Deliver Quality Work with Agility

Professional Skills

Step 3: Decide what to do –
Putting it all together!

IBM

The situation

Roger, a customer service manager, is responsible for a team that in addition to answering calls, collects weekly information on the average call handling time and customer wait time. Normally, the team enters this data into a spreadsheet and submits the report to Roger. But today, he's asking the team to look into factors affecting the wait time.

Review the email that the team received from Roger.

To:	Customer Service Team
Cc:	Roger N/New Orleans
Bcc:	
Subject:	Tech Target accounting issue

Team

I've heard a rumor that there has been an increase in response time handing calls from Tech Target. This could lead to trouble next year, when we're scheduled to renegotiate our contract. Please check the status of this and get back to me.

Roger
Customer Service Manager

What did the team do?

Here are the steps the team took to solve the problem.

Step 1: Identify who on the team acts as the primary contact with Tech Target.

Step 2: Call that person at Tech Target and find out whether there are issues with service.

Step 3: Report the findings back to the customer service manager.

How did the team respond?

Check out the email that the team sent to Roger.

To:	Roger N/New Orleans
Cc:	
Bcc:	
Subject:	Re: Tech Target accounting issue

The rumor you heard is correct; there are service issues that could cause trouble. For more information, contact Clarissa at 1–555–555–1212.

What do you think?

Was that the best approach by the team?

What didn't work so well ...

- The response was shallow and did not add any value. It only answered a "yes" or "no" question without looking deeply into the issue.

- They did not identify who Clarissa was. Did she work for TechTarget or the customer service team? What was her position or authority regarding this issue?

- The approach was limited to finding out whether there were service issues reporting those findings to the manager.

- The team even included a name and phone number, probably thinking that this would add value, but the information only created additional work for the manager.

This response creates additional work for the manager who requested the deliverable.

A quality deliverable should not create work for other people; on the contrary, it should save them work.

A revised approach

Now review the revised approach the team adopted. This method gets to the bottom of the problem rather than just determining its existence as a "yes" or "no."

Step 1: Identify who on the team acts as the primary contact with Tech Target.

Step 2: Call that person at Tech Target and find out whether there are issues with service.

Step 3: If issues exist, find out what they are, and get an informed opinion about what might be causing them.

Step 4: Report the status and a description of the issue back to the customer service manager.

Step 5: Enable the customer service manager to learn more if necessary.

What did that look like?

Here's the team's revised email to Roger.

To:	Roger N/New Orleans
Cc:	
Bcc:	
Subject:	Re: Tech Target accounting issue

The rumor you heard is correct; Tech Target has experienced a rise in average phone wait time from 43 seconds to 3 minutes and 30 seconds. Clarissa in the client operation team (1–555–555–1212) suggests that we reduce the wait time either by hiring more staff or by reassigning staff from another account to this one. Attached please find a spreadsheet that compares annual costs for each option.

What was the difference between these approaches?

- The team was self-motivated in their research. They looked beyond confirming if service issues existed and provided more information, saving the customer service manager work.

- They shared two possible solutions from a colleague, along with her phone number and a spreadsheet, to help the manager.