



Published each month by:

PROCESS QUALITY ASSOCIATES INC.

690 King St., Suite 2, London, Ontario N5W-2X3 Phone (519)-667-1720 1-800-837-7046 Fax (519)-667-1722

"We engineer the quality of your success"

VOL. 96 No. K

Circulated to people interested in improving their products and processes

Benchmarking Tip:

MANAGE THE CHANGE FROM THE START

The purpose of benchmarking is to change a process or practice for the better. Unfortunately, many benchmarking studies never get beyond producing recommendations; they get bogged down when it comes time for implementation. If a company does not properly manage change from the onset of the benchmarking study, the recommendations will sit on a shelf.

Following are a couple of ways that may help with the implementing of recommendations:

- Before undergoing the benchmarking process, inform everyone who has a stake in the study such as the managers, funders, process users, customers, etc., and if possible, get them involved in it. By doing so, the stakeholders will likely accept the recommendations and help implement the necessary changes.
- Using benchmarking facilitators who are trained in organizational change management techniques can improve the effectiveness of benchmarking studies, and increase the likelihood that the results of the team's efforts will be embraced by the company.

Surprise And Delight Your Customers

Customers have a lot of choices today so companies need to go above and beyond to stand out. They need to undersell and overdeliver. Since 15% to 40% of customers are at risk of going to a competitor, everyone in the company needs to be committed to amazing and delighting customers with unexpected quality and service.

Companies should have pre-programmed responses for the 5 or 6 things that might go wrong to ruin a customer's experience with the company. Walt Disney World, for example, has a Vice-President in charge of its parking lots who eliminates parking-related issues before they become a problem. If something goes wrong, such as a customer not being able to find their car in a 75,000-car lot, the customer's entire Disney experience might be ruined.

Some companies are now using a data base to note customers' preferences, purchasing habits, etc., so they can speak to them on a personal level. Generally the more personal the service, the more loyal the customer is. Ritz-Carlton, for example, has a frequent-guest system. When a guest requests something special at one hotel location, the next day, any other Ritz-Carlton hotel can call up the guest's record and note that special request.

Sheila Kessler, author of *Total Quality Service*, brought her own satin pillow cases when she stayed at Ritz-Carlton. "The next time I stayed at a Ritz-Carlton," says Kessler, "to my surprise and delight, the hotel had satin pillow cases on my pillows!"

Another way to delight customers is through mass customization. It used to be only small shops offered customized services, but increasingly, large companies are now customizing. Levi Strauss offers custom-fit jeans and will send them directly to customers' homes. American Airlines expedites meal service on flights for those who want their meals sooner.

While small improvements to delight customers can set a company apart from the rest, companies must ensure that what they are doing adds value for the customer.

Thoughtfulness Leaves A Good Feeling With Customers

"Many customers visit our company each day. During the cold and flu season, I always keep a box of tissue and a package of cough drops handy just in case one of my customers has a cough or cold. They are always surprised and so thankful when I am prepared. Providing this little bit of TLC shows customers we care."

- Roger LaMarche, Customer Service
Print Three, Etobicoke, Ontario