

Auxilium Expatbiz Services is an alliance of experts delivering services and products to companies and individuals from the US and other countries with business or other economic interests in Central Europe. This edition of our »EuroGateway Publications« recapitulates an **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** published in Feb. 2012 in German for your free use! **Together we create value across cultures!**

Customer Service: »Success by Satisfaction«

The Management triangle of POS (Planning, Organizing and Supervising) alone does not guarantee success. This target can be achieved most easily by satisfaction:

- customer satisfaction with the customer communicating his or her experience, this can be word-of-mouth recommendation – or not
- employee, co-worker and superior satisfaction making collaboration a lot easier reducing obstacles, most likely producing better results (quality)
- satisfaction of the acting staff member ensuring easier work flow and thereby also raising the chance for better quality of work results (products/services).

All three levels need to be taken care of. For all of them there are »tools« assisting to keep the objective in focus. Those tools will make it easier to arrive at the goal – or in any case to come as close as possible.

Defining Objectives

The basic requirement is the employees' knowledge of how to achieve or support satisfaction on each relevant level. Similar to the casual research if things have gone wrong (bad performance) or fault diagnostics in technical environments, one has to start (if necessary on a daily basis) homing on:

- What will support today, this week, this year my personal satisfaction?
- How can I support or provide satisfaction for my staff, my workmates and my superiors?
- What do I have to do to achieve my (internal or external) customer's satisfaction?

Different tools will help to identify those objectives. For the personal goals it might be a self-assessment or a pros-cons list. Clearly defined and documented tasks and competencies as well as agreements within the organization will help in the environment of staff, workmates and superiors. For the external environment of the company we suggest installing a »Satisfaction Management« that is customer oriented. All those tools are either appliances which can be learned and trained in their application or they can be designed by the company using such appliances – if suitable, with external assistance. Please contact us at dr.herdmann@expatbiz.eu for more information! Duties and competencies should be defined and documented in an **Organizational Manual**. Satisfaction Management should include strategies for the prevention, the identification, and the resolution of problems. Its indispensable core will be a **Complaint Management** process which will facilitate the receipt of complaints instead of hindering or even preventing them.

Management of Satisfaction: a Factor Determining Success

Positive, as well as negative experiences are communicated. The problem you will be confronted with is that positive experiences will be communicated only to 5 or 10 persons by word-of-mouth recommendation while negative experiences will be talked about much more frequently (with between 10 and 16 individuals) hence have many more recipients. Also it is a well researched fact that for each customer who sends a complaint to your company there are about 19 additional disappointed customers not giving any notice. This means that for each complaint that you receive you have to assume there will be between 200 and 320 negative remarks circulating – and possibly more with social media!

Neither success nor satisfaction will come over night without any action undertaken. Both – success and satisfaction – are elements of development processes and such processes will take time to become effective. Development will take place on three levels:

- systemic
- interpersonal and
- intrapersonal

All three levels form a hierarchy: If someone is not able to cope with himself he or she will not be able to develop interpersonally. If the team is not able to cope and communicate the most beautiful and expert systemic processes will not work. Individual issues, approaches and skills may need support through training, coaching or supervision.

Intrapersonal Development

Here the values that determine our actions have a special meaning. As a general rule an employee who seems to be a problem is someone who has a problem. Also as a general rule the ability to resolve problems amicably will raise self assuredness and self assuredness raises satisfaction. You can't »produce« customer satisfaction without employee satisfaction and the road to satisfaction must be travelled starting with the very first contact.

The company must accept to be asked – and ask the question themselves what are the values they preach internally and whether those values are the values of their employees. The target will be missed if one attempts to achieve satisfaction or even happiness solely with salaries or premiums.

Interpersonal Development

Employees must be trained in their ability to hear what is being said implicitly alone: What is it that my counterpart imperatively wants to achieve and what is it that may not take place at all? The ability is needed to react to anything said in a manner making progress and developing the communication further and deeper and carving out the customer's fears and objectives.

Systemic Development

Any communication must be taken seriously and must be taken care of appropriately without undue delay. The systematic analysis of the complete feedback is the only basis for continual improvement of quality. The classical understanding of the expression »customer« is invalid since all forms of discontent have a damaging effect. Therefore modern companies have developed their customer relationship management into a feedback management.

Basic elements of satisfaction management

Ready-made »canned« programs will usually have no effect to raise the preparedness of staff to achieve objectives: the aggrieved parties did not participate in designing the remedy. It is recommended to conduct a detailed analysis to identify blockades and, based on this, to design a customized process of development. Kick-off interviews with selected employees will help to identify obstacles for success. Those obstacles should be addressed in customized workshops with those employees to design the basis of Satisfaction Management in your company. This will support commitment to common objectives. Feedback interviews six weeks after implementation will strengthen the process.

Issues in how the system is managed, its philosophy and culture may have a direct impact on all three levels of the system and can often be resolved rapidly. This is where external support by a consultant may be of great value. Contact us to discuss possible Satisfaction Obstacles for your organization in a Central European environment at dr.herdmann@expatbiz.eu!

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