DEFINING QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE COMPETENCIES AT

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT'S

MEMORIAL STUDENT CENTER

By

Sarah L. Crawford

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The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751

ABSTRACT

Crawford   Sarah   L.
(Writer)   (Last Name)   (First)   (Initial)

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The purpose of this project was to assist the University of Wisconsin-Stout's

Memorial Student Center (MSC) toward improving and maintaining their quality of

customer service. A full census of 398 Memorial Student Center (MSC) staff was

conducted to best profile customer service attitudes and beliefs among the current

employees. A total of 189 surveys were returned for an overall response rate of 47.5%.

Participants included 162 student staff, 23 permanent staff and 4 participants did not

respond to whether or not they were permanent or student staff. A survey containing 39

items rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale and five open-ended ("other") responses was

developed for use in the study. All quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive

statistics, correlations, t-tests, and factor analysis. Qualitative data was analyzed by *first,*

identifying open-ended responses that could be seen as replicating existing Likert scale

items and *second* to identify and organize qualitative responses that introduced unique

concepts.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to assist the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Memorial Student Center (MSC) toward improving and maintaining their quality of customer service. This was the first of a two-phase research effort designed to provide the information required by the MSC to accomplish these goals. This stage of the research protocol included an extensive review of the literature related to customer service, organized and extracted critical themes from these previous studies, examined existing measurement scales and designed a comprehensive measure of customer service goals and processes. Accordingly, this primary stage was organized around the following objectives.

1. From the literature, compile a comprehensive list of all dimensions of customer service cited as contributing to quality.

2. Using the broad content defined above; build the research instrument used in both phases of the investigation.

3. Through data collected from MSC employees, construct the profile of optimal customer service as envisioned within the organization.

4. Report the data from the employee survey to guide improvements in existing service training modules and develop new ones.

The second stage of the overall plan will use the survey instrument designed and used for this study in an effort to profile the dimensions of optimal service as reported by MSC customers. This new customer-defined profile then will be contrasted to the provider-

defined profile from this study. This will allow MSC staff to map those aspects of service important to an optimal working environment within the MSC (provider-defined profile), isolate those dimensions of service central to interactions with clients (customer-defined profile) and discover any gaps in meeting customer expectations (customer-defined expectations not included in the provider-defined profile).

The Importance of Customer Service

Understanding customer service is one of the utmost priorities for many companies. Service is a valuable resource and, if customers do not receive the service they expect, they will go elsewhere (Graham, 1994). Horovitz (1990) defined service as being "measured in terms of freedom from inconvenience and added value of products, that is, in terms of basic service features and the customer's experience with the service" (p. 13).

Purdy (2001) gave a few reasons that indicate the importance of focusing on customer service. *First* he stated that a recent national survey found that poor service was the reason almost half of all consumers stopped doing business with a company during the past year. *Second*, companies that hire customer service representatives without strong service capabilities are at risk of losing valuable lifetime customers. *Third*, 70% of customers will buy products from companies that have excellent customer-service reputations.

Zemke and Woods (1998) explained that it is vital to be concerned with customer service employees because they have the ability to retain the customer base. They also noted that some managers view customer service as separate from their department.

These managers believe that customer service is supposed to take care of customer complaints, problems and questions, and they often overlook customer service being the responsibility of the whole organization, each department contributing in its own way. In addition to this, Greenberg (1996) mentioned that customer service representatives have the potential to clear up situations and deal with them on their own without having to call on managers or supervisors. Such efficiency greatly facilitates the service process leading to satisfied and loyal customers.

Loyal customers are important and essential. Research has shown that 65% of a typical company's business comes from current loyal customers (Tschohl, 1998). Perlik (1999) stated that customer loyalty increases when a complaint is handled effectively and also includes guidelines to address customer concerns. Employees should apologize sincerely, involve the customer in the resolution, fix problems quickly, do extra for the customer, follow up with the customer and confirm repeat business. Businesses that concentrate on finding and keeping good customers, productive employees, and supportive investors continue to generate greater results. Loyalty is one of the great producers of business success (Reichheld, 1996).

While many organizations realize that it is important to understand customers' needs, many find that it is not easy to determine the importance of particular consumer demands or implement a plan to satisfy them. A survey by Yankelovich Partners found that 90% of customers said they felt they paid enough money to get the highest levels of service, yet 64% said that service representatives they dealt with did not care about their needs (Jones, 1997). Similarly, Meister, Chambers and Shehab (2000) stated that 92% of the executives from a Forrester Research survey believed that a common view of the

customer is important or needed, but only 38% believed that they would reach that goal in one year. Failure to provide the desired level of service to the customer often results from the organization's failure to realize the complexity of the service process. As the following review describes, service hinges on a variety of factors that occur during exchanges with the client, but it also is determined by numerous exchanges that occur between company employees *before and during* the contact with the consumer.

Characteristics of Service-related Interactions with Customers

The employee/service provider and customer often interact and communicate, which is also a large aspect of customer service. Employees have the ability to make the customers' experience positive or negative based on this interaction. Harris (2000) asserts, "Customer service is anything we do for the customer that enhances the customer experience". An analogous perspective comes from Zemke & Woods (1998) which states, customer service is a relationship with people who are essential to everything you do; meeting the needs and expectations of the customer as defined by the customer; used to create a mutually beneficial relationship between itself and those it serves; and a proactive attitude that can be summed up as: I care and I can do. Similarly, Evenson (1999) explained that people skills are at the root of good customer service. People skills include interpersonal relations, problem solving, teamwork and leadership. These skills also foster a positive attitude, effective communication, courteous and respectful interaction and the ability to remain calm and in control in difficult situations.

Many departments in various organizations may have slightly different service dimensions. However, certain dimensions which may/may not have been developed with

the consideration of customers' expectations and perceptions seem to relate to almost every service business.

Tangibles include the physical goods and facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel (Booth, 1999; Dube, Renaghen, and Miller, 1994). *Reliability* includes the employee having the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. It also involves understanding the needs and perspectives of others and being conscientious (hard-working, well-organized and reliable) (Cagle, 1998; Dube, Renaghen, & Miller, 1994; Greenberg and Sidler, 1998). *Responsiveness* involves aggressiveness and willingness of employees to help customers and provide prompt service (Dube, Renaghen, & Miller, 1994; Greenberg & Sidler, 1998). *Assurance* includes the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence (Cagle, 1998; Dube, Renaghen, & Miller, 1994). *Empathy* involves caring and individualized attention the organization provides its customers. Empathy also involves being able to identify emotionally with employers and customers (Dube, Renaghen, & Miller, 1994; Goodman, 2000; Greenberg & Sidler, 1998). These dimensions should be seen in service businesses for customers to get the most out of their experience.

Booth (1999) noted that customers want attitude, knowledge, standards and initiative when receiving customer service. Booth (1999), Cagle (1998) and Evenson (1999) stated that communication skills are also critical in delivering customer service. Hyland (2000) suggested doing what the MSC is in the process of; list the most important customer service elements and circulate questionnaires to customer service representatives and customers asking them what they think is important. Confidence is a

good starting point for customer service, according to Cagle (1998). He also explained

that good people skills, and the ability to position information in a way that is acceptable

and exciting to the customer are also important in customer service.

The best customer service representatives solve problems with ease and speed

(Greenberg & Sidler, 1998). Other qualities include: security (calm and clear headed,

even under demanding situations), helpfulness (agreeable, and good natured), and

problem-solving ability (smart enough to meet customer needs). People who succeed in

customer service are motivated to please and be helpful (Greenberg & Sidler, 1998).

According to Goodman (2000), there is an outline of exceptional customer service

representatives. Exceptional customer service representatives (CSR's) enjoy helping

other people and are most likely people-oriented people. Exceptional CSR's are team

players; they enjoy being part of a team and take comfort in the fact that they can depend

on others and feel a sense of pride in the fact that others can rely on them. Exceptional

CSR's enjoy interacting with other people. They love to stay busy with a full workload

and enjoy meeting challenges of their work that other candidates would shy away from.

They are able to identify emotionally with their employers as well as their clients.

Exceptional CSR's are able to get along with different people from diverse backgrounds.

They have an ability to please most people and accept feedback and criticism in a

constructive manner. Exceptional CSR's are generally pleased with their past work

experiences and past employers. Exceptional CSR's are stakeholders and "rooted"

people and they tend to work at the same place for a considerable period of time.

Zemke & Woods (1998) also noted ten common mistakes employees make with

their customers. *First*, employees take the customer for granted. *Second*, employees use

jargon, expecting the customer to understand their lingo. The customer may perceive this behavior as being rude and unwilling to help. *Third*, employees speak so fast that the customer has to ask him/her to repeat what was said. *Fourth*, employees give short, slashed answers to the customer's questions. *Fifth*, employees do not appear like they care about the customer's complaint. *Sixth*, employees are not proactive when a problem arises. *Seventh*, employees are preoccupied with other tasks. *Eighth*, employees interrupt the customer or no longer listen, believing they know what the customer is asking or saying. *Ninth*, employees make judgments about the buying power of a customer based upon his/her appearance, language, skills, or company's reputation. *Tenth*, employees argue with the customer.

Harris (2000) mentioned additional barriers to excellent customer service. These included laziness, poor time management, attitude, moodiness, inability to handle stress, insufficient authority, and serving customers on "auto pilot". With any of these traits or behaviors listed above, it will be more difficult for employees to deliver quality customer service.

Characteristics of Service-related Interactions among Employees

It is important to focus on the employees who deliver customer service because service begins on the *inside* of the organization. It begins with how individuals speak to each other and deal with each other (Martinez, 1997). This is important because the nature and tone of customer service interactions with clients is greatly influenced by the nature and tone of interactions between employees. Various factors contribute to the

culture of service expressed by an organization including hiring practices, training,

service policy and employee compensation.

Hiring practices. Poor service attitudes, beliefs and habits can be introduced into

an organization through indiscriminant hiring practices. The way to identify and hire the

best candidate for any job is to ask the people who know and understand the job best,

who know the clients best, and who know the work group best. It takes more time than

other hiring processes, but it is better to spend time up front and hire the best person for

the job rather than to spend time trying to correct problems later. For example, Sunoo

(2001) reports a study by Reid Systems in Chicago revealed some problematic responses

to their pre-employment assessment questions they used to gather data on pre-existing

customer service attitudes and preferences among potential employees. Their results

showed that:

- ➢ 46% said customers have to follow the rules if they are going to help them.

- ➢ 45% said they believe that customers should be told when they are wrong.

- ➢ 34% said they would prefer to work behind the scenes, rather than with the customers.

- ➢ 13% said they believe that if customers don't ask for help, they don't need it.

- ➢ 10% said they do not feel it is necessary to help a customer if the request falls outside their area of responsibility.

- ➢ 6% said they have repeatedly argued with customers and coworkers in recent jobs.

To avoid poor hiring choices, Ludwick (1995) suggested sitting down with the work

group before the recruitment process begins and identifying the knowledge, skills,

abilities, and characteristics that the team members feel are important or critical to continuing the work of the team successfully.

Three mistakes to hiring were noted by Vessenes (2001). *First*, the organization may not have a job description available for the position. The first step to hiring is to have an accurate job description. The job description explains what is expected of the employee on-the-job. S*econd,* interviewers all too often believe resumes qualify a person for the position. Resumes are to be used to examine the candidate's job experience, work history and educational background in order to disqualify individuals for the position. *Finally*, many interviewers believe that liking the interviewee in the interview means they are right for the position. The person may be able to communicate effectively, but may not have the skills or background to complete the tasks on the job.

The interview itself is important to accomplish four things. *First*, it is a way to validate what the applicants' resume says. *Second*, the interview is a way to gain insight into the applicants' work ethic. *Third*, it is a way to gain a sense of how the applicant would fit into the organization. *Fourth*, the interview is a way to gain a feeling that the applicant likes the organization and whether they can be trusted (Vessenes, 2001).

Training. "Training is at the forefront of organizational priorities, and innovation in training is one of the most crucial aspects of the quality improvement process" (Hiam, 1992). Training has started to focus on aspects other than developing skills and discipline on-the-job and has moved to process improvement. Ernst & Young and the American Quality Foundation found that only 20% of United States businesses focus on process improvement whereas Japanese firms focus on process improvement 50% of the time. Process improvement involves continuously reviewing, analyzing, incorporating,

changing consumer expectations, and refining the process so that products and services continuously improve (Lin and Darling, 1997).

According to Lin & Darling (1997), there are two consequences to be expected from customer service training: greater focus on job performance and personal enrichment. The *first* benefit is the improvement of necessary skills for the employee to do his/her job successfully. The *second* benefit of customer service training is the increase in self-efficacy of the employee (Lin & Darling, 1997). Self-efficacy is a person's expectation that he/she can successfully execute the behaviors required to produce a desired outcome (Bandura, 1977).

Booth (1999) suggested that training should be used in many areas. Training can help employees develop a positive attitude about themselves and seek opportunities to serve customers. Training has the potential to teach employees how to communicate effectively with customers, become more positive and powerful representations of their business, listen more attentively to customer needs, develop a professional service manner, and maintain a neat, professional appearance.

Training should not only lead to skill improvement, but should also change the way employees think and view their jobs (Lin & Darling, 1997). Training must tell employees why it benefits them to have good customer service and what they are trying to accomplish as a team instead of what not to do on the job (Hartill, 2000).

Service policies. Guidelines to take customer service to a new level come from Booth (1999). Employees should learn to think from a customers' point of view and let customers know what to expect and when. Employees should be able to plan for contingencies, listen and ask new customers how they heard about the organization.

They should also be able to bring customer service to the management table for input on product development and marketing activities and put the customer at the top of the pyramid and be a winner – it's expensive and impractical to argue with customers.

Gerson (1998) believes his customer service plan has the ability to enhance customer service as well. *First*, he noted that performance standards should be established for customer service. *Next*, the commitment to service must begin at the top of the organization. While customer service has to start and be driven by top management it should also be visible to customers. *Finally*, it is important to train employees in service quality. Measuring the level of service is also important for improving customer service. The level of service was measured in the present study by what employees believe is important and will also be done with customer surveys. Gerson (1998) suggested letting the customers define what "service" is, set service standards and abide by them.

Other factors contributing to a positive culture of service. Other studies also highlight the importance of employee relations. A survey administered by Grant Thornton LLP found that 83% of more than 400 business owners and senior executives surveyed considered employee talent to be a vital issue in company success. The results also discussed that customer service was the key factor in gaining a competitive advantage over other companies, with 90% of the responses (Lane, 2001).

Marshall (2001) noted that Unifi Network's survey suggested that there is a link between employee retention and service quality. The study examined the impact of employee turnover on customer satisfaction within six industries. The results described that there was a strong link between employee retention and the quality of service as

rated by the customer. Reichheld (1996) stated that it is important to focus on two kinds of loyalty: employee loyalty to the company and customer loyalty to the products and services a company provides. A company, which has loyal employees, will most likely show better performance and will often result in more loyal customers. He also stated that statistics show that American companies lose half of their customers in five years and half of their employees in four years on average. Lane (2001) found that owners and executives see themselves as being directly responsible for fostering loyalty among their employees. Eighty-five percent of employees surveyed believed that owners and management, when leading by example, have the largest impact on employee loyalty. Seventy-three percent said loyalty was influenced by regular communication from the owner or chief executive officer. The corporate world is fast paced and changing, therefore loyalty especially needs to be recognized as an important contributor to consistent and efficient service.

A case study of AMP Incorporated showed that by comparing company ratings with customer ratings, there was a significant difference in results. The results showed that customers can only feel valued through monitoring and improvement of each department, meeting customers' needs, and maintaining committed employees, empowering employees, and enthusiastic leadership (Brown, 1995).

Additional organizational barriers to delivering high-quality customer service were suggested across several studies. *First*, inadequate communication between departments is one reason for not delivering high-quality customer service (Connellan and Zemke, 1993; Harris, 2000). *Second*, if employees are not rewarded for quality service or quality effort their actions will not be repeated, whereas actions that are

rewarded will be repeated (Connellan & Zemke, 1993). *Third*, the company may be understaffed, which may cause employees to deliver service quickly instead of focus on quality customer service or customer satisfaction (Connellan & Zemke, 1993; Harris, 2000; Hyland, 2000). *Fourth*, the company may have inadequate computer systems (Connellan & Zemke, 1993). *Fifth*, the organization may have provided inadequate training for employees in developing people skills. One reason for this may be that companies are often concerned with customer "satisfaction" rather than "loyalty". Satisfaction is the lowest form of loyalty. While satisfied customers will shop anywhere, loyal customers will fight to do business with certain organizations. If the organization has a low training budget service may be poor. Companies may make the mistake of only providing "company training" and "policy training". They may provide some "customer service" training, but few offer any "personal development" training (positive attitude, goals, listening, responsibility, pride or communication skills) (Connellan & Zemke, 1993; Gitomer, 1999; Harris, 2000; Hyland, 2000). *Sixth*, there may be a lack of support from other departments (Connellan & Zemke, 1993). *Seventh*, the company or department may have low morale or no team spirit (Connellan & Zemke, 1993). *Eighth*, the company or department may have bad organizational policies and procedures (Connellan & Zemke, 1993; Gitomer, 1999). The written principles may just include a set of rules and policies written in terms of the company, not the customer.

Upper management may be a reason for poor service if he/she sets a poor example (Gitomer, 1999; Harris, 2000). If upper management does not show what quality service should look like, employees are unlikely to deliver the service wanted or needed. Service

may also be lacking because companies sometimes allow employees to be rude to customers and tell customers "no" (Gitomer, 1999).

Using Research to Shape Service Delivery

Morris (1996) stated that employee surveys are a way to listen to what is going on inside the company and the voice of the internal customer. Employees are both customers and suppliers. They are customers because they receive products from other departments and they are suppliers as they help assist other departments with their inquiries. It is important to get both the internal customers point of view as well as the external customers point of view.

Brown (1995) suggested comparing results of external customers' (individuals outside of the organization that utilize the services) perceptions of the organization and internal customers' (employees of the organization who utilize the organizations services) feelings about their organization. External customers react to areas in the organization they receive service from, such as the employees' capability of meeting specifications, awareness of customer problems, complaint handling, consistency, reproducibility, on-time delivery, maintainability, responsiveness and flexibility, product training, product literature, and accessibility of key staff. Internal customers react to areas in the organization such as their working environment, communication at local and organizational levels, training, development, retraining, recognition schemes, and health and safety provisions.

According to Berry (1995), researching employees is critical in service improvement. Many companies do little or no employee research when attempting to

improve their service, but will spend a lot of time and money researching only the customers' perspectives. Employee research may help reveal the causes of poor service because they experience the service delivery system every day and they see it from a different vantage point than do customers.

In a study of an industrial services company, Berry (1995) found, after asking both customers and employees to evaluate the company's service quality, that employees' ratings were significantly less favorable than the customers. This may be because the employees knew more about the company's weaknesses. Customer and employee research play complementary roles; one is not a substitute for the other (Berry, 1995).

Levine (1995) stated that an opinion and attitude survey allows employees to speak their minds for the good of the organization. The survey style he suggested involved all employees including managers and supervisors. Questions were answered using a Likert scale and included questions regarding employees' opinions, attitudes and beliefs on a range of subjects relating to the organization, job and department.

Harris and Strout (2001) stated that Compaq, a PC manufacturer, conducted employee research and found that their internal measurements looked good. However, when customers' perceptions were gathered, they were not as good as the previous measurements indicated. Through their research, Compaq found that people skills were lacking, so that is where training and resources were to be invested in their company.

If input is not gathered from employees, organizations run the risk of making the same errors they always have and also they may not develop as teams (DeVoe, 1999). Getting feedback from employees is just as important as getting feedback from customers. Employees also need to feel that their suggestions/opinions will not be

criticized. DeVoe (1999) also stated that it is important to show staff members what was done with the surveys they completed.

Not only is employee feedback important, but research also shows that it is not pay, benefits, or dissatisfaction with the job that provokes employees leaving. Lilienthal (2000) found that 67% of employees who leave their jobs are satisfied with their jobs, but they do not feel listened to or valued. Surveys of employees can also give management an important idea of the organization's main issues and the results have the potential to set the framework for ongoing feedback to be gathered (Lilienthal, 2000).

Studies by Gerson (1998) and Naumann and Giel, (1995) demonstrated that customer satisfaction is irrevocably linked to meeting or exceeding customers' expectations. Thus the service provider must understand what specific customer needs exist through research.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature clearly documents what most people believe to be obvious; namely, that customer service is an important, if not *the most* important aspect of doing business. However, these studies as a whole also describe an important paradox. While service is highly valued by both the consumer and provider, the service efforts of many organizations, who want to deliver quality services fall far short of customer expectations. Several factors are suggested as being crucial to the success or failure of service efforts.

Providing service is a complex interaction between factors directly related to exchanges with the customer and the internal organizational processes that shape a

culture of service. This dimension of organizational culture creates the social and functional context within which service takes place. It molds the beliefs, attitudes and behavior habits of service providers. Additionally, it creates a functional model of service that either facilitates or restricts the effective and efficient responses of service staff. Too frequently, this culture of service evolves more through corporate inattention versus deliberate, orchestrated and organization-wide planning and design.

Service is too frequently based upon assumptions versus verified information. Such assumptions about service usually create limitations in customers' ability to obtain quality service, or alternatively, clients can face a series of complex service options that fail to address their specific needs. Existing models of customer service vary considerably adding to confusion among service managers. Service models range from holistic approaches that encompass many factors to highly specific designs that concentrate attention on a few central areas of service management. Therefore, organizations must collect timely information regarding both internal functions and customer interfaces to effectively provide service using a customized model. As stated above, this study designs and initiates such a process for the UW-Stout MSC.

CHAPTER TWO

Methods

Participants

A full census of Memorial Student Center (MSC) staff was conducted to best profile customer service attitudes and beliefs among the current employees. Surveys were administered to all (398) employees of the MSC, including permanent staff and student staff. Of this total, there were 27 (6.8%) permanent staff and 371 (93.2%) student workers. The primary job functions of the full-time staff include General Operations, University Dining Service, University Bookstore, University Telephone, Service Center, Rec Center, Weight Training and Fitness Center, Intramurals, Activity Administration, University Ticketing, University Recreation, Stout Student Association, For Your Entertainment (FYE) and Stoutonia (UW-Stout's newspaper). The primary job functions of the student staff include working for the full-time staff in the areas listed above. The participants either worked in the Memorial Student Center building or in the Johnson Fieldhouse, however, all participants worked for, and were supervised by the Memorial Student Center.

Instrumentation

A survey containing 39 items rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale was developed for use in the study. The questions were drawn from the themes extracted from the review of the literature, and addressed general areas such as problem solving, attitude, work qualities, teamwork, interpersonal skills, critical thinking skills, and personal development. All questions were rated on a scale ranging from "1" strongly disagree to

"7" strongly agree. Five open-ended ("other") responses were included to give

employees the opportunity to additional ratings of areas they felt the survey omitted.

Demographic questions were also included which asked the employees if they were part

of the student staff or permanent staff and in which department they worked (See

Appendix A). The researcher, the Assistant Director and the Research Advisor

contributed to the construction of the questionnaire.

Procedure

The questionnaire was reviewed and approved by the Assistant Director of the

MSC, the Research Advisor, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UW-Stout. A

memorandum was distributed to all staff members of the MSC with the surveys, which

briefly described the study and its purpose and asked all employees to volunteer for the

study by filling out the questionnaire. The Assistant Director of the MSC organization

determined who received the packets of surveys and memorandums. All supervisors

were given a large envelope for staff to place their surveys, which were then returned to

the primary researcher. Thus, an attempt was made to administer the survey to all

permanent staff, managers, and employees of the Memorial Student Center (MSC). The

total number of surveys administered was 398. A total of 189 surveys were returned for

an overall response rate of 47.5%. Twenty-three (5.8%) participants reported themselves

as full-time staff, 162 (40.7%) reported being part of the student staff and four (1%)

participants did not report whether they were full-time or student staff. The remaining

209 (52.5%) did not return the survey.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

All quantitative data was entered in SPSS and analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlations, *t*-tests, and factor analysis. Qualitative data was analyzed by *first,* identifying open-ended responses that could be seen as replicating existing Likert scale items and *second* to identify and organize qualitative responses that introduced unique concepts.

CHAPTER 3

Results

Mean, standard deviation and median values for the individual items across the entire sample are reported in Table 1 below. As is evident in the table, MSC employees did not make meaningful distinctions between the items and rated each at the top of the 7-point rating scale. Interestingly, a 7-point scale was selected trying to avoid ceiling effects that occurred anyway.

Table 1

Item	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Median
1. Work toward the goals of the organization and the department.	6.3 (1.2)	7.0
2. Know my individual responsibilities and priorities and how they relate to others.	6.4(1.1)	7.0
3. Contribute to an informal, comfortable, and tension free workplace.	6.3(1.1)	7.0
4. Be able to resolve conflict effectively.	6.4(1.1)	7.0
5. Find positive resolutions to problems.	6.5(1.1)	7.0
6. Take the initiative to resolve issues before they become problems.	6.4(1.1)	7.0
7. Remain calm when things get hectic.	6.4(1.1)	7.0
8. Be enthusiastic about work.	6.3(1.1)	7.0
9. Exhibit high morale.	6.4(1.1)	7.0
10. Maintain a positive frame of mind.	6.4(1.1)	7.0
11. Be eager to try new approaches.	6.3(1.2)	7.0
12. Be willing to compromise.	6.2(1.2)	7.0
13. Be willing to collaborate.	6.4(1.1)	7.0
14. Display a high level of productivity.	6.4(1.2)	7.0
15. Pay attention to detail.	6.3(1.1)	7.0
16. Follow through with commitments.	6.6(1.1)	7.0
17. Display knowledge of products/services.	6.4(1.2)	7.0
18. Stay focused on tasks.	6.3(1.2)	7.0
19. Respond quickly.	6.3(1.2)	7.0
20. Respond effectively.	6.5(1.1)	7.0
21. Give continuous attention to customer satisfaction.	6.4(1.1)	7.0

22. Show interest in other team member's achievements.	6.2(1.2)	**7.0**
23. Show confidence in other team members.	6.3(1.2)	**7.0**
24. Show trust in other team members.	6.4(1.2)	**7.0**
25. Be cooperative rather than competitive.	6.4(1.2)	**7.0**
26. Respect the final decisions of the team.	6.3(1.2)	**7.0**
27. Not to dominate others in interactions.	6.3(1.2)	**7.0**
28. Exhibit open lines of communication with other staff.	6.5(1.1)	**7.0**
29. Be sensitive to the feelings of others.	6.3(1.2)	**7.0**
30. Listen effectively.	6.5(1.1)	**7.0**
31. Interact in a friendly, courteous manner.	6.5(1.1)	**7.0**
32. Display a positive self-image (one's conception of oneself or of one's role).	6.4(1.1)	**7.0**
33. Understand other cultures.	6.2(1.3)	**7.0**
34. Show concern for the needs of others.	6.4(1.2)	**7.0**
35. Gain the trust of the customer.	6.3(1.2)	**7.0**
36. Gain the respect of the customer.	6.5(1.1)	**7.0**
37. Readily accept feedback on performance.	6.4(1.1)	**7.0**
38. Be open to criticism.	6.4(1.1)	**7.0**
39. Be tolerant to different points of view.	6.4(1.2)	**7.0**

A series of independent sample t-tests were used to examine rating differences between permanent employees and student employees. The means of only two items were significantly different across groups. First, "show confidence in other team members" (Student Staff Mean = 6.3, Permanent Staff Mean = 5.7, t= 2.2, df = 183, p = .027). Second, "show trust in other team members" (Student Staff Mean = 6.4, Permanent Staff Mean = 5.8, t = 2.3, df = 182, p = .021). Students rated showing confidence and trust as more important than the regular staff. This may result from their position in the organization. Students are likely the least experienced and have the least job security. Based on the lack of experience, they may not be given confidence or trust of employers. The reader is cautioned regarding over-interpreting these differences in

that significance at the .05 level suggests that two differences would be observed (out of

39 analyses) simply by chance.

Factor analysis was employed to identify and map component factors within the

items. Table 2 displays the rankings and factor loadings of the individual items. A single

monolithic factor emerged when Principal Component (PC) extraction was applied

without rotating the matrix. An identical singular factor resulted when Varimax rotation

of the matrix was attempted after PC extraction because the matrix could not be rotated

after the massive factor emerged. The single factor had an Eigenvalue of 31.17 and

explained 79.9% of the total variance across the 39 items.

Table 2

Item	Factor Loading
#31. Interact in a friendly courteous manner.	.944
#13. Be willing to collaborate.	.924
#30. Listen effectively.	.923
#16. Follow through with commitments.	.922
#12. Be willing to compromise.	.922
#34. Show concern for the needs of others.	.920
#18. Stay focused on tasks.	.920
#21. Give continuous attention to customer satisfaction.	.919
#37. Readily accept feedback on performance.	.916
#32. Display positive self-image (one's conception of oneself or of one's role).	.915
#36. Gain the respect of the customer.	.913
#20. Respond effectively.	.913
#17. Display knowledge of products/services.	.910
#10. Maintain a positive frame of mind.	.908
#28. Exhibit open lines of communication with other staff.	.907
#39. Be tolerant to different points of view.	.904
#9. Exhibit high morale.	.903
#25. Be cooperative rather than competitive.	.900
#24. Show trust in other team members.	.898
#22. Show interest in other team member's achievements.	.897
#5. Find positive resolutions to problems.	.895
#35. Gain the trust of the customer.	.893

#4. Be able to resolve conflict effectively.	.892
#7. Remain calm when things get hectic.	.888
#23. Show confidence in other team members.	.885
#6. Take the initiative to resolve issues before they become problems.	.884
#26. Respect the final decisions of the team.	.882
#38. Be open to criticism.	.880
#2. Know my individual responsibilities and priorities and how they relate to others.	.879
#8. Be enthusiastic about work.	.878
#11. Be eager to try new approaches.	.878
#27. Not to dominate others in interactions.	.876
#29. Be sensitive to the feelings of others.	.875
#33. Understand other cultures.	.874
#14. Display a high level of productivity.	.866
#19. Respond quickly.	.865
#15. Pay attention to detail.	.864
#1. Work toward the goals of the organization and the department.	.852
#3. Contribute to an informal, comfortable and tension free workplace.	.763

Ideally, separate factor analyses would test for potentially different factor structures across the two worker groups. However, subdividing the sample created group sizes that would not be sufficient for such procedures. Instead, individual Pearson correlation matrices were used as a simple check for differential patterns. Similar to the above findings in the factor analysis, all items were significantly intercorrelated within both groups. All items were significantly correlated with all other items at the .05 level, with correlation coefficients ranging from .56 to .91 in the student staff group and from .71 to .98 in the permanent staff group.

Qualitative analysis revealed that 23 participants (12.2%) offered open-ended responses. Three (13.0%) responses came from permanent staff and 20 (87%) responses came from student staff. These items were subjected to qualitative content analysis. It was determined that 48.9% of the responses could in fact be linked to existing scale items

(See Appendix B), whereas 51.1% of the responses were determined to be unique (See

Table 3).

Table 3

Employment Information	Unique Comments
Student Staff	Show up on time
Student Staff	Be there
Student Staff	On time
Student Staff	Be on time
Student Staff	Dress appropriately
Student Staff	Be presentable looking (clothing, etc)
Student Staff	Not smell bad
Student Staff	Smile
Student Staff	Smile
Student Staff	Smile
Student Staff	Have an approachable boss
Student Staff	Be thankful I even have a job
Student Staff	Enjoy people
Student Staff	Have fun at work
Student Staff	Not boast about yourself
Student Staff	Respect authority
Student Staff	No question is a stupid question
Student Staff	Enjoy the job and pass that excitement onto the customer
Student Staff	Be approachable
Student Staff	Have a sense of humor
Permanent Staff	Be treated fairly by management
Permanent Staff	Be paid a living wage
Permanent Staff	Maintain a healthy lifestyle
Permanent Staff	Student employee's are not treated differently than LTE's

Student staff's responses seemed to fall into more of a job performance category than did

permanent staff's responses. Three of the four responses from permanent staff seemed to

relate to job dissatisfaction.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

As described above, the customer service literature appears to fall evenly between two fundamental models of service. Several studies describe highly specific approaches to service (Evenson, 1999; Dube, Renaghen & Miller, 1994; Booth, 1999; Cagle, 1998; Greenberg & Sidler, 1998; Goodman, 2000) as opposed to others who favored more global, inclusive definitions (Horovitz, 1990; Harris, 2000; Martinez, 1997; Zemke & Woods, 1998; Gates, 1998). The results from this study unambiguously indicate that those MSC staff that provided data hold a global view of providing service.

The top ten statements from the factor analysis were: Interact in a friendly courteous manner, be willing to collaborate, listen effectively, follow through with commitments, be willing to compromise, show concern for the needs of others, stay focused on tasks, give continuous attention to customer satisfaction, readily accept feedback on performance, and display positive self-image (one's conception of oneself or of one's role).

The unique qualitative comments have a few similarities within their work groups. For example, student staff participants showed that being on time (4 responses), presentation of self (3 responses), smiling (3 responses), and enjoying the job and having fun at work (3 responses) were all important areas of delivering customer service. Permanent staff did not feel the same main traits were important. Instead, they mentioned 4 unrelated traits of delivering quality customer service. First, be treated fairly by management. Second, be paid a living wage. Third, maintain a healthy lifestyle. Fourth, student employees are not treated differently than LTE's. Student staff

responses seem to fall into traits they believe are important to their superiors, whereas the permanent staff responses seem to relate to traits important to them at the present time and not what they *should* think. As mentioned above, three of the four permanent staff responses seem to indicate some degree of job dissatisfaction. Of the total number of permanent staff surveyed (27), 11.1% of the permanent staff are indicating some degree of dissatisfaction. Of the permanent staff that returned surveys (23), 13% of them are dissatisfied with their job in some way. It is important to point out that these permanent staff members other employees while they may not completely happy, which may be transmitted down to employees. As mentioned in the literature review, upper management may be a reason for poor service if he/she sets a poor example (Gitomer, 1999; Harris, 2000). Job performance may be important to the student staff because they do not know what is completely expected of them.

Reasons for representation of permanent staff responses versus student staff responses may be a factor in missing data (52.5% of administered surveys). Permanent staff accounted for 23 (85.2%) returned surveys of 27 administered to their group, whereas the student staff accounted for 162 (43.7%) returned surveys of 371 administered to their group.

Missing data or nonresponders may have resulted for a few reasons. Volunteers tend to be better educated, more intelligent, less conforming, and more likely to be female (Johnson and Mowrer, 2000). Moreover, if respondents are in support of general research, they will be more likely to participate in a survey than those with less support of science (Ullman and Newcomb, 1998). Stevens and Ash (2001) also noted that student participation may be affected by the timing of the experiment during the academic term.

Individuals who participate early in the study tend to be more conscientious and more open to experience than those who choose to participate later.

The surveys in the present study were administered at the beginning of the semester while students were still adjusting to work and school. As mentioned above, timing may be the result of the lower return rate for students. Many possible explanations exist; unfortunately, the researcher has no proof that any of these account for missing data.

A limitation of this study may have been the mechanism of data collection. By placing the completed surveys in an envelope with staff members from the same department, anonymity may have been questioned. Caution should be taken when interpreting the profile that emerges from the data because those that have negative views of customer service may have been more hesitant to respond simply because they felt someone would be able to define them. The method of data collection helped with the number of surveys returned, but may have caused a differential response. The respondents may have reported what they thought they *should* report.

The request for conducting this assessment of defining quality customer service for the MSC was given by the Associate Director of the MSC in order to evaluate the necessary ingredients of quality customer service. This phase included the staff of the MSC in order to determine the internal culture of service expressed by the MSC. The second survey will be helpful in defining quality customer service traits important in delivering quality service. By comparing results of the employee survey and customer survey, training sessions will be developed and hiring concentrations will be defined.

As reported above, this study appears to indicate staff favoring the global all-inclusive model of customer service providers. Staff members are unlikely to discriminate between factors described in the models when hiring. More information is needed to define what is needed to serve clients.

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Appendix A

Defining Quality Customer Service Competencies at
University of Wisconsin-Stout's Memorial Student Center

The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify quality customer service competencies in the departments affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Stout Memorial Student Center. This survey will assist in the completion of the following goals:

➢ To create a Memorial Student Center customer service profile in order to continue to "Hire the Best".
➢ To develop an interview guide based on the customer service profile.
➢ To identify training areas critical in providing quality customer service.
➢ To assist in the development of future training sessions to help provide quality customer service.

Data obtained from this questionnaire will be used to develop future training programs and an intake interview guide for customer service position openings. Your input is much needed to create and maintain high-quality service. Your time and efforts invested in providing this information are greatly appreciated.

I understand that by returning this questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of this study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

UW-STOUT MEMORIAL STUDENT CENTER EMPLOYEE SURVEY:

Employment Information:
Which are you? (check ONE)   _____Student Staff   _____Permanent Staff

Where do you work in the Memorial Student Center? Check ONE (If you have more than one job in the Student Center, please select the department where you work the most hours).

___Building Managers	___Service Center
___Cash Management	___Student Life Promotions
___Custodial Staff	___Involvement & Leadership
___Dining Service	___University Bookstore
___Event Services	___University Recreation
___Office Assistant	___University Ticket

Please circle the number to each statement that best describes its importance for customer service.

As an employee, it is important to:	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
1. Work toward the goals of the organization and the department.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Know my individual responsibilities and priorities and how they relate to others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Contribute to an informal, comfortable and tension free workplace.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Be able to resolve conflict effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Find positive resolutions to problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Take the initiative to resolve issues before they become problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Remain calm when things get hectic.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Be enthusiastic about work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Exhibit high morale.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Maintain a positive frame of mind.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Be eager to try new approaches.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Be willing to compromise.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Be willing to collaborate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

As an employee, it is important to:	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
14. Display a high level of productivity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Pay attention to detail.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Follow through with commitments.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Display knowledge of products/services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Stay focused on tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Respond quickly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Respond effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. Give continuous attention to customer satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Show interest in other team member's achievements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Show confidence in other team members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Show trust in other team members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. Be cooperative rather than competitive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Respect the final decisions of the team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Not to dominate others in interactions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Exhibit open lines of communication with other staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Be sensitive to the feelings of others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Listen effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. Interact in a friendly, courteous manner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Display a positive self-image (one's conception of oneself or of one's role)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. Understand other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. Show concern for the needs of others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. Gain the trust of the customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Gain the respect of the customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. Readily accept feedback on performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. Be open to criticism.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. Be tolerant to different points of view.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

As an employee, it is important to: **Strongly Disagree**   **Strongly Agree**

40. Other _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. Other _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. Other _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. Other _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44. Other _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Thank you for your time.

Appendix B

Qualitative Comments Related to Existing Items

EMPLOYEE COMMENT	ITEM RELATION
Make a commitment to the job and organization.	Related to #1. Work toward the goals of the organization and the department
Positively support/promote respective department.	Related to #1. Work toward the goals of the organization and the department.
Have a manageable job description.	Related to #2. Know my individual responsibilities and priorities and how they relate to others.
Being able to adapt to change or sudden discrepancies.	Related to #4. Be able to resolve conflict effectively. OR Related to #5. Find positive resolutions to problems.
Be able to make decisions when nobody knows what to do.	Related to #5. Find positive resolutions to problems.
Not to blame co-workers for last minute customer changes.	Related to #4. Be able to resolve conflict effectively. OR Related to #6. Take the initiative to resolve issues before they become problems. OR Related to #7. Remain calm when things get hectic. OR Related to #10. Maintain a positive frame of mind.
Be as accurate as possible both for the customer and company.	Related to #15. Pay attention to detail.
Be knowledgeable – that's important at the Service Center.	Related to #17. Display knowledge of products/services.
Customer Satisfaction.	Related to #21. Give continuous attention to customer satisfaction.
Satisfy the Customer.	Related to #21. Give continuous attention to customer satisfaction.
Teamwork.	Related to #25. Be cooperative rather than competitive.
Be willing to assist other team members.	Related to #25. Be cooperative rather than competitive.
Be comfortable voicing your opinion.	Related to #28. Exhibit open lines of communication with other staff.
It is important to offer helpful suggestions.	Related to #28. Exhibit open lines of communication with other staff.
Ask questions about tasks on duty.	Related to #28. Exhibit open lines of communication with other staff.
Treat other people the way you want to be treated.	Related to #29. Be sensitive to the feelings of others.
Listen to the supervisor.	Related to #30. Listen effectively.

Show Self-Confidence.	Related to #10. Maintain a positive frame of mind. OR Related to #32. Display a positive self-image (one's conception of oneself or of one's role).
Be nice.	#31. Interact in a friendly, courteous manner.
Be outgoing and approachable.	(Related to #32. Display a positive self-image (one's conception of oneself or of one's role. OR Related to #31. Interact in a friendly, courteous manner).
Put forward role-model qualities.	Related to #32. Display a positive self-image (one's conception of oneself or of one's role).
Be understanding of customer situations.	Related to #34. Show concern for the needs of others.