

Refining Employee's Customer Service Performance through an Inter-Organizational Climate Study: A Way Forward

Dr. Zainal Abu Zarim

Academic Prof. and Deputy Dean
Graduate School of Management
Multimedia University
Persiaran Multimedia, 63100 Cyberjaya
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Email: azzainal@mmu.edu.my

Hafizah Omar Zaki

Assistant Manager, Special Projects
Graduate School of Management
Multimedia University
Persiaran Multimedia, 63100 Cyberjaya
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Email: hafizah.omar@mmu.edu.my

Abstract

Substantial research had been done on refining employee's customer service performance. Thus, there were very limited empirical studies that are engaged in an inter-organizational climate study in assessing employee's customer service performance. With the current economic situation as well as emerging needs and requirements, all businesses either from public or private sector serving customers put greater attention on fulfilling those needs and requirements. In this state of affairs, the act of polishing its employees' skills, knowledge, teamwork and passion is very important in ensuring better performance deliverance. A study conducted in one of the telecommunication service provider company in Malaysia had been done to test its inter-organizational climate study. The Internal Climate Study was done in one of the telecommunication company in Malaysia to benchmark opinions and perceptions of its employees. The study had provided baseline information about perceptions that exist in the internal environment and ways forward to improve customer service performance. The approach used in this study is through the use of focus group and qualitative interview.

Key words: Employee's Customer Service Performance, Inter-organizational Climate Study

1. INTRODUCTION

With today's turbulences of economic situation as well as emerging needs and requirements, all businesses either from both the public and private sector serving customers put greater attention in fulfilling those needs and requirements. In this state of affairs, the act of polishing its employees' skills, knowledge, teamwork and passion are usually done as a process of ensuring better performance deliverance. The growth in customer demand requires growing research attention on improving the customer service performance delivered in contributing to desirable customer outcomes. This is where the inter-organizational climate study is needed.

Earlier study on customer service performance where researchers focused both on organization and at individual level analysis had contributed positive impact to the servicing industry. Thus, it is understood that "a climate for service" within employees is deemed to develop when assessing the organizational climate where employees values services, do work that satisfy them, and expect rewards from services delivered (Schneider, 1990). In related to organizational climate, these findings had also enabled the company's management to make informed decisions about the appropriate messaging and communication strategies necessary to take the employee's climate study initiatives to the next level towards realising the corporate vision and mission.

The inter-organizational climate study is focused on refining employee's customer service performance. This study is very important as it is done to refine employee's customer service performance through the implementation of inter-organizational climate study. The study used two internal components of the climate study which include focused group and qualitative interview techniques as a means of data collection throughout the study. In the spirit to drive transformational improvements, to eliminate the unidentified work culture, and to outperform negative employee performance, the study had made the findings a jumping stone to solve problems and for future research enthusiasm. The results however were astonishing as the study had turned the employees' dynamic energy into a driving force of change by creating an inter-organizational climate framework.

1.1 Objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine employee's performance in delivering services to customers by undergoing the process of employee inter-organizational climate study.

1.2 Significant of the study

The study is deemed important and relevant to the field of organizational and human resource management as it is to increase employee's passion and deliverables in performing their works. With the upcoming work diversity, it is also crucial for the study to be conducted. Eliminating unnecessary barriers to perform and deliver services may hinder employees from becoming an organization with the performance-based culture.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Employee's Customer Service Performance

Being an asset to any company and in the urge to improve and transform, employees are always considered as an important driving force towards change. Improvements ensure better employee performance and are also linked to achieving company goals (Liao, H., & Chuang, A., 2004). Likewise, ensuring better quality customer service performance is always crucial in today's servicing industry. Employee performance can be best evaluated based on the service delivered to customers (Bowen & Waldman, 1999). In relation to performance outcome and high deliverance on quality services, customers that are satisfied with services received will purchase more, and come back to get the services (Borucki & Burke, 1999; Bowen, Siehl, & Schneider, 1989). It is in this that a need to refine employee's performance comes to place. The mutual

relationship and bonding between employee and customer is very important in determining good interactions and satisfaction. Hence, employee's behaviour and motivational level plays important role in influencing customer's perception of the service being delivered (Liao, H., & Chuang, A., 2004). Furthermore, feedback is also an important outcome mechanism in ensuring good service deliverance (Waldersee, R., & Luthans, F., 1994). With this, it can be alleged that customer feedback and employees performance as one directional improvement initiative.

2.2 Inter-organizational Climate Study

Inter-organizational climate study is very much important in defining employee performance. Inter-organizational climate study had been expressed in great detail from previous organization theory perspective introduced by several scholars (see for instance, Hall et al., 1977; Schmidt & Kochan, 1977; Van de Ven, 1976) that has not relate well with the perspective of customer service performance. Thus, a free flow top-down and bottom-up approaches to behaviour, perceptions, and attitudes would help company to create a more adjusting employee performance. In most company, an inter-organizational climate study is defined as an organizational input where employees are good in nature, helpful, well-mannered, and lenient (Barrick & Mount, 1991). This presumes that employees are likely helpful and useful in delivering service to customers. Consequently, a service climate within employee is deemed to develop where employees values services, do work that satisfy them, and expect rewards from services delivered (Schneider, 1990). With detail inter-organizational climate study altering to each individual employee, greater positive presumptions may evolve.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study area and data collection

The study is conducted at one of the telecommunication service provider company in Malaysia. Data is collected through the use two components of the climate study which include (1) Focus Group, and (2) Qualitative Interviews. Focus group is used by identifying several perceptions of the employees. Some of the perceptions are, where they are today, where do they want to go, and how do they get there. In making sure that this component works well, the study puts three focus group comprising of 10 to 12 participants where each were facilitated on a one-on-one basis to ensure confidentiality and pursuant open and frank views.

While, the second internal component of the Climate Study were Qualitative Interviews comprising 32 qualitative and quantitative questions based around issues of Awareness; Performance; Work Culture; Communications & Reputation; SWOT Analysis; Way Forward. To ensure a more feasible outcome, Face-to-face interviews with the company's 30 stakeholders were conducted by a one-on-one basis to ensure confidentiality and pursue open and frank views.

Table 1: Total respondents of the internal components of Climate Study

Focus Group (FG)	FG One – GMs FG Two – AGMs, Managers, AMs FG Three – Non-Executives	35
Qualitative Interviews	Across all grades and Multi-divisions	30
TOTAL RESPONDENTS		65

*FG = Focus Group

*GM = General Manager

*AGM = Assistant General Manager

*AM = Assistant Manager

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Focus Group

The findings of the focus group are summarized in table 2. It can be explained that focus group one, two, and three had almost all similar opinions. In deriving to where the employees are today, employees are seemed too focused on the work culture, communication and people. In going to where the employees wanted to go in the future, matters such as customer centricity, performance-based culture, and communication are at the focal attention. While the driving force to get there focused on communication and people. By this, it can be clarified that employees have greater chance of improving and moving from where they are today into achieving to their respective goal. Thus, if the goal is to perform better in servicing the customers, then communication and people is seemed to be the driving force towards better employee customer service performance.

Table 2: Information on Employee Focus Group climate study

	FOCUS GROUP 1	FOCUS GROUP 2	FOCUS GROUP 3
Where They Are Today	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Culture • Communication • People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment • Passion • Work Culture • Communication • Customer Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work culture • People • Operations
Where Do They Want To Go	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Centricity • Performance-based culture • Values • Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Company Mindset • Customer Centricity • Leadership/ Ownership • Performance-based Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Centricity • Culture of Passion • Communication
And How Do They Get There (goal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Centricity • Internal Customer & Training • Actionable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • One Company Mindset • Communication • People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People • Communication • Operations

4.2 Qualitative Interview

A qualitative interview comprising 32 qualitative and quantitative questions based around issues of Awareness, Performance, Work Culture, Communications & Reputation, SWOT Analysis, and Future aim were conducted across all grades and multi-divisions. All the respondents communicated a very positive ambition to perform well in delivering services and to be number one against all odds in the next five years. To some it is about emerging as the best, and most preferred service provider, with uncompromising quality and customer centricity. All aspirations and ambitions for the company have been shared as conditional to its complete Transformation into a High-Performance company with Performance-Driven people. Employees are willing to go beyond their call of duty, given that the expectations or deliverables are clearly communicated to all employees towards achieving unified growth for the company, moving forward.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 A way forward

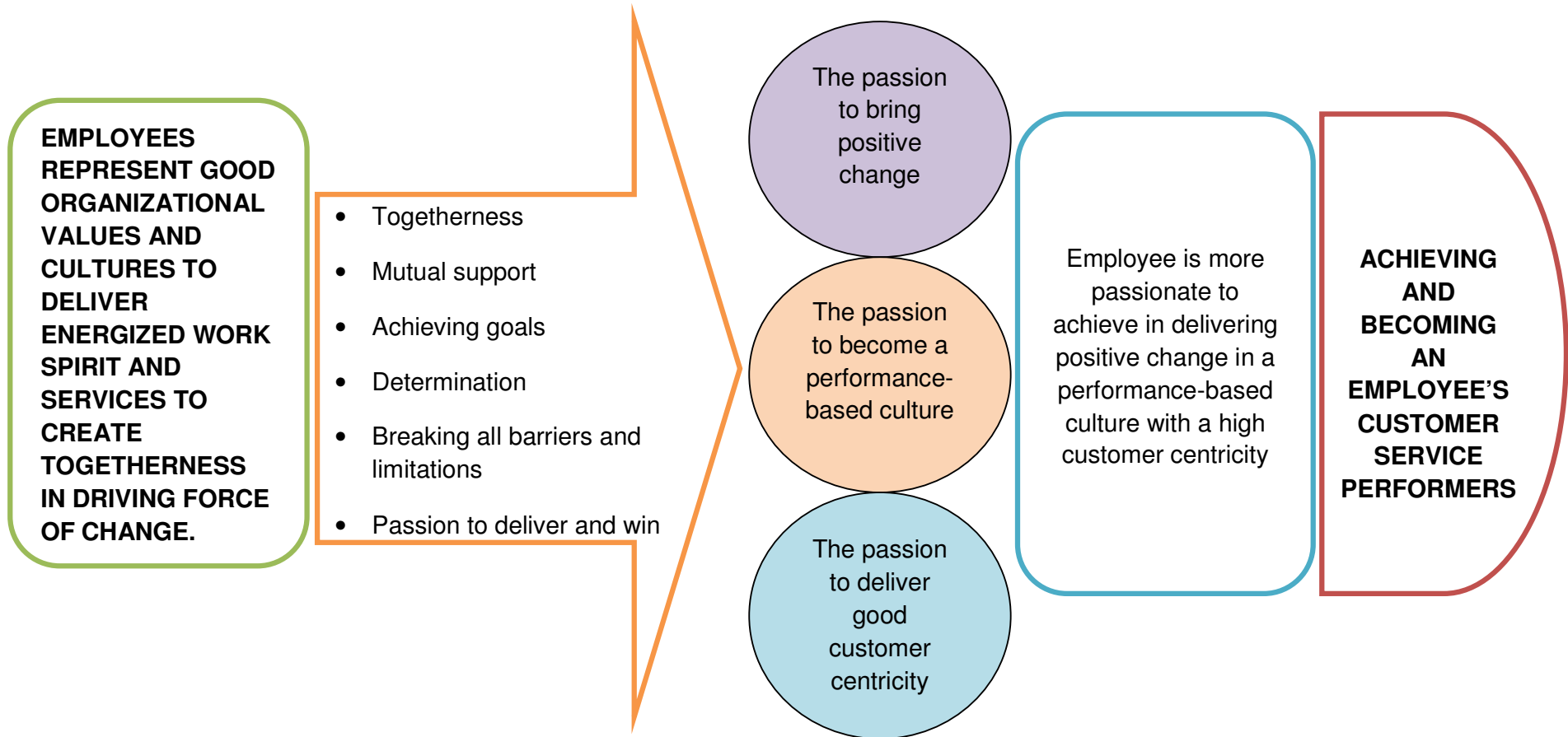
The framework in figure 1 is built based on the findings and deeper analysis. Employees had high hope and determination in serving well and in making the company into the foremost telecommunications provider.

Employees embody good organizational values and cultures to deliver energized work spirit to create togetherness in driving force of change. With deeper passion to bring about change, to become a performance- based culture, and to deliver customer centricity, the company believed that its employees are the top of becoming a top performer in delivering service to customers.

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Further research catering all organizational sectors in Malaysia and all over the world is deemed to be future research engagement into comparing, assisting and solving services and organizational problems. The limitations of shorter time for data collection and interviews had allowed scarce number of participants. Thus, the research is to be expanded with due extension of time in the future.

Figure 1: Inter-organizational climate framework



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