria, employees were also researched. This includes communication system through face-to-face and telephone encounters with top management.

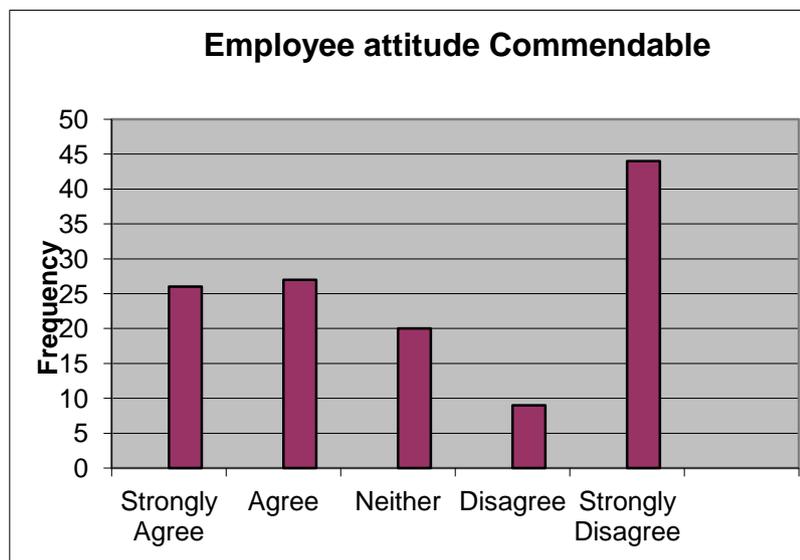
## 5. Analysis and interpretation of results

This section presents and analyses current information gathered by the research instruments chosen by the researcher specifically for the case study as described in detail in section four. The results will be presented followed directly with the analysis of the data and interpretation of the results. Different themes affecting customer services under each factor were identified and then questions pertaining to each theme were formulated.

### Customer Factors

#### Employee's attitude

Positive employee attitude is important for any business as stressed by Freemantle (2002) and he argues that with sensitive and courteous handling, the customers that behave in the most atrocious way, expecting the impossible and putting extreme pressure on the highly stressed frontline staff, can become reasonable. As a result, they have to be empowered to work independently. As the manager wants his /her service provider to be the customer's best friend regarding customer services matters, the manager must also be the employee's best friend. The responses are summarised in figure 1.



**Figure 1** Employee attitude  
Source: Question A1

From the results presented in figure 1, it is evident that the majority of respondents, 44 percent strongly disagree with the statement that employee attitude is commendable. In the opinion of the researcher, this can be attributed to the fact that management is doing little to encourage the development of internal commitment. 20 percent are non-committal as to whether employee attitude is commendable or not, while 27 percent agree that employee attitude is commendable. For clarity on employee attitude towards Pick 'n Pay, question A1, the four statements shown below were posed and the customer responses are displayed in table 2

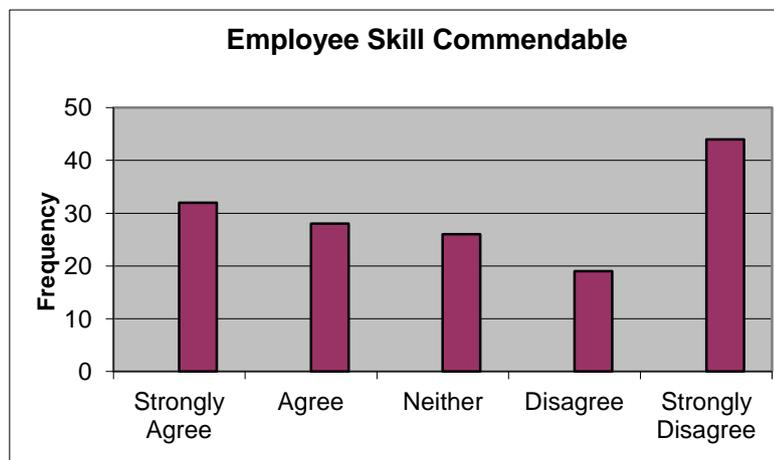
**Table 1 Customer service provider's attitude****Source: Question A 1**

STATEMENT Employees...	S. Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	S. Disagree
A1.1. feel satisfied working in this department	26	27	16	9	22
A1.2...feel committed to the department's objectives	19	24	19	16	22
A1.3...feel their supervisors are concerned about them and how they do the work	13	15	20	15	37
A1.4...feel recognised and supported by management	9	11	17	19	44

From table 1, it can be suggested that the concept that internal quality of a working environment contributes most to employee satisfaction is unknown concept. The high percentages of disagreement bear testimony. Heskett et al (2007) argue that internal quality is measured by the feelings that employees have towards their jobs, colleagues, and the company itself. Internal quality is also characterised by the attitudes that employees have towards one another and the way they serve each other inside the company. It will be interesting to see how the same customers perceive employee skills, which follow in the next section.

### Employee skills displayed in customer service delivery

The importance of employee skills cannot be overemphasised as employees can hardly be expected to operate the latest technology equipment without equipping them with the necessary skills. Question A2 solicited customer perception of employee skills in customer service delivery. The overall results are summarised in figure 2.



**Figure 2 Employee skills**  
**Source: Question A2**

Figure 2 illustrate that the majority of respondents, 44 percent strongly disagree that employee skills are commendable, while 26 percent were non-committal probably because most of the respondents are newly employed who have yet to develop skills for the job. 32 percent of the respondents agreed that employee skills are commendable.

This can be attributed to the fact that some of the respondents are with the retailers for longer period of time and have developed a sense of love and security with the company. To

extract from the customer enough information about employee skills, five concise questions were asked. The results are shown in table 3.

**Table 2: Customer's perception of employee skills**

**Source: Question A2**

STATEMENT Employees....	S. Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	S. Disagree
A2.1...has clear sense of the roles and their overall purpose	20	13	26	14	27
A2.2.are given the tools and equipment that they need to perform their job	32	28	5	19	16
A2.3.are given praise and thanks for a job well done	8	22	8	19	16
A2.4...are regularly provided with coaching to improve performance	7	17	13	9	18
A2.5.... feel recognised and supported in their daily work	9	13	17	17	43

Table 2 shows a strong disagreement that employee skills are commendable. From the above figures, it is suggested that the retailer appeared not to care much about employee's capability and that of others around them. Heskett et al (2007) argue that a strong customer – employee satisfaction mirror involves such factors as the ease of doing business with the company, the competence of service people, the timeliness of the service, service representative availability and concern for customers and the interest displayed by service personnel in helping customers.

In order to achieve this mindset, three factors implied:

- The latitude given service providers by management to meet customer needs;
- The authority given service providers to serve customers; and
- Possession of the knowledge and skills needed to serve customers.

The next section will show if management has an interest in employee empowerment as compared to employee skills.

### **Employee empowerment to serve customers**

Employee empowerment is a necessity for customer service providers to serve customers satisfactorily. Customer service providers are continuously faced with customer situations that are unique to the customer and that are somewhat beyond the boundaries of existing policies. Therefore, empowerment is nothing else, but making someone else takes the risk and responsibility. For many organisations and many managers, empowerment remains nothing more than a slogan. But for some, it means specific actions and practices that liberate human energy and brainpower, and take advantage of individual know-how, argues Blem (2006). He further said that empowerment is all about natural leadership. It's about challenging people and letting them meet the challenge in their own ways, and also challenging managers to release more and more control and to rethink their own power needs.

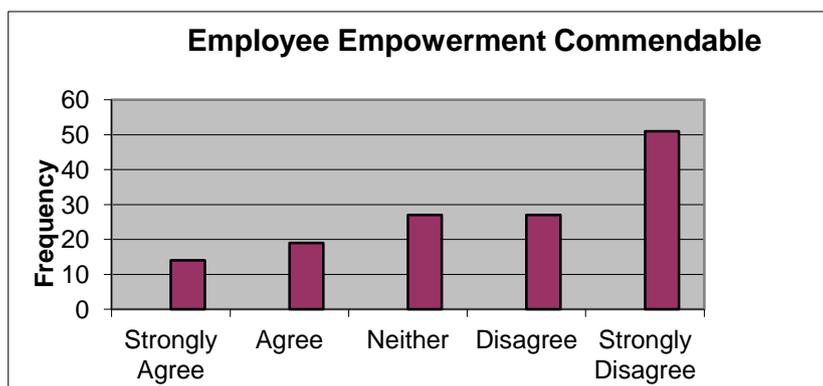
The second type of empowerment is the internal commitment that occurs when employees are committed to a particular project or program for their own individual reasons or motivation. The problem with change programs designed to encourage empowerment is that they actually end up creating more external commitment than internal commitment. The result is that employees feel little responsibility for the change program, and feel less empowered. Therefore,

companies would do well to recognise the potential inconsistencies in their change programs, to understand that empowerment has its limits, to establish working conditions that encourage employee's internal commitment and to realise that morale and even empowerment are penultimate criteria in organisations.

The ultimate goal is performance. Through empowerment, customer service providers are given the discretion to make decisions to assist their customers further. For employees to take more responsibility for their own destiny, management must encourage the development of internal commitment. By definition internal commitment is participatory and very closely allied with empowerment. To reinforce this mindset, management must try to involve employees in defining work objectives, specifying how to achieve these objectives, and setting stretch targets.

The customers were given four statements pertaining to employee empowerment to respond to. The responses are summarised in figure 3.

**Figure 3 Employee empowerment**



**Source: Question A 3**

As indicated in figure 3, the majority of respondents 51 percent, strongly disagree that management is empowering customer services providers. This is probably because management has no trust in employees of not having the necessary skills and capabilities in performing their duties without any supervision.

It is a fundamental truth of human nature and psychology that the less power people have to shape their lives, the less commitment they will have. When, for instance, management single-handedly defines work conditions for employees, the employees will almost certainly be externally committed. That commitment is external because all that is left for employees is to do what is expected of them, argues Argyris (in Harvard Business Review, 1988). The high percentages of disagreement represent the situation of high-imposed control with little autonomy for the customer service providers who for the most part are content to work in this environment, which feels supportive of them. The other probability could arise when the organisation speak of empowerment on ill-defined ways and expect individuals to respond without giving any real support for them to cope with the change.

In this situation, high controls exist and employees feel unsupported and consequently frustrated by what is happening, argue Armistead & Rowland (2006). 27 percent of the respondents are non-committal on the situation of employee empowerment. This can be attributed to the fact clarity on why and when empowerment rather than control is needed or lack of clear communication on the need for change and what empowerment means in their organisation for individuals, teams, and process owners.

In the researcher's opinion, this was caused by the rigid and bureaucratic systems typical of government machinery. Management must empower employees through accompanying high

performance expectations with expressions of confidence, foster the opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making and provide autonomy from organisational restraint. In order to gather more accurate information on employee empowerment to serve customers, four questions relating to this theme were asked. The customer's responses are given in table 4.

#### I. TABLE 3: CUSTOMER'S PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT

Source: Question A 3

STATEMENT	S. Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	S. Disagree
Customer service staff...					
A3.1. are encouraged to solve problems and find solutions	14	17	13	27	29
A3.2...are allowed to say what they really feel without fear	13	14	14	19	40
A3.3. are shown concern for the need and feelings of fellow employees	5	16	17	11	51
A3.4. are given mandate to take decisions that relates to their jobs	8	19	27	19	27

Table 3 indicates a higher level of non-employee empowerment within the retailers. In the researcher's opinion, management is doing little if not to grant frontline staff wide latitude in deciding how to create their assigned outcomes. Management also fails to maintain active communication, so that frontline staff can coordinate their effort and approach their problems in ways that can create synergy rather than conflict.

#### Employee attitude

It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents strongly disagreed that employee attitude is commendable. More positive attitudes from employees will make customers feel more welcome and appreciated as customers. This is an important tool to be used by management to prioritize its operations to improve customer service delivery process.

#### Training and development

Although most of the respondents indicated lack of regular training, it is interesting to note that employees are better trained for their jobs, one cannot help it but comment in its inadequacy. This conclusion emanates from the perceptions of both employees and customers as customers indicated that there is a need to train front line customer service providers on customer care. This can seriously undermine the company's objectives to improve the performance of the corporation, as untrained employees will not be able to deliver quality service to customers.

#### Communication

Communication and the channels used for it in any enterprise are its lifeblood and are essential for the organization's survival. This is probably also the reason that it is important to think of the human influence on the process of communication, and to devise ways of managing the effect of this influence. The answer is to ensure that communication between people receive a high priority. The respondents indicated a strong disagreement on the situation of management communicating information openly.

## Motivation

The level of motivation in the front line service providers is unsatisfactorily, and demotivating. Employees feel are not being recognised for special achievements. Motivation is important in the sense that it derives people to do things, which they previously thought to be impossible. Employees should be helped to realise their own potential as humans and management may use the following in order to achieve this:

- Create a healthy and enjoyable atmosphere
- Provide enough opportunity for communication
- Give every individual enough recognition
- Provide enough space for individual growth

## Job satisfaction and motivation

Job satisfaction and motivation are two rather broad concepts, but nevertheless extremely significant for individual employees, companies, and society at large. For individuals, job satisfaction and motivation are important with respect to experiencing mastery and contentment. At the same time, high job satisfaction has been shown to reduce absences due to illness – employees who are happy with their jobs are sick less often than those who are discontented. Studies have also shown that productivity and profitability can be good measures for “total” employee job satisfaction.

To achieve the objectives of the study the following hypotheses were formulated:

$$H_{01}: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$$

$$H_{A1}: \mu_1 = \mu_2$$

The response of the hypothesis is shown in table 5.

**Table 4: The Pearson correlation**

		Job satisfaction	Total: Motivation & job satisfaction
Job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.072
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.448
	N	157	156
Total: Motivation & job satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.072	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.448	.
	N	157	156

Table 4 shows that the Pearson correlation indicates a perfect correlation of 1 at a significant level of 0.05 2-tailed. When conducting the z-test,  $H_{01}$  was rejected thus accepting  $H_{A1}$ . Therefore, by accepting  $H_{A1}$ , one may conclude that there is a positive correlation **between job satisfaction and motivation of employees at grocery retailers in Pretoria, South Africa**

## Empowerment

The level of empowerment of front line service providers is still satisfactory. Employees generally can solve their immediate problems and make decisions to satisfy their needs. Management lists the lack of empowerment as an internal constraint to satisfactory customer service and front line service providers find the red tape frustrating.

Empowerment of employees is the key to building trust relationships between employees and management. When employees are empowered, management will need to trust them to make the right decisions and employees need to trust management to give them the information and support to make the right decisions.

## Recommendations

The recommendations served to encourage the management to further develop and empower its employees in order to motivate them, thereby improving their productivity level, which is of strategic significant to the organisation's competitive position. Improving employee motivation and involvement will introduce a culture of learning and service quality within the organisation, which will lead to high levels of customer service. Factors which need to be looked at are as follows:

### Employee attitude

Management is advised to improve employee attitude. As the literature review insists, sins of a defective support system such as the rail utility's inefficiencies and unreliable railway system can be forgiven by a customer after sensitive and courteous handling by an employee with a positive attitude such as a warm smile, a sensitive glance, a welcome piece of unsolicited information, or a thank you. Employee's attitude can be improved by improving the employee's working conditions, rewards, training and development. These factors will be discussed briefly in the next sections.

### Training and development

De Poy and Gitlin (2004) state "training-constraint, lavish and universal- is another hallmark of companies that produce great customer service". Therefore, Customer Services management is advised to provide adequate training and development for its front line service providers.

Training and development is vital to any organisation because, as the literature review has shown, it is a means to make every employee more valuable to the enterprise by extending his skills and knowledge, modifying his attitudes towards his job and adjusting his patterns of behaviour in the organisation. A survey should be done to determine what it is that employees do not understand and how it can be improved. It is very likely that employees have trouble with implementing strategies or are unsure about what the boundaries are for entertaining or servicing customers. Social training, which focuses on the interpersonal values, attitudes and techniques needed to render good service, should also form part of the training program. Furthermore, training and development serve as a dual purpose in the sense that it helps management meet its human resources requirements, while at the same time increasing the market value of those being trained. This translates to higher motivational levels.

### Motivation

Robbins (2006) defines motivation as "the willingness to exert high levels of effort toward organisational goals, conditioned by the effort's ability to satisfy some individual need". Management needs to improve employee motivation. It is clear from the literature review that motivation directly affects the amount of input that an employee is willing to put towards an organisational goal, and that the higher the level of motivation, the more the intended input. An individual's desire to reach self-actualisation can motivate him/ her to constantly better him/herself to grow. A motivational program at the retailers should include the following:

Regional managers should have individual goals for front line service providers at the beginning of the year, highlighting strengths and weaknesses. This will enable front line service providers to air their views and to discuss problems that they experience in the area with their managers. In this way managers will be aware of individual problems and will be able to assist front line service providers in solving these problems. Employees will then feel that their individual problems are being addressed and they will feel more motivated:

Defined guidelines and criteria for incentives and individual rewards should be stated to allow every employee the change to be rewarded. Management's task therefore should be to affirm the positive, reinforce individual's and group's accomplishments and share success. It is also management's task to keep employees focused on achievements and discourage dwelling on what could have been or what they don't have.

### **Organisational culture**

A prerequisite for becoming a service- driven company is to establish a positive internal climate, which fosters positive attitudes towards customer satisfaction. Management is advised to foster a culture that recognises the importance of internal customers. As the literature section has shown, the way the internal customers do business with one another affects the way they do business with the external customers.

If the front line service providers cannot get help from the internal customers, they will not be able to effectively and efficiently serve the external customers. From the research, it was confirmed that employees and customers, view customer service differently. It is important to bring the employee's view and service priorities in line with the views of the customer. An objective measurement of customer expectations and views will be necessary.

### **Empowerment**

Research has shown that Customer Services employees feel generally that they cannot solve their immediate problems and are not at power to make decisions to satisfy customer needs. Management list the lack of empowerment as an internal constraint to satisfy customer service and Customer Services service providers find the red tape frustrating.

However, since employees perceive their level of empowerment to be low, management should investigate why this is so, and what should be done to raise it to satisfactory levels. The literature insists that empowering customer service providers benefit everyone. Customers do not have to wait long while their situation is explained to a supervisor, then supervisors are left to do more important work, and the customer service providers are motivated to do their work. Empowering employees means that employees need to know under what constraints they operate, the degree of latitude they have and how to solve problems with customers.

Therefore, Customer Services management must make empowerment more than just a management fad or buzzword. Give the people the authority and associated responsibilities to make decisions considered to be in the organisation's best interest. But empowerment does not mean that managers can abrogate responsibility. The strategies for obtaining those goals would differ, but as far as the goals themselves –empowerment, self-respect, self-reliance, and respect for individuals- they would almost speak from the same pages. Frontline service providers must be provided with training, information and other support designed to allow them to use their judgment in responding to customer complaints.

### **The significance of this research**

The significance of this research is that it reveals to management the importance of customer service in maintaining a competitive advantage. It is therefore imperative to formulate a customer service statement. A customer service statement forms an integral part of the customer service strategy.

### **Conclusion**

The answer to the main research question, whether there is a correlation between motivation and job satisfaction of employees, is that there is indeed a positive correlation. This means that the more job satisfaction an employee perceives, the more motivated the employee

feels. This correlation even becomes stronger when employees are older and more experienced. However, no difference was found between men and women. Improving job satisfaction levels of employees could be done for instance by giving employees the opportunity to voice their opinion on certain administrative issues, and to listen to their input.

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