INCREASING EFFICEIENCY OF CUSTOMER SERVICE OF A CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL STORE.

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ABSTRACT

A construction material store received complaints about customer dissatisfaction to service staff. This study aims to address this issue, and to quantify whether the measures taken were effective. We studied a sample of 25 sale staff, using random tests to measure initial service performance. Buddy system concept and Knowledge Sharing Training were then implemented to facilitate under-performers. We used the time spent locating an inventory as a measurement of working efficiency. After the training, it was found that the average time spent finding a product reduced from 3.49 minutes to 1.57 minutes – a 54 per cent improvement.

Keywords: Increasing Efficiency, Customer Service, Construction Material Store

INTRODUCTION

Currently, Customer Service is an important activity in Logistics. Many companies intend to be the best distribution channel for selling products and providing services to respond customers' need, including the development of new distribution channels to support the changing lifestyles in order to compete in successfully in today's competitive global markets. A construction material store is a warehouse store business that combines structural products interior decorations for houses, buildings, gardens and tools to provide convenience to customers within the province and nearby areas. The company found many customer complaints about service from product consultant staff. In which the customer receives the service delayed Could not keep up with the demand. Therefore, this study Aim to improve the service of the employees to better meet the needs of customers. This study focused on KPI and conducting a study using the Buddy model by using Active learning concepts to design customer service improvement.

OBJECTIVE

1) To study Customer Service activity of product consultants in a construction material store.
2) To improve Customer Service Efficiency of product consultants in a construction material store.

LITERATURE REVIEW
1. Customer service

Customer service is the direct one-on-one interaction between a consumer making a purchase and a representative of the company that is selling it. Most retailers see this direct interaction as a critical factor in ensuring buyer satisfaction and encouraging repeat business. Even today, when much of customer care is handled by automated self-service systems, the option to speak to a human being is seen as necessary to most businesses

Basics of Good Customer Service, Successful small business owners understand the need for good customer service instinctively. Larger businesses study the subject in-depth, and they have some basic conclusions about the key components: 1) Timely attention to issues raised by customers is critical. Requiring a customer to wait or sit on hold sours an interaction before it begins. 2) Customer service should be a single-step process for the consumer. If a customer calls a helpline, the representative should whenever possible follow the problem through to its resolution. 3) If a customer must be transferred to another department, the original representative should follow up with the customer to ensure that the problem was solved.

Measuring customer value is necessary to capture the essential meaning of quality. [1] However, the existing tools to measure customer value do not adequately manifest the concept of customer value itself. Therefore, the modification of these tools becomes the prerequisite to continuously improve quality performance. The measurement of customer value during acquisition and use is based on intangible aspects (cognitive judgement). Along the value stream, these measures are translated into tangible aspects, which comprise aspects such as shorter lead-time, reduced defects, and lower costs

2. Knowledge Sharing

Organizational knowledge sharing can be the backbone of organizational learning and it brings enormous benefits to an organization [2]. These practices have a positive relationship with organizational human capital (employee competencies), which contribute to organizational performance [3]. Organizational performance might be attributed either from growth, product or services, product quality or organization effectiveness. In designing and clarifying knowledge sharing model in administrative agencies, it can improve performance such as learning, growth, internal process, financial and customer [4]. However, to be successful, insurance companies needs more than just the ability to enhance knowledge sharing capabilities among its employees. It needs a comprehensive knowledge sharing strategy whereby every unit or department in the insurance companies needs to be integrated in an effort to share knowledge effectively.

There is a case study about [5] The Influence of Knowledge Sharing on Organizational Performance Among Insurance Companies in Malaysia that aimed to determine how the implementation of knowledge sharing can contribute significantly to the success of business. This is because, with the implementation of knowledge sharing, organizations can look at various ways to improve organizational performance. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between knowledge sharing and organizational performance among insurance companies in Malaysia. From a total of 180 managers of insurance companies participated in the survey, the results of the study confirmed the hypothesized influence of knowledge sharing on organizational performance. Besides, the results indicate that insurance companies need to focus on their knowledge sharing practices among employees especially in obtaining and managing their customers' knowledge in order to identify customer complaint, needs or wants and customer preferences. Thus, the conceptual model created through the findings will help managers and decision makers to better understand the role of knowledge sharing practices among employees in insurance companies.

3. Buddy System

The buddy system is a procedure in which two individuals, the "buddies", operate together as a single unit so that they are able to monitor and help each other.[6] The buddy system is basically working together in pairs in a large group or alone. Both the individuals have to do the job. The job could be to ensure that the work is finished safely, or the skill/learning is transferred effectively from one individual to the other. When this system is used as part of training or the induction of newcomers to an organization, the less experienced buddy learns more quickly from close and frequent contact with the experienced buddy than when operating alone.

The buddy system is used in new employee induction for assisting with the formalities in an organization. [7] The period could be from a month to two months. The buddy helps in

acclimatizing the new employee to the culture and day to day aspects of working, in a shorter period of time. The buddy helps the new employee to become knowledgeable about department practices and organizational culture in a shorter period. The purpose of assigning new employees with a buddy is to help welcome employees and reaffirms their decision to join the organization. It provides new employees with a reliable, motivated, single point-of-contact for their basic questions regarding their work experience. The buddy system is an effective method to provide support, monitor stress, and reinforce safety procedures.

METHODOLOGY

1. Collecting data and information from the case study

To collect data and information of the case study, by means of survey the company and interview manager, customer, and employee including collect customer complain letters to find and specify a problem. The content issue was company information, customer service activity of store sales employee and customer activity process. After receiving the data, literature review was next studied to find relate research and theories with relate this issue.

2. Analyzing information and indicating the problem

Fishbone Diagram was used to analyze information and indicate the problem. This step would identify potential factors causing an overall effect from customer complain letters. Each cause or reason for imperfection is a source of variation. Causes are usually grouped into major categories to identify and classify these sources of variation.

3. Testing Customer Service Efficiency of product consultants before improving

To test a sample of 25 product consultant employees the Customer Service Efficiency before improving by using random product inspection test. The test was designed as similar as the test form from National Skills Standard for Logistician of work occupation warehouse operator by Thai Logistics and Production Society.

4. Designing Customer service improvement

To design Customer service improvement, literature review and relate research were used again to find a procedure and method to solve the problem and improve the Customer Service efficiency. After found it, it would be applied in a training program for product consultant employees and create the process to improve Customer Service efficiency.

5. Training and improving

To train and do the process improvement that had designed. Knowledge sharing and Active Learning were used to train the sample who have negative test result. Buddy system was used to match the samples between who have positive test result and who have negative test result. Finally, KPI of customer service was used to evaluating Customer Service Efficiency improvement.

6. Evaluating Customer Service Efficiency of product consultants after improving

To test again for evaluating the Customer Service Efficiency of the sample of 25 product consultant employees by using random product inspection test after training and improving.

7. Result and Conclusion

This step was to collect and show the result and conclusion the evaluating the Customer Service Efficiency of product consultants a construction material store after improving.

RESULTS

To collect information and data found the customer complaint letters that remark slowly service of product consultant employee. To use Fishbone Diagram found sources of variation that were caused by two factors; personal factor and raw material/product knowledge factor. Personal factor was torpidity and period of employment, new employee had no experience and no skills to respond customers quick and right service. Period of employment was one of the causes of Raw material or product knowledge factor as well, short working had not much product knowledge to inform correct information to customers, it makes unhappy customers and changed customer's mind to not buy the products.

After that, a sample of 25 product consultant employees was test the Customer Service efficiency by using random product inspection test. The test was designed as similar as the test form from National Skills Standard for Logistician of work occupation warehouse operator by Thai Logistics and Production Society. In the test, every sample had to find list of specified seven product items at the department store and the researchers were the timer for finding. The result showed that new employees took long time to find products and long-time working employees took not much time to find products as following:

Table 1: The result of finding products of a sample of 25 product consultant employees test

Period of Employment	Amount of the sample	Total Time Spent finding products (mins)	Average Time Spent finding products (mins)	Average time finding products per piece (mins)
Less than 6 months	5	122	24.4	3.49
6 months – 36 months	10	146	14.6	2.09
More than 36 months	10	112	11.2	1.60
Total	25	380	15.2	2.17

After literature review and designed Customer Service peocess improvement, Knowledge sharing training program and Buddy system were selected to improve the customer services. The samples who had time spent finding products more than 15.2 minutes would be taken into the training program and match with the sample who had time spent finding products less than 15.2 minutes. About the training program, the outstanding employee of customer service of the company was invited to share service knowledge and service skill which could satisfy customers. Moreover, Buddy system would help new employees learn product knowledge and get advice from their buddy to provide better service to customer. A month had attempted for Buddy system and three days for the training program.

To evaluate Customer Service Efficiency of product consultants after training and improving, the sample of 5 product consultant employees, who had Average Time Spent finding products of 24.4 minutes, were tested again by using random product inspection test. The result showed that the sample of 5 product consultant employees, who had long time service, have improved Customer Service Efficiency by time reduction. The average time spent finding seven products before improving was 24.4 minutes and 3.49 minutes per piece, the average

time spent finding seven products after improving was 11 minutes and 1.57 minutes per piece. There was 54 per cent improvement.

Table 2: The result of finding products of 5 product consultant employees test after improving

Number	Period of Employment (months)	Time Spent finding products before improving (mins)	Time Spent finding products after improving (mins)	Improvement Rate	Average time finding products per piece (mins)
1	5	26	11	58%	1.57
2	5	18	8	56 %	1.14
3	1	33	15	55%	2.14
4	2	21	9	57%	1.29
5	1	24	13	46%	1.86
Total		24.4	11	54%	1.57

CONCLUSION

Study on Increasing Efficiency of Customer Service activity of product consultants in a construction material store. The objective is to study and improve study Customer Service activity of product consultants in the case study. Most of the factors that cause problems are caused by personal factor; period of employment, and raw material/product knowledge factor; product placement that does not be found the position, product out of stock, not in stock and no products as customers require. This study had studied with the product consultants of Hardware department and Structure department with a sample of 25 people using random tests to check inventory to measure performance before improvement) to evaluate the efficiency of individual employees and shows the test results. After that, Buddy matching and active learning sharing knowledge program had been used for training the product consultant employees.

Buddy system concept and Knowledge Sharing Training were then implemented to facilitate under-performers. We used the time spent locating an inventory as a measurement of working efficiency. After training and improving found that the time spent finding products of staff of the hardware department and the structural department decreased from the beginning, before solving problems, The average time spent finding products of 24.4 minutes and the average time to find products per piece was 3.49 minutes/piece after correcting the problem and testing again. The average time spent finding products is 11 minutes. The average time to find products per piece is 1.57 minutes/piece. The rate of change has improved by 54 per cent.

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