

Improving Customer Satisfaction:

The Leadership Factor's 10 point plan

Our experience from working with a large number of organisations on customer satisfaction has highlighted a number of characteristics that are shared by the most successful:

1. Top management support

Top management do not just pay lip service to customer satisfaction but make it quite clear from their actions that satisfying customers really is a top priority of their organisation.

2. Prominence

In companies where customer satisfaction is a top priority, the customer survey process and the results are given very high prominence throughout the organisation. All possible methods of communication are used to provide information about the CSM process, including e-mail, staff newsletters, team briefing, notice boards, large posters on walls and special workshops.

3. Extensive feedback

The top customer-focused companies are not afraid of sharing their customer satisfaction results with customers as well as with employees. They also understand that customers' attitudes change only slowly, even when customer service is improving, so that process must be accelerated by providing customers with information on improvements that have been made.

4. Swift decision making

Once a customer survey has been completed, all the information required to make decisions on improving customer satisfaction is available. No more will emerge by delaying things. On the contrary, customers' expectations may be changing and their satisfaction will certainly be declining if problems remain unresolved. Moving from analysis and decision making to action as quickly as possible is a characteristic of top performing companies.

5. Action

The whole point of conducting a CSM survey is to improve customer satisfaction and that will be achieved only through taking action on the PFIs. All PFIs and Satisfaction Enhancers should have an action plan - preferably very short. Four or

five key significant actions per PFI are more than enough. Often customer satisfaction will be most effectively improved by making noticeable advances on just one or two key problems for each PFI.

6. Ownership

Most critically each mini action plan must be owned by a senior manager. It's even better if the staff who have to implement the action own it too. Ideally the manager responsible for each PFI would brainstorm and agree the action points with a cross section of relevant employees.

7. Management review

As a tangible demonstration of top management interest, progress on the customer satisfaction action plans should be an agenda item in the relevant executive/board meeting at least every three months. Reporting progress at this level is a key factor in turning plans into success.

8. Continuing focus

Keeping the spotlight on customer satisfaction continuously is a major challenge. Most of the top performing companies on customer satisfaction develop a specific communication plan to achieve it, often involving permanent reminders. At MBNA for example, customer focused slogans (such as "think like a customer") can be seen everywhere around the building - even woven into carpets and carved into door frames.

9. Recognition and reward

One very tangible way of doing this is to include customer satisfaction as a key element of staff reward and appraisal strategies. Customer satisfaction related pay has been relatively common in the USA for some years. Schemes are many and varied but can be very simple, e.g. a flat rate bonus for all staff for achieving the Customer Satisfaction Index target. Public and private recognition of good customer service is also a good motivator.

10. Co-ordination

To make sure that all this happens somebody needs to co-ordinate it. That person needs to develop an overall plan based on the action for all the PFIs plus any company wide initiatives such as feedback, ongoing communications and reward and recognition schemes. Progress on the overall items should also be reported at senior level at least quarterly.

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Please get in touch with Jude on 01484 467002 if you'd like more information about any of The Leadership Factor's products or services including our one day seminars in customer research and additional services for when your survey is complete.



The Leadership Factor (UK)
Taylor Hill Mill, Huddersfield
HD4 6JA, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1484 467002
Fax: +44 (0)1484 517676
e-mail: uk@leadershipfactor.com



The Leadership Factor (Australia)
PO Box 373, Pymble,
New South Wales 2073 Australia
Tel: +61 (0)2 9880 2588
Fax: +61 (0)2 9880 2599
e-mail: australia@leadershipfactor.com



The Leadership Factor (Portugal)
Avenida Marquês de Tomar, 69-2°
1050-154 Lisbon, Portugal
Tel: +351 (217) 82 22 00
Fax: +351 (217) 82 22 55
e-mail: portugal@leadershipfactor.com



The Leadership Factor (France)
7 Rue Clement Ader,
F 73100 Aix les Bains, France
12 Rue du Quatre Septembre,
75 002 Paris, France
Tel: +33 (0)4 79 61 78 58
Fax: +33 (0)4 79 61 78 59
e-mail: france@leadershipfactor.com



The Leadership Factor (U.S.A.)
1100 University Avenue, Suite 114
Rochester, NY 14607
Tel: +1 (585) 295-1055
Fax: +1 (585) 295-1057
e-mail: usa@leadershipfactor.com



The Leadership Factor (Spain)
Calle Segre, 27 1° D
28002 Madrid, Spain
Tel: +34 (91) 561 28 40
Fax: +34 (91) 561 75 05
e-mail: spain@leadershipfactor.com

