

Building a service culture

MANAGERS

“My doctor says that I have a malformed public duty gland and a natural deficiency in moral fibre,' he muttered to himself, 'and that I am therefore excused from saving Universes.”

Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Many companies have tried to build a service culture through training and providing practical tips about what to do when speaking to a customer but for some reason, this hasn't changed people's approach...

... Why is that?

Let's look at this dilemma from a different angle.

The pace of change in businesses seems to increase every day with directives about new processes or systems enhancements – it is all people can do to read these changes let alone apply them.

Staff are so used to being told what to do that they don't think, there is no need - what is the point? They believe that someone will just tell them what they are supposed to do anyway.

And herein lies the root cause of the problem. In our very attempt to improve service we have reduced our possibilities. Service is all about treating customers as individuals – really relating to them as individuals – even if it is a short 'phone conversation. But by implementing processes that help businesses manage to its lowest common denominator, we are stopping people doing what we need them to do. We stop them thinking which takes away their ability to relate to customers – have you ever heard people being described as 'job's worth' or 'robotic'?

But the problem is even more entrenched than that.

Managers frequently say that they would like to spend more time with individuals in their team – coaching and supporting them – relating to them as individuals but they simply don't have the time. So if you can't treat your own team with the

personal attention they need... and deserve... how can you expect them to treat customers like that?

Difficult dilemma eh!?

In this short session we will explore what you can do as a manager to improve customer service by your own actions. In session 2 we will look at the tactics you can then employ with your team to help them focus in the right way.

Before we start our activity, take a moment's pause for thought. Go back to the quote on the first page

- What does it mean to you, in your role as a manager?
- What does it mean to your team in their roles at work?

Take a few minutes to think about it

For me that quote was a call to action – it is easy for us to talk about remedying all the ills and place the blame elsewhere so we don't have to take action. E.g. there simply aren't enough hours in the day. But as a manager, you are powerful and have responsibility. It is up to you to make this difference – be the manager who really does put their people first without making excuses of other priorities – why? Because it matters – to you, to them and ultimately to the business

Let's look at how?

A manager's job is to get results through people.

A manager's job is proactive, not passive – you are not a caretaker. However, it takes courage and determination to fulfill that proactive role. If you want to be more proactive read on – if not shut this down and get on with the rest of your emails!!!!

The solution is not rocket science but it is a well kept secret otherwise more would do it... you want to know what it is?

Treat your team well and they will treat the customer well! See I told you it wasn't rocket science but do you want some figures to back this up?

Research

1. Research has shown that for a case study company, a one point increase in employee commitment could lead to a monthly increase of up to £200,000 in sales per store.
2. Extensive research conducted among 65,000 employees and 25,000 customers in almost 100 stores of a major UK retailer showed a clear link between staff commitment, customer loyalty and sales growth.
3. Work in Sweden by Anderson, Farnell and Lehman support these findings and further suggest that; a 1% increase in satisfaction sustained each year for 5 years leads to a 11.5% increase in profits and that costs of quality are also reduced as loyal customers are more prepared to expect a short term fall in quality.

So, easily said but how do we apply this easily too?

4. 77% of respondents in a recent survey for Personnel Today said that the poor relationship with their boss was seriously affecting their ability to do a good job. People are motivated by their boss and their boss's care and attention. The more time you spend with them (constructively) the more they will be able to contribute.
5. At Sears Roebuck, America's number 4 general retailer, they can demonstrate how showing this care and attention improved profitability. When the new CEO took over in 1992 he was faced with a major problem. He was forced to close down outlets, make huge infrastructure changes whilst at the same time improve the attitude of their staff who would be reeling from the changes taking place. The case study of Sears Roebuck provides valuable insights into how individual members of staff can make a difference when truly encouraged to do so.
6. In fact, research shows that for every 20% improvement you can make in staff satisfaction, you will increase profitability by 2% as staff will focus increasingly on sharing the personal attention they get with their customer (whether internal or external)

So let's take a few minutes to explore this in practice

Action

1. Take 1 minute to list all the things that you believe motivate people at work
2. Now take a clean piece of A4 and draw in 3 columns – 2 thin columns and 1 large one e.g.

Name	Rating	Action

3. List down, on the left hand side of the paper all the individuals in your team
4. Now, in the next column, either rate each person on how happy you think they are at work right now
Or
If you are serious about making a difference, ask them to rate themselves and to also identify 1 thing that you could do, as their manager, that would improve their rating. If you present this question in a caring way you will be amazed at the difference you can create, just by asking the question and showing you are genuinely interested.
5. Turn back to your original brainstorm of ideas, and, for each person, identify 3 things that you currently don't do that you could try with each member of your team. Take your time and really think about it.
6. Spend 6 weeks working on these ideas and at the end of 6 weeks ask the team again to rate themselves – what are the differences? How has this improved their effectiveness at work? During the 6 weeks observe what is going on – notice the differences they make and enjoy the successes together.

This is not about asking you to do more with less time – it is simply about asking you to take notice of what your team are telling you – they know what they want and by opening up the communication, you are more likely to be able to focus together on achieving the results needed.

If you want to know more

www.leaps-bounds.co.uk/freestuff on motivation and skill/will

“The Service Profit Chain, The value profit chain: treat employees like customers and customers like employees” James L Heskett et al