**Building a Customer-Centric Workspace**

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Uber – a ride-hailing service whose application provides passengers with the ability to request a ride and coordinate with their drivers in real-time, is currently the most complained about brand in both the US and the UK. Based on compiled survey and social media data from the 2020 National Customer Rage Study, customer complaints about Uber include feeling unsafe using the service, expensive rates, dirty cars, poor customer service, and various other unprofessional behaviors. Additionally, the Uber mobile app has been stripped of its license to operate in several countries due to legal battles concerning repeated patterns of passenger risks.

As the company’s customer service department rating has dropped to a new low of 3.2 out of 5 stars and 20 loyal customers have been lost, Uber has finally decided to shift to an organization-wide focus on customer satisfaction to increase that average to 4.5 stars within one year.

**Challenges**

As the new supervisor of Uber’s customer service department, I will expect to face numerous internal and external challenges while establishing my authority and leading the shift to an organization-wide focus on customer satisfaction. The main challenge I expect to face internally, is rebuilding employees trust – as the previous supervisor’s relationship with employees in the department was rooted in discontent, distrust, discrimination, and poor morale. Other challenges will include, addressing unhappy customers, poorly performing staff, bad attitudes, fostering a culture of trust and inclusion, as well as improving the morale, productivity and efficiency of the workforce.

The relationship dynamic with staff after being promoted to supervisor will shift, as I now hold a position of authority and the employees in the customer service department are expected to follow my lead. Prior relationships with co-workers will change, and have a high potential to complicate my efforts to lead - given that I’m friendly with many members in the department and know that some of them don’t perform their jobs well or properly.

According to principle 6 – subordination of individual interest to mutual interest, I must put aside personal considerations and put company interests first. Thus, the interests of the organization outweigh the personal interests of individuals. Those who undermine my authority or refuse to accept my position as their supervisor, will be met with disciplinary corrections (Fayol, 1917).

Out of the skills required for the role of a supervisor - technical, administrative, and interpersonal, my weakest skill set is the administrative role – primarily the capacity to interact with stakeholders and control the work of my subordinates.

Middle management – whom I report to, will judge my performance based on a set of criteria. Performance criteria will be used to measure my ability to manage resources to accomplish goals, the effectiveness of my results – in terms of quantity, quality, costs & budget control, and HR management, as well as my ability to maintain supervisory balance.

**Rebuilding the Department**

A customer-centric organization is one that puts the needs of the customer first and focuses on building a positive customer experience. To do so, these organizations spend time, effort, and money to optimize service and product offerings, and to identify and address the needs and issues of current and potential customers – in effort to establish long-term relationships and customer loyalty.

Implementing a customer-centric model for the customer service department, will require the organization's internal culture to shift - from product-centered to customer-centered. To instill a service culture and philosophy in the department, I must first foster trust between my subordinates - in effort to change the distrust towards management. The previous supervisor of the department was disrespectful to women and minorities, incompetent, and overall disliked - which led to a culture of distrust and overall employee discontent. As I work to develop a relationship of mutual respect and trust between myself and staff, the internal culture will gradually shift to support a workplace of positivity and inclusion.

**Establishing Authority.** Relationships with old co-workers must change to support my new role as their department supervisor. I must become a strong role model for them to follow, and learn to handle environmental pressures, encourage employee initiative and listen intently. Don’t let prior relationships with co-workers get in the way – don’t play favorites and make fact-based decision making.

**Improve Employee Morale and Productivity.** I will need to leverage the principle of esprit de corps/team spirit, to develop morale in the workplace – both individually and communally. Team spirit helps develop an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding, helps to finish tasks on time, and enables individuals to work more effectively in groups.

**Shift from product-centered to customer-centered.** Introduce changes incrementally and carefully – to allow employees to adapt to the new service culture and make necessary changes.

**Establish and maintain a service culture.** To build and maintain a service culture, the organization must first clarify the standards that employees are meant to deliver and ensure they understand the vitality of customer service to the organization's success. This can be accomplished via employee training, clearly defined roles and expectations, policies and procedures that establish the manner in which various interactions will be handled.

**Improve Employee Attitudes.** The manner in which employees communicate the organizational culture to customers via their attitudes and non-verbal cues is equally important to a service culture. Employee training can be used to influence employee attitudes toward building customer satisfaction and loyalty.

**Improve Customer Satisfaction.** Listen intently to the customers current needs and anticipate their future needs. Deliver high quality products and services that meet customer needs and expectations.

**Improve Customer Retention.** Establish organizational values, beliefs, norms and practices that are rooted in providing good customer service. I must also consistently measure customer satisfaction and relay the results to middle-management.

As customers' opinions of a company are largely based on how they’ve been treated by employees, the poor and unprofessional manner in which employees have been treating customers, has resulted in the loss of several long-time customers. To change customers' perceptions of the company, I will employ a customer-centric approach to provide them with the highest level of support and attention to ensure their current and anticipated needs are met.

To win back the customers that the department lost under the previous supervisor, I must demonstrate that I really care about them through actions and behaviors. By listening to their needs and providing them with the highest level of support and attention, is the first step in winning them back. Putting forth the same amount of effort throughout the duration of a customer interaction is important to keeping them happy, as well as to attract, win back, and retain customers.

**Communication**

Effective internal and external communication is critical to the success of any organization, and is especially important when building a customer-centric organization from the ground up. External customers include vendors, wholesalers, and end-users – people who pay to use the services offered by the organization. Communication with these external customers is key to customer retention, and requires time and effort to build good relationships, understand their needs, and how to best meet them. In contrast, internal communication with co-workers is crucial to establishing a cohesive and sound operation.

As people typically learn and communicate best through one of three modes – visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, it’s important for supervisors to have an understanding of employees' learning styles to most effectively communicate with them. Once I develop an understanding of the learning styles of each worker, I will be able to adapt my approach when communicating with them accordingly – to more effectively get my message across.

I will follow my organization’s communication policies. When communicating with employees – I will use repetition, ask questions, use examples and tell stories, be truthful and admit mistakes, be specific and clear, communicate in multiple modes, and give proper explanations to problems. Ethical considerations when communicating include - not sharing information with all employees - playing favorites, violating an employee’s right to privacy, bullying an employee to force them to act or communicate in ways that violate their personal beliefs, inconsistent disciplining, as well as failing to report a violation if there’s a potential for harm.

The best way to reach customers is to provide consistent customer experience that demonstrates that you care, value and understand their needs. Traditional methods of communication - media advertising, direct mail advertising, telephone selling, trade shows, and face-to-face selling, used in tangent with demonstration centers and telemarketing are very useful. Demonstration centers “allow customers to observe and usually try out complex industrial equipment” – which often has more impact than describing them. The most effective demonstration centers “relate directly to the customer’s needs and include a custom-designed demonstration” (Shapiro,1981).

The best way to reach employees is to first foster good open and honest communication – actively listen to what they’re saying, ask questions, and provide training seminars that clearly explain what is expected of them. Employee training is critical to ensuring employees fully understand the message I’m trying to get across. In contrast,when communicating with upper management, it’s important that I keep them informed of progress towards performance goals, potentially controversial matters, the attitudes and morale of employees, as well as share my constructive suggestions and ideas to improve areas of business.

**Managing Diversity**

To improve relations with my workers, I will make them feel valued via positive and meaningful feedback and make it clear that I want them to be happy and succeed. I will encourage employee input and empower them with important responsibilities, and recognize their success with monetary rewards. Additionally, an understanding of each of my employee’s needs, wants, and struggles is vital to fostering growth and improving performance. To further improve relations with my workers, I will instill a relationship of mutual trust and respect with them. Effectively managing employee satisfaction and behavior will help negate potential problems with employee turnover, tardiness, absenteeism, discipline, and morale – in turn improving the efficiency of the workforce. Further, employee-centered supervision should be rooted in honesty, integrity, respect, and positivity.

Utilize the principle of equity – I will be fair and impartial when dealing with all employee equal attention (Fayol, 1917). By understanding employee differences and perceptions, I will first work to improve employee perceptions of the department. I will allow employees to split or share work tasks, and allow telecommuting.

To prove my sincerity, I will actively listen to employees, ask them questions, and make sure they feel valued by recognizing their successes. By taking a genuine interest in employees and creating an environment that encourages and fosters employee growth, will further help demonstrate my good intentions. Moreover, by taking the time to get to know employees on a personal level by asking them meaningful questions, and remembering what they told you – will further help instill trust, loyalty, and safety.

To bring the department together as a cohesive unit, I will first make sure everyone is on the same page, encourage consistent open and transparent communication, encourage open feedback and through creating a sense of community and collaboration within the department.

**Conclusion**

The following steps must be taken to rebuild the department – sorted by the order of importance:

1. Taking hold: As I take hold of the customer service department, I must first listen actively to my employees, focus on learning how to run the department, establish credibility with my subordinates, and build a power base.

2. Immersion: Once I’ve taken hold of the department, I will continue to actively listen to my employees - to gain a comprehensive and fully informed understanding of the real issues and operations of the department.

3. Reshaping: In this phase, I will begin to incrementally introduce changes to re-build the department into a customer-centric environment. Reshaping the department will entail fostering an environment of mutual trust and respect with my employees, and then training and developing their understanding of a service culture and its focus on providing good customer service that effectively meets the needs of customers.

4. Consolidation: Instilling a sense of community and collaboration within the workplace, will help in creating a cohesive department.

5. Refinement: After gradually re-shaping and consolidating the department, I will work to remove deeply rooted problems – as I simultaneously update and improve any of the changes I made in the prior stages. Fine tuning operations, consolidating gains, and seeking new opportunities to make creative improvements are sources of refinement.

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