

The Importance Of Measuring Customer Satisfaction With Your Internal IT Services

Internal customers, or your company's employees, are invaluable corporate assets and are directly linked to the satisfaction and loyalty of your company's external customers. Specifics, Inc. has conducted customer / employee satisfaction studies simultaneously for many companies in the IT Services Industry. The findings of these studies prove that loyal, satisfied employees yield loyal, satisfied customers — an improved revenue stream and loyal, satisfied shareholders.

With that said, let's take a look at the factors which contribute to employee satisfaction. Specifics has developed, and for over thirteen years has been using an employee satisfaction questionnaire with questions centered around ten broad "human resources" categories:

- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Empowerment
- ✓ Performance
- ✓ Support
- ✓ Development
- ✓ Recognition
- ✓ Compensation
- ✓ Benefits
- ✓ Client / Customer Relations
- ✓ Overall Satisfaction.

Although all of these categories contribute to the satisfaction of employees, the remainder of this article will focus on the category which is directly affected by satisfaction with internal systems, specifically the IT services offered; that is *Support*. Questions in this category measure whether the corporate culture fosters an open environment that promotes employee cooperation, initiative, and productivity. In short, do employees have the tools needed to do their job and does the organization have the systems in place to support employees in their work. These issues are often reflective of the culture of a company.

Once the basic compensation, benefits, and development programs are adequate, the most significant area of employee dissatisfaction is the inability to perform the tasks required because the needed technology or systems are unavailable or do not work. The effects of this dilemma are greater when the technology malfunction prevents the employee from doing something for an external customer, versus an internal customer.

When nontechnical employees rely on information technology to get their work completed, they need technical people to assist them with hardware and software selection, implementation, initial training, and ongoing technical support. Additionally, paper and / or on-line user documentation must be available and accessible to employees for ongoing troubleshooting and

ready-reference. If any of these IT components are missing, productivity declines and employee frustration ensues at a level that ultimately impacts external customer satisfaction.

Most companies tend to place more emphasis on satisfying external customers (those who contribute directly to the company's revenue stream) than internal customers (employees of the company). Perhaps the emphasis is correct, but what is not clearly understood is the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Although the data is inconclusive, Specifics' studies support the notion that there is a 2 to 1 relationship between employee and customer satisfaction. That is, a .5-point increase in overall employee satisfaction results in a 1-point increase in customer satisfaction.

For the IS department, responsible for providing technical support to employees, it is important to know not only how they are performing on each of the IT components, but which components are the most important to their internal customers. By determining the importance and performance of various attributes of each of the components, the IS department can be better positioned to request and allocate budgetary dollars.

Specifics, Inc. has developed a questionnaire which is designed to help IS departments measure their internal customers' assessment of the importance and performance of the technical services offered. The questions cover hardware and software selection, installation, implementation, interface with other systems, training, help desk, and documentation. By analyzing the results of quantitative answers to importance and performance questions, as well as the answers to key open-ended qualitative questions, Specifics creates a Value Model to provide IS departments with a road map to follow. The Value Model outlines which attributes of particular aspects of a relationship, i.e., training, documentation, help desk, et cetera, need to receive attention to get the biggest return on the financial investment, which aspects need to be enhanced or maintained, which aspects are potential recognition opportunities, and which aspects should be regularly monitored for changes in ratings.

By following the road map, or recommendations of the Value Model, IS departments can:

- ✓ Improve their internal customers' satisfaction in the areas that are important to those customers
- ✓ Better allocate their budgets
- ✓ Directly contribute to the overall job satisfaction of their company's employees
- ✓ Indirectly contribute to the satisfaction of their companies' external customers, revenue stream of their company and to shareholder satisfaction.

For additional information on Specifics' Internal Customer Satisfaction Study, Employee Satisfaction Study or if you would like to discuss your interest in conducting research on other topics, please call 770.391.0013 and ask for Joe Blumberg or Paul "Sandy" Flynn.