

THE POWER OF BUILDING RESOURCES

A case study for the CAPM® Certification Course.



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Introduction

A large retail company has thousands of employees across the southeast region. It has plans to expand to more regions, but there are some challenges the company must first overcome. The company is in the early stages of adopting Project Management practices to aid its expansion initiative. Having proven systems and effective processes in place is useful and necessary for businesses, especially growing businesses. However, the success of these measures rests on the behavior of the people within the company. Unfortunately, the company has forgotten this and neglected its most valuable asset, human resources. It does not have strong initiatives and programs in place to make employees feel valued.

The focus of the growth strategy has been on increasing revenue stream and market share, but no plans have been defined for improving people relations.

Challenges

The customers of the company need to be satisfied with the friendliness and overall knowledge and experience of the employees, especially while they are spending money. They need to feel respected and valued by the company as they contribute to the success of a business. This could only happen if the employees are treated with respect and valued as well.

However, customers are complaining about having to describe their issue from scratch multiple times when they seek resolution for service issues. Employees lack attention to detail. When the employees do work hard, their hard work often goes unnoticed. Many don't feel there are opportunities for growth and development, so they lack the motivation to go the extra mile and give good customer service.

Solution

Project Management best practices on managing resources significantly improve the morale of employees and ultimately the level of customer service displayed in retail operations.

The Project Management framework recommends that companies have a recognition and rewards program, provide training for employee development, and provide opportunities for career growth and progression. Having such programs in place will enable the employees to believe the company cares about them and is committed to their future. A display of good faith in people development will transfer into revenue because customer service will increase and customer complaints will decrease.

As a basic requirement, the company should institute the following process:



Having a plan outlining the strategy, programs that support people development, and then a follow up approach to manage the overall initiative will keep the focus on the employees and cause the company to not lose sight of what is important.

In addition to implementing internal people improvement measures, the company should also arrange for a rewards and recognition program that includes metrics around customer resolution in retail operations. Having rewarding and motivating measures around providing and ensuring customer satisfaction in all facets of the retail business will motivate employees to provide better customer services.

Approach

Once the company starts valuing its employees and considering them the reason for its growth, the first step from a Project Management perspective will be taken care of. Earlier, even though the business was successful, it was difficult to identify that there were real people issues. Having a leadership team open to change and looking for strategies that would improve the overall projection are key to the changes around human resource management being implemented.

Next, by understanding the voice of the customer and using that data to drive next steps, the retail company will be able to qualify and quantify people-related issues, especially those that directly drive an increase in customer service issues.

Finally, a process for recognizing good behaviors and practices implemented by the employees has to be created. Instituting a rewards and recognition program is a great way to improve morale, increase productivity, and improve the customer experience.

Final Outcome

By implementing the three key human resource management processes discussed above, the retail company will quickly experience improvements in its customer experience, employee morale, and overall quality of people interactions internally and in its retail operations.

Because the new processes insist on proper communication and documentation, the customers will no longer be frustrated about poor listening skills, handoffs, and problem resolution. They will also experience better overall service. Poor customer service and engagement was a symptom of internal people issues. The new Human Resource Management Plan and Rewards and Recognition Program will address the underlying root cause of this problem. This will also alleviate the stress the customers felt due to the excessive need to follow-up on their service issues.

Critical Success Factor

To implement Project Management best practices for the retail operation effectively, the staff must feel they are a valued asset to the company, believe they will be respected and rewarded for their efforts, and must be properly trained and have career growth opportunities to work toward. There must be independent tracking of each of these items to allow for consistent tracking and reporting, for metrics and measurement purposes.

Finally, more effective reporting and management of key metrics should be in place so that the focus is not limited but encompasses all people-related issues internally and externally. With the addition of a rewards and recognition program and career development, new critical success factors that ultimately focus on customer satisfaction and quality, rather than business expansion, will naturally come to light.

Lessons Learned

While it is tempting to handle all interactions with customers and employees as per a single process, this is too simplistic an approach. Following Project Management best practices around human resources is the most effective way to manage people and customer issues, especially when a company is looking to expand its business, which will require an increase in number of people.

Although it will take a significant amount of work and time to improve employee morale and change customer perception, the resulting increase in customer satisfaction, as well as the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the staff, will make this investment worthwhile.

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