



Leadership and Management

Skills for the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Statement of Confirmation of Authenticity

By the act of making this submission, the student declares that this is the work of the student named above. The work has not, in whole or in part, been knowingly presented elsewhere for assessment, or where assessment has been built on a previous assessment, this has been identified. Where materials have been used from other sources it has been properly acknowledged. If this statement is untrue, the student acknowledges that an assessment offence has been committed.

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INTRODUCTION

In the following essay a look into how Carphone Warehouse value their customers, the steps they take to ensure they have a robust customer service department, the steps they take to employ the right staff and keep them up-to-date with by training them, having clear values all so that they can provide the best customer service (Lewis, 2016). What the company values are, how they maintain them; how customer centric they are and how this is communicated to their staff. The case study will show difficulties of maintaining staff morale and loyalty with customer satisfaction. A look at the different avenues that are used to ensure that a world class service is provided. These high levels are achieved through training that is being provided to all staff as well as systems that are put in place to assist with great customer service that can translate to customer loyalty and profitability for the business

In addition to this, a view of the different methods the company uses to help them provide the appropriate customer care. Systems they use in order to get the service right for their customers.

The case study shows how to analyse the reasoning behind decisions that are made; were they necessary for the business to make a change. To do this a close look at the benefits the staff are given as an employee of the business and the employees contractual obligation. The policies and procedures that have been put in place by the business ensured that they cover all aspects of customer care and keeping the customer at the heart of everything they do. Finally summing up the findings.

Within this process a look at how Carphone try to maximise customer value, as every organisation should. What is customer value? It has been described as an interchange between what the customer receives for what they have given (Weinstein, 2012). The way in which this is delivered is via quality processes which will become clear later on.

CASE STUDY CHANGING HOURS

The customer service teams in the call centre for Carphone Warehouse were called to one of its regular monthly team meetings. This was held to update on any changes to the service, give the employee of the month reward and update on how the team is upholding the company statistics. Team members can talk about any issues they may have, for their manager to look into and come back with feedback. Also, team building exercises are conducted in this time. In this particular meeting the team was informed that there will be some trials held for working until 8 p.m. Currently the customer service team was working up to 7 p.m. It would be a week-long trial just to see if it was suitable for the customers and viable for the company.

After two months from the date of the trial a meeting was held, and the announcement was made that the extended hour will start from the following month. This was not

received well, as no one thought the extended hour would actually be put in place. There were lots of complaints about childcare arrangements and safety of staff, as there have been reports of mugging in the area. The concerns were listened to and the manager advised that they would look at these issues and get back to the team accordingly. The advisers' concerns were listened to and those with childcare issues, fixed hours arranged. An escort service for employees to walk to their cars and the train station via the in-house security was offered in winter months to provide a sense of security. However, the new working hours would commence the following month, and once the staff got used to it there was no more complaints.

The staff and the benefits

The Carphone Warehouse customer value statement is...

"Providing unbeatable customer service is at the heart of everything we do. With us, it's all about finding you the best deal and the right combination of phone, tablet, network and tariff. We also monitor Trust Pilot to make sure we're constantly improving to keep you, our customers, happy." (Dunstone, 1989).

The main focus area of the company is a customer, and they see the importance of great customer care and how this reflects on the business. All employees are made aware of this statement and are reminded of it from time to time. One of the ways the company tries to ensure they have the right staff is by having a robust employment system in place.

There is a four-step interview system, first the initial look at the Curriculum Vitae, then the telephone interview is held, following this the candidate is invited for an assessment centre interview. This consists of a full day group assessment where candidates are put through personality and ability tests which are designed to assess the candidate's personality and capability of dealing with client's problems over the phone and see if they are an active Listener. Being able to listen has been proven to be an important factor and a skill as it shows accuracy is needed to ensure the messages are received correctly which then forms a relationship between the sender and receiver (Cooper, 1997). Once they have passed these stages they then have to come for a face-to-face interview and the successful candidates of this stage are then given a conditional offer once they pass the week's training exercise. The last step is a week's training at the end of which a test is given. If they successfully pass this test, then and only then they are given employment. The week training is paid irrespective of them passing or failing the test, but once the candidate has passed they are given their contract to read over and sign. It is important to note that as part of the contract all Carphone Warehouse staff are on a 365 day, twenty-four hours, seven day a week contract as per rota.

According to (Lovewell-Tuck, 2006) after a successful candidate is employed there are lots of incentives to keep the employees motivated in providing great customer service, for this purpose the following benefits are awarded:

On the last Friday of every month all employees are invited for drinks and light refreshment which is provided free of charge.

- Once a year a ball is held and all the employees from across the country are invited and can bring a partner, there is entertainment food and drink, courtesy of the business.
- They have a gym and a nursery on site.
- A pension is offered to all employees.
- Stakeholder scheme open to all employees after three months' service.
- There is an offering of private medical care, staff can contribute 20 percent of cost for single cover and 50 percent for any other type of cover for example family. After six months of service staff are covered by an income protection. On a voluntary basis dental care is also offered as a benefit.
- Employees have a standard 21 days holiday and are given an extra day for their birthday.
- There is an enhanced maternity benefit as well as an offer of flexible hours.
- They have on-site canteen which is staffed and offers subsidised meals.
- Other benefits include a hardship fund, staff can apply for interest-free loans, free counselling, there is a £250 gift for any employee that gets married and for any staff that has a baby.
- Carat point is a scheme where, points are rewarded to employees based on staff performance, the points can then be exchanged for electrical goods or holidays depending on the amount of points generated.

To ensure the staff keep the customer at the centre of their focus all around the building, and on the internal website the five sentimental rules of Carphone Warehouse are reinforced (Danila, 2006).

1. If we don't look after the customer someone else will.
2. Nothing to gain by winning an argument but losing a customer.
3. Always deliver what we promise. If in doubt, under promise and over deliver.
4. Always treat customers as we ourselves would like to be treated.
5. The reputation of the whole company is in the hand of the individual.

In addition to the above the employee is given a buddy to help them for the first two weeks of employment, this buddy helps the new employee with their enquiries if needed reminders of how to use the internal phone system and intranet, so they should never feel unsupported. All calls are recorded and once a week each customer service adviser is monitored on a selection of their calls and then coached on any areas of weakness. Praised and rewarded by the current points system for achieving high levels of customer

service. They have a once a month meeting where they can feedback any concerns or ideas and, in this meeting any new products or news is given to the employees. They also use this time for team building exercises to keep the social aspect of the business going.

It can be seen that the company puts a lot of effort into recruiting the correct staff and ensuring that the staff are rewarded for their efforts. All staff are seen as being valuable assets to the business (Armstrong, 2006). The company is run under a human relations management theory. They work in teams and socialise and motivate. Have upward communication and dynamic leadership. Employees feel secure as the company is growing and opportunities for promotion always expressed. All staff were vetted and had a vigorous interview process, so are all qualified for their roles.

It is important to note here that it is not just the customer service department that receives the staff benefits or have an in-depth interview process. Carphone do think of customer experience and they cannot just look at one department to do so. A clear process map needs to be in place for the full customer lifecycle and all departments provide their part right Goodman (2009 p235 – 236).

Through the team meetings two-way feedback is given from employees to managers and managers to employees. Several forms of employee rewards are available which help motivate the staff and make them feel as if the company cares about them. Training is given once any changes to the business were made and continuing monitoring and coaching on a weekly basis given. As all calls are monitored employees are aware that the management are keeping an eye on them (Belletti, 2014).

The organisation has these benefits in place to help encourage staff not only to be customer centric but for longevity of the staff wanting to remain employed by the company. They have all the tools they need to do their work and are rewarded for doing so.

How to know what the customer wants

Customers look for quality in their transactions, quality products, the organisations' website, their interactions with the business and more. The most significant feature for the customer is quality (Alton, 2017).

The process Carphone go through to recruit the right staff and keep them, shows that they understand the importance of their customers and what they mean to the business. A satisfied customer not only remains with the company and becomes a repeat customer but is more likely to recruit more customers for the business (Haroun, 2018). There are many different tools used to gain information about what the customer wants.

A survey was conducted of which 71 percent of over 200 marketing managers said that in customer service quality assurance was one of the most valuable metrics for monitoring business (Alton, 2017). When a customer contacts the business, there are several different systems that are used to store information on why the customer called, and how the issue was resolved.

Netezza is a system hosted by IBM data centre which uses targeted data and cut them into similar small sections then send the results back as to what calls were made, what was the outcome and problem areas there are and what needs to be worked on. The system was integrated into the business in 2010 as improvements were needed on the Oracle database system. This proved to be a highly successful changeover, as now the same queries that took hours to process are now being processed in minutes (Brandon, 2014). This means that the company can spot any issues very early on and resolve them before they become major problems, and also know what's working and they can push that more.

This works by, transforming data warehouse and analytics appliance that integrates databases, server, storage and analytics into an easy-to-manage system. Data can be sourced from any application. It provides a collection of statistical and measured functions of analytical structure use the companies many multi-channels. It is capable of petabyte scalability of thousands of business submissions. No need to offload data to permit it to operate. It is sent ready for instant data loading and query implementation (Francisco, 2011).

The information would be taken from many different sources for the call centre, correspondence department, social media, sales anywhere where feedback given customer information can be found Netezza can bring this information together to develop reports and analysis for the business. This information once analysed helps businesses provide added value. It can also be used for customer valuation which helps business work out which customers to target and capitalise on.

Social media

Carphone have a social media presence to help provide customer engagement. They are on Facebook, they post information on the latest deals advertised and customers can make a comment. Stores have their own Facebook pages where they can interact at the local level. Responses are monitored and where action needs to be taken an email is sent to the customer in response to their statement. Customer satisfaction surveys are sent out to see the areas for improvement (Parsons, 2016).

Kay Parkinson says *"We've got to build our strategy around where our customers are. We're monitoring and building conversations online. It's about putting customers back at the heart of everything we do."* (Turner, 2009).

They are continually active on Twitter, at one time it was one of their main sources for customer feedback. Helping them to turn negative situations into positive ones by acting fast through monitoring customers' tweets (Turner, 2009).

Carphone carried out research that proved 68 percent of UK customers have YouTube installed on their phone (Reporter, 2017). Therefore, it is a good channel to reach customers from a marketing point of view, but feedback cannot be easy to capture via this source.

Although these social media sites are good for promotions, marketing, and learning about the customer, spotting trends and detecting issues; there is a downside to social media as problems such as bad service can be communicated from anyone at an amazingly fast rate and is easily accessible by all existing customers and potential customers. If a customer has a bad experience they can post it online. Once you have social media it is important for it to be monitored; a good example of this is where a customer tweeted that they could not find the local store they were immediately tweeted back with the location. It is also important to monitor third-party sites which they do via RSS feeds, it can pick up any comments about them. Giving them the opportunity to respond and rectify where possible, doing this can convert the customers negative opinion into a positive one. It is also important to note that social media feeds once out there stay there so where possible where there are any with a complaint or issue it is rectified and try to get the person to update or remove the status is paramount (Peppers & Rogers, 2016).

Through all these sources, information and feedback from the customer can be gained to change services, make improvements, send out information basically communicate with their customers. This is what is called the customers voice or VOC using all inputs it describes the overall customer experience (Goodman, 2009).

Negative feedback if not handled properly can destroy a business, which is why it is so important to monitor and action your findings from feedback and complaints. In the Telegraph it has been reported that trolls cost UK businesses up to £30,000 a year (Burn-Callander, 2018). Poor customer service on product reports can go viral, once it has gone virtual without good management it can destroy a business.

The importance of customer satisfaction

The need to have contact with customers to try and manage and meet their expectations is extremely hard. To find a balance when people's expectations can be so different. What is excellent customer service to one person is good to another. The monitoring of customers' movement and feedback helps to get a general picture of what most customers want. There is a reciprocal relationship between the business and the customer, the customer's expectations are set by the company practices but in turn the company's practices are lead by the customers' feedback (Schneider, et al., 1998).

There has been lots of research on why customer service is important to business and what the implication of this is. Ross Beard (2014) states there are six important reasons as to why customer satisfaction is important.

1. It is a lead indicator of customer repurchase intentions and loyalty.
2. It is a point of differentiation
3. it reduces customer churn
4. it increases customer lifetime value
5. it reduces negative word-of-mouth
6. it is cheaper to retain customers than acquire new ones

Once these six points are kept in mind when dealing with customers and servicing their needs the company can benefit and develop.

Through monitoring contact with your customer and conducting different forms of customer satisfaction surveys this can build a picture of what the customer expects, wants and needs. These all help to build a relationship between the business and the customer. This relationship is what will make a customer stay, leave, promote your company or tarnish its reputation. Understanding your customer current satisfaction level is key to retaining them (Beard, 2014).

Before deciding to extend the working hours, the business would have explored their customer feedback and known that this is what the customer wanted and needed.

What is needed to achieve great customer service

A favourite restaurant becomes this because of the knowledge that the food and service will be good. This knowledge and expectation brings satisfaction in knowing that the experience would be worthwhile. Kyra Sheahan (2017) states reliability in customer services helps with retention and increased profits. It is like a hook that keeps bringing the customer back. A survey completed by McKinsey & Company found customer satisfaction is increased by 20 percent when delivered at a consistent level and the bottom line is increased by 15 percent (Qureshi, 2015). This proves there is value in delivering consistent customer service not only does it benefit the customer but the providing organisation.

The way in which Carphone Warehouse recruits, monitors and trains their staff shows an understanding of the importance of consistency. Through these methods they ensure their staff provide quality customer service which is delivered in a consistent manner.

Enquiries are made with the expectation of an answer in a timely manner, if a customer is unable to get a response to their query, it is unlikely that they would want to do more business with that company in the future. If a customer walked into a furniture shop with the intention of buying a sofa suite and no one paid any attention to them, no form of service offered, the likelihood is that they would walk out without a purchase being made and they would be very unlikely to return. According to Jeff Toister (2013) a white paper from Zendesk showed that the cost of resolving an issue can increase by 66 percent over a one day extended response time. Hence why companies like Carphone Warehouse have a service level agreement where calls and emails are to be responded to within a timed deadline.

This is where the Netezza system becomes of great assistance to help the business respond effectively and efficiently to any problems that are picked up whether it be by letter, email or social media it aids the business to respond quickly in the hope it prevents a bigger problem.

No matter what business or industry you are in things do go wrong and how you deal with them is the key. It may be that you are unable to solve the problem but showing understanding and care could go a long way.

For example, a train is delayed due to bad weather which has meant a customer has missed a particularly important meeting. They complain to the attendant and the attendant responds saying the customer should have taken an earlier train that way they would have been on time for their meeting. On the other hand, same train different attendant apologises for the delay and explains how the weather affected the train and offered advice on how to avoid this in the future. In both cases there was nothing the attendant could have done. The second attendant showed empathy leaving the customer feeling better about their predicament, compared to the first attendant who blamed the customer probably leaving the more annoyed than before speaking to the attendant.

Len Markidan (2016) refers to Genesys survey with 90,000 customers that were asked when relating with companies what matters to them most. 40 percent of them said better human service, out of the six answers available this percentage was more than double the second most popular answer. It can be seen from this how important it is to treat people with understanding.

This is part of the reason why Carphone Warehouse training and monitoring of courses ensure that their advisers can help their customers to the best of their ability. Training provides the skill-sets needed to adapt approaches for different types of customers and show empathy where needed. One of the five fundamental rules that Carphone has is: Always treat customers as we ourselves would like to be treated (Danila, 2006).

Understanding the customer and where possible anticipate their needs, by trying to prevent problems before they occur (Alton, 2017).

In a call centre environment quality assurance is a priority; advisers need to be knowledgeable on the products and services, at the very least have access to this information to provide to the customer. Always deliver what we promise. If in doubt, under promise and over deliver (Danila, 2006). This rule helps advisers to ensure that when they inform the customer of what they're going to do it will be done within the timeframe given. If you tell a customer something will be done by five o'clock and it is done by three it reflects on the company well.

Brenda Eckstein (2012), states tangible is anything that you can see, hear, smell or touch. In a call centre environment as the service provided is over the phone tangible items are more things you can offer customers. The advisers can offer, gestures of goodwill which is a monetary payment for inconvenience or errors that may have been made but are not classed as the business' admitting to any fault or error. The gesture of goodwill is capped at a certain amount for telephone advisers. For higher amounts the supervisor or manager would need to authorise the payment. Having a letter sent out or a text to a customer for them to receive it is also a tangible item that the staff can offer their customers.

People are becoming more aware of sustainability and what it means for us and our future generations. Research conducted by Unilever shows that there is a potential market of \$1 trillion for businesses that can successfully convey their sustainable practices to customers (Unilever, 2017). Depending on the region between 78 and 88 percent of customers have a feel-good factor when acquiring sustainable products (feed, 2017).

As people are becoming more aware of sustainability this has become important to customers to see the business they are dealing with is doing its part to protect the environment. Although the Carphone Warehouse business does not manufacture mobile phones they are part of the waste electrical and electronic equipment directive. This is in place to encourage safe disposal of electrical goods. They will donate £10 to charity for every device they receive for recycling. They also will dispose of the portable batteries used in mobile phones (Warehouse, 2005).

Another initiative used to reduce costs and the company's footprint for CO₂ emissions is to reduce travel by having more meetings using teleconferencing. Through teleconferencing Unilever saved 14 ½ thousand on short-haul flights and 23 ½ thousand on long haul flights saving roughly 40 million pounds and lowering their CO₂ emissions by hundred and 13 ½ thousand (Exchange, 2016). When you add to the man hours travelling it is quite a saving not only to the planet but to the business.

A strong effort has also been made at the head office to become paperless and encourage paperless bills by promoting online billing. They have live chat and customers can contact them via email as opposed to posting letters, both of these methods are faster and easier to track.

Summary, conclusion and recommendations

To summarise, when you analyse all what Carphone Warehouse have put in place to get the right advisors for their customer service department, a thorough interview process then continuous training, monitoring, coaching and team building, to ensure they have the right staff fully equipped to deal with their customers every request. Then they have also ensured they are able to monitor their customers by putting in place a high-level data collection system to monitor and be in a position to respond to any issues and or problems as soon as possible. In the case study it showed that they respond to the customer's needs by extending their opening hours, as well as their staff, keeping the whole system balanced.

It can be concluded that they take care of the full lifecycle of their customers by being customer focused. They really recognise the need for customer value and do their best ensuring that they have customer alignment. The change over from Oracle to Netezza was a great move which could only enhance customer centricity.

They are aware that they need to be a sustainable business and have made changes to their business practice to enable them to do so. They have also put in place a recyclable service and encourage their customers by way of donation to participate. Overall the business seems to be managing their customer services well even though it is not possible to please all.

The recommendation here is to keep up to date with the monitoring software. Technology develops so fast businesses can not afford to become complacent, as they will be left behind. When Carphone changed over from Oracle they saw the benefits immediately. Staff collect a lot of the information that is fed into the system so keeping the right staff, training them, having the clear service standards in addition according

to Julia Lewis (2006) have strong leaders who inspire and set the tone. This will result in continued world class service.

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