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Customer Care

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Market research
 - 2.1 Tools for use
 - 2.1.1 Service cycle mapping
 - 2.1.2 Quantitative research
 - 2.1.3 Mystery shopper surveys
 - 2.1.4 Customer service audit
 - 2.1.5 Individual interviews
 - 2.1.6 Team visits
 - 2.1.7 Toll-free telephone service
 - 2.1.8 Customer service department/customer call centre
- 3.0 Customer perceptions
- 4.0 Developing a customer care strategy
- 5.0 Establishing the commitment
- 6.0 Management commitment
 - 6.1 Communication
- 7.0 Importance of teams
 - 7.1 Harnessing diversity
 - 7.2 Evaluating a good team
- 8.0 Making customer care a habit, not an act
 - 8.1 Creating the habit depends on the culture
- 9.0 Summary

Purpose:

To analyse the concepts of a **customer care** program and how they are interpreted by organisations today.

Objectives:

As an outcome of completing this topic you will be able to:

- a. Defining customer care.
- b. Researching and analysing the market today.
- c. Understanding customer perceptions.
- d. Determining service standards and expectations.
- e. Planning and implementing a customer care philosophy.
- f. Examining customer care in action.

Introduction

Many organisations today tend to launch, or adopt Customer Care as customer service which demonstrates that the organisation really **'CARES'** for the customer. This is often embraced in slogans such as **TOTAL CARE** or similar. The emphasis also focuses on providing additional service to the customer.

A strategy which is developed along these lines is destined to have a short life and seen by staff in the organisation as just another *'fad'*, and consequently lacking the necessary commitment for real success.

As the term *'Customer Care'* is subjective by nature it is inevitable that different interpretations will be placed on the concept.

This module will examine customer care from the perspective of what is required to ensure that it becomes a way of life in an organisation.

There are no quick-fix solutions to transforming an organisation into a truly customer focused operation with a 'Customer Care' philosophy.

What is the difference between 'Customer Care' and Customer Service? This is a typical question that may be asked. Perhaps a good way to view Customer Care is similar to TQM with respect to 'Quality Accreditation'.

We will consider customer care as customer service in action.

Jargon has a habit of influencing how we address issues in the market place and this has no exception in the area of customer service.

Today's jargon includes phrases such as customer care, delighting the customer, exceeding customer expectations, job enrichment, value-added, and sustainable competitive advantage. These phrases will come and go but the requirements remain the same.

Probably the most critical question to begin with is - 'Where does Customer Care start.' Failure to come to terms with this statement will most likely result in misdirected effort and poor outcomes.

A successful 'Customer Care' program will embrace all employees and management along with customers. This is essential to ensure that all the necessary disciplines within the organisation are involved in the overall process of delivering the most exceptional customer service possible.

Where rewards are used in measuring performance, staff will perceive management priorities accordingly. For example, if rewards are offered for increasing sales, and customer service is expressed in words and not actions, employees will quickly identify management priorities being focused on profits and growth.

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The corporate culture of an organisation provides the key to the success or otherwise of a customer care program designed to maximise customer satisfaction.

How can you tell whether management pays lip service to customer service, or is generally committed to it? It will surely be witnessed through the actions of employees which reflect the informal aspects of organisation culture. The formal elements comprise the mission, vision, procedures and other control systems. Sometimes these are no more than PR, or smokescreens to the real state of the organisation.

Unless these are supported by important informed values, little will be achieved. These values will be shaped by factors such as:

- The extent and manner of senior management involvement.
- The degree to which senior management practice leadership by example and act as positive role models for customer service.
- The consistency with which customer care policies are implemented.
- The commitment of middle management (who are often the most significant sources of resistance to change).
- The existence of reward systems that genuinely recognise customer service.
- The anecdotes and legends that circulate within the organisation about past practices, historical events, and current priorities.

It is usually these informed values that determine the true measure of the organisation's intentions towards its customers.

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"Even with my 10 years' experience in a service department as a supervisor, this course has given me more confidence and direction, I now see things from a management perspective and am able to deal with situations more competently."

Stephen W, OCE (Australia)

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"Excellent, first class content. Balanced delivery. The value of this course is the scope. It covers the many aspects of management and provides a very good understanding of all the areas covered."

Tom McD, Siemens Nixdorf (Australia)

"It enables the line manager to effectively converse with, and understand other departments in an organisation."

Martin B, Schindler Lifts (Australia)

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