

Service Marketing: A practical approach
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Lecture-21
Developing Service Personnel

Hello there, welcome to this course of services marketing with a practical approach.

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Lesson 21 Developing Service Personnel

Appropriate Human Resource Policies

So in this lesson we will look at developing service personnel and appropriate human resource policies. So how appropriate the Human Resource Policies can be helpful in developing the Service Personnel.

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The employees of the service providing company have a considerable role to play in delivering services to their customers. Among other things, they must clearly know the role they have to play in delivering the service and to do it properly in order to meet the expectations of their customers. Appropriate human resource policies have to be evolved and implemented. A culture of quickly understanding customers expectations and meeting them effectively and efficiently has to be set up through these human resource policies and programmes. These issues have been discussed in this lesson.

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As we know by now, service personnel deliver services to customers during the moments of truth. Hence, the performance of service personnel becomes central to the quality of services being delivered. It was discussed in an earlier lesson that service quality gap #3 between specified service standards and the actual delivery can be addressed by using good human resource policies. Most dimensions of service quality can be influenced by the service personnel.

Service personnel must be reliable, i.e. able to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. They must be responsive, i.e. be willing to anticipate customer needs, help them and provide prompt service. They must assure customers with their knowledge and courtesy and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. They must be empathetic towards customers, have their best interests at heart and provide them caring, individualized attention. Finally, their dress, demeanour and personality are important for effectively interacting with customers and keeping them satisfied and happy with service purchase.



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Appropriate Human Resource Policies	
Human Resource Policies for Service Personnel for Delivering Superior Quality Service	
Hire the right people	Compete for the best people
	Hire for service competencies and service inclination
	Be the preferred employer
Develop people to deliver quality	Train for technical and interactive skills
	Empower employees
	Promote teamwork
Provide needed support systems	Develop service-oriented internal processes
	Provide supportive technology and equipment
	Measure internal service quality
Retain the best people	Include employees in the company's vision
	Treat employees as customers
	Measure and reward strong service performance

So what are these appropriate human resource policies, so these are the policies which are required for delivering superior quality service. So the four Policies are hire the right people, develop people to deliver quality, provide needed support systems, and retain the best people. So in hire the right people, we have to compete for the best people, we have to hire for service competencies and service inclination and be the preferred employer.

Under develop people to deliver quality, we have to train for technical and interactive skills, empower the employees and promote teamwork. Under needed support systems provision, we have to develop service-oriented internal processes, provide supportive technology and equipment and measure internal service quality. And finally, to retain the best people, we have to include employees in the company's vision, treat the employees as customers and measure and reward strong service performers.

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Above policies have been discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

1. **Hire the right people:** Service employees need to work with customers. Notwithstanding the circumstances of the day and their personal moods, likings and dis-likings, they must believe that customer requirements are of utmost importance and those have to be met to their satisfaction. They must have experienced the joy of serving others and take pleasure in doing so.

At boundary spanning roles at the outer edge of their organisation in contact with customers and the external environment, service personnel have to juggle customer service with operations and sales and can be subject to lots of 'emotional labour' – a term coined by Arlie Hochschild in 1983. They must have integrity and learn and imbibe other universal values that are important to their customer segment. They must have a positive attitude towards helping customers and solving their problems instead of having a habit of passing the buck and giving excuses as to why something cannot be done. They must have an overall pleasant personality, take interest in their service and have a healthy, joyful demeanour. In order to hire the right people, the company can follow the strategies discussed next.



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So this is the inclination that service employees must have in order to satisfy the customers.

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- a. *Compete for talent:* Our company can identify the best talent available and compete with other companies to hire them. Alternatively, we must assess a number of people for a particular post in order to get the best talent available.
- b. *Hire for service competencies and inclination:* Prospective employees must have the requisite competencies as indicated by the certificates of various courses that they have undertaken. An in-company test can also be conducted to assess the knowledge and skills required for a particular job position. Similarly, an employee who is to be selected as a service provider must have an inclination towards the service as discussed earlier. Employees with high degree of helpfulness, thoughtfulness and sociability are more preferable than others for delivering superior quality services.

Next is compete for talent: Our company can identify the best talent available and compete with other companies to hire them. Alternatively, we must assess a number of people for a particular post in order to get the best talent available. Then hire for service competencies and inclination. Prospective employees must have the requisite competencies as indicated by the certificates of various courses that they have undertaken.

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- c. *Be a preferred employer:* Prospective candidates must look forward to joining our company and working for the same. It is well known, that, only satisfied and happy employees are in the best position to satisfy and delight their customers. Best pay in the industry, opportunity to own company stock, scope for learning advanced skills, recognition, reward and feedback, scope for career advancement and growth, a friendly, positive, caring and supportive internal climate along-with long-term association intent can go a long way for the company to be a recruiter of choice for prospective employees. Flexible working locations and hours, facilities to look after employees' children, employee health care and welfare (including rest rooms) are also important to keep employees happy and worry-free so that they can give their best to the customers of the company.

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2. **Develop people to deliver superior quality services:** Once the company has hired the right employees she must train and work with them to develop them into skilled service professionals. The following three strategies can help in this direction:

- a. *Train for technical and interactive skills:* Service personnel must be regularly trained for imparting, upgrading and reinforcing appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude. Integrity, i.e. honesty, truthfulness and commitment must be enforced and measured as it is the single most important factor leading to the maintenance of a climate of trust and helpfulness in the organisation, finally resulting in company profitability. Interpersonal, leadership and team-working skills are also to be imparted so that service personnel can effectively communicate with customers to fulfill their needs and satisfy their expectations.
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b. *Empower employees*: This includes giving employees the desire, skills, tools, training and authority to do whatever it takes to meet customer requirements, without giving away things free of cost. Empowerment helps employees feel that they are in ownership of the service processes and experience the joy of serving and satisfying their customers. Empowered employees can recover services better when something fails. They can afford to work closely with customers and build a relationship with them. Such business relationships can go a long way for the customers to patronize our service business. This can prove profitable for our company as loyal customers are prone to repurchase our services, advise others to do so, forgive quickly in the event of service failure, be prepared to pay increased prices and ignore our competitors' offerings.

c. *Promote teamwork*: This includes educating employees to understand how the service is basically delivered by a team. Moreover, each employee must visualize how his role and performance affects the extent to which customers are satisfied or delighted with their service. Service personnel must also be imparted training on multiple skills so that they can fulfill each others' roles in the absence of colleagues, serve more efficiently and effectively during peak hours, and earn flexi-time benefits during lean hours. Team-working also helps release stress as difficult jobs can be shared among team-mates and they can discuss and evolve better ways of delivering those services.



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3. **Provide needed support system:** Employees can best serve their customers when they are in-turn supported by internal systems and other colleagues in their company. For instance, call centre employees can best answer customer queries when they have customer data and other information ready on their computer screens. The following strategies can help in this regard:

a. *Measure internal service quality:* Each employee receives services of other employees in the company in order to execute service performance for the ultimate customer. Service employees can identify which other employees do they serve and how that service helps in the service delivered to the external customer. Then they can measure the quality of service they provide to internal customers. For instance, one employee may be providing supplies to another employee who remains busy with customers. Much valuable time can be lost with accompanying irritation if supplies do not arrive in time and there are frequent stock-outs. By ensuring adequate inventory, an internal employee who is seemingly playing a support role, actually helps the front-line employee to deliver services smoothly and promptly to external employees.

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b. Provide supportive technology and equipment: Supportive equipment can help employees deliver services that are more responsive to customer needs. For instance, giving mobile phones to employees can have multiple benefits, they can be contacted by the company when necessary and customers can contact them beyond standard service hours. This gives customers 24 x 7 access to service personnel which can be of much benefit to customers as well as the company in saved overtime wages.

c. Develop service oriented internal processes: The service blueprint must be updated regularly with feedback from customers and customer contact service personnel in order to keep it customer oriented. At times old processes may have become redundant or inefficient. Such processes must be reengineered to eliminate non-value adding activities while incorporating activities that can be efficient and effective in delivering value to customers.

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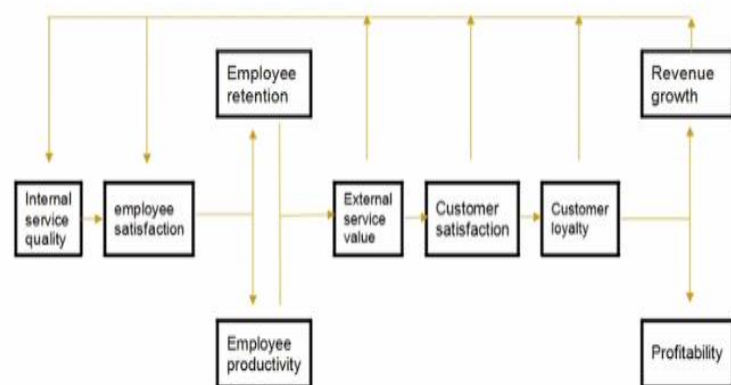
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4. Retain the best employees: Once a company hires, trains and develops her employees, it is important to retain them as employee turnover can hurt the company in more ways than one. Happy, trained and loyal service personnel are able to serve customers more effectively and efficiently, while bringing down costs and increasing revenues and profits. They are the vital link in the service profit chain, a concept (depicted in Figure 15.1) forwarded by Professors Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser and Schlesinger in 1994.

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The Service Profit Chain

So, this is the service profit chain, where we have the internal service quality that means the support employees served the internal employees well and that leads to employee satisfaction, employee satisfaction leads to employee retention and employee productivity a very higher productivity. Employee retention and productivity leads to external service value

and that leads to customer satisfaction which in turn leads to customer loyalty, which in turn leads to revenue growth and profitability.

And from all these the arrow again goes back to internal service quality and employee satisfaction. So, this is the Service profit chain which shows that internal service quality is the first one that drives the revenue growth and profitability. So in order to have revenue growth and profitability the key is to have internal service quality and internal employee satisfaction who in turn will be able to satisfy the customers, who will be loyal and the company would become profitable in sometime.

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Here are some strategies that can be employed to retain the best employees:

a. *Include employees in the company's vision:* This includes involving employees in formulating and/or driving the company's vision. This gives employees a sense of ownership of the company and they endeavour to drive the company to greater heights instead of looking for greener pastures for self aggrandisement.

b. *Treat employees as customers:* This includes supporting employees through their work as well as non-work lives so that they can work free of worries for the company and associate themselves with the improvement and growth of the company.

c. *Measure and reward strong service performance:* Employees can be rewarded based on the customer satisfaction scores. Customer can be asked about the services they actually received from various employees the employees can be rewarded accordingly. Such incentives can keep employees interested in working for the company and her customers for mutual benefits.



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Treat employees as customers: This includes supporting employees through their work as well as non-work lives so that they can work free of worries for the company and associate themselves with the improvement and growth of the company. Measure and reward strong service performance: Employees can be rewarded based on the customer satisfaction scores. Customer can be asked about the services they actually received from various employees, and the employees can be rewarded accordingly. Such incentives can keep employees interested in working for the company and her customers for mutual benefits.

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