

Literature reflection on total quality management



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One simple way to achieve efficiency in service is the establishment of processing consistency (Canel et al, 2000). In order to achieve this employee must perform their duties and tasks correctly at all times. One of the basic requirements for successful implementation is the use of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles.

TQM can be described as a management philosophy and company practices which aim to harness the human and material resources of an organisation in the most effective way to achieve the objectives of the organisation (BSI, 1993). It can be applied as a means for improving staff morale, increased productivity and delivering higher quality services to both internal and external customers (Cowles and Gilbreath, 1993).

Training

Appropriate training of an employee plays a vital part in any department or organisation. Sufficient training and empowerment will allow employees to resolve any perceived conflicts, before they become negative service encounter for the customer or for the employee themselves (Canel et al, 2000).

An example which relates to this case is when the Team Managers needs to email the operations team in order to process any exceptions. While the TM's don't have the power to process any exceptions for their consultants and also having to email operations all the time makes them too dependent. It has been experienced many times that operations team don't process the exceptions on time and sometimes they are processed for the wrong time or reason, this results in the consultants not hitting their efficiency targets and

the TM taking the hit as well. Consultants are also made to pay the time back for something that was not their fault. Due to such issues consultants have worked more than they are expected to, have been put on coaching/development plan for not hitting their targets which indirectly demotivates them and reduces their morale. Such behavioural attributes are seen on call that the consultants then take in which they don't sound enthusiastic, make mistakes and hence results in poor customer service. This is hence not considered as prompt and efficient service as it affects the image of the department and the organisation as a whole.

Training and empowerment provides service employees the ability to identify and resolve problems and operational weaknesses hindering organisational effectiveness and efficiency (Billesbach and Schniederjans, 1989).

Another example which states that training and empowerment is necessary is when the operations team is off and there is nobody to process the exceptions. Operations team within phonebank only work business hours which is between 9-5, with the phonebank service being open 24/7, it gets harder to process any exception when operations are not in. It has been observed that when the operations team are not in and if any exceptions are emailed they are likely to be processed incorrectly the next day or are forgotten to be processed at all. This happens because TM's can't process any exceptions and have no access to the systems that the operations team use.

Semi Autonomous Work Teams are the most conducive in the continuous learning environment because each employee trains others in their group, by

doing so TM's will be able to do operation team's job and this can help phonebank in maintaining its efficiency targets and improving communication process (Derouen and Kleiner, 1994). Support from the organisation, supervisor and co-workers is considered essential for training transfer and skill maintenance (Chiaburu, 2010).

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment- " process by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources and control over their own lives. In doing so, they gain the ability to achieve their highest personal and collective aspirations and goals" (Robbins, Chatterjee & Canda, 1998).

Empowerment of employees in the work place provides them with opportunities to make their own decisions with regards to their tasks. Now-a-days more and more managers are practicing the concept of empowerment among their subordinates to provide them with better opportunities.

In Management:

In the book Empowerment Takes More Than a Minute, the authors, (Ken Blanchard, John P. Carlos, and Alan Randolph, 2001), illustrate three simple keys that organizations can use to effectively open the knowledge, experience, and motivation power that people already have. The three keys are that managers must use to empower their employees are:

Share information with everyone: The first key to empowering employees within an organisation or a department is by sharing information with everybody, this gives the user of the information a clear picture of the

company/departments current situation and another strong point is that it brings trust between employees by allowing them to view all the company information. This will act as a strong base in building trust between employer and employees.

Phonebank should let the consultants have access to all the information that affects their performance. Currently consultants have to ask their team managers for some of their efficiency figures which they can't access, the information they have access too is not real time, thus it affects their daily performance. If the consultants can access the information that affects their performance in real time than they can improvise upon it quickly and achieve their personal targets which in turn will achieve the departments. Doing this will give more control to the consultants in managing their performance and will eliminate the blame culture from within them for not being able to access the information they need when they don't achieve their targets. It will also give TM's more time to concentrate on their main duties rather than having to constantly run behind their consultants making sure they adhere to their targets.

Create autonomy through boundaries: this is the second key to empowerment which also builds upon the previous one. By opening communication through sharing information, it opens up the feedback about what is holding them back from being empowered.

Rather than consultants being put on coaching and development plans for not achieving their targets as a direct result of them not having access to all the information that affect their performance on a daily basis. By following

the first key it will assure that consultants get a chance to improvise and communicate effectively with their TM's on what they think they need to manage their performance before they get put on a coaching/development plan. If all consultants communicate their views and ideas to TM's regularly this will help the TM's to look for trends and work out the best suited solution that can prove beneficial to all hence increasing productivity while being efficient.

Replace the old hierarchy with self-managed teams: this is the third and final key to empowerment which ties them all together. By replacing the old hierarchy with self-managed teams, more responsibility is placed upon unique and self-managed teams which create better communication and productivity.

By successfully following the above two keys it will make sure that the consultants and TM's will have access to all the information they need to perform well, they will have a clear idea of what is expected of them and everyone will know of the departments goals and aims that they need to work towards. Employees with sharing personal experiences and ideas with each other can develop a much more efficient solution to any problem that comes their way. With everybody knowing what they are doing and what is expected of them, employees will communicate effectively and increase productivity.

Communication Model/Information Theory

In 1949, Shannon and Weaver, inspired by developments in systems theory and cybernetics, introduced a new communicative model that they called “

Information Theory” (Shannon and Weaver, 1949). In information theory, information is viewed as a measure of the entropy or uncertainty in a system. In the information theory model of communication, a source produces a message; this message is passed along a channel, to a receiver that interprets the message. Figure 4. 0. 1 is a representation of the inter communication model that phonebank uses to process its exceptions. The model is adapted from one of the phonebank’s communications model to give the reader an understanding on how information is communicated within phonebank and what channels are used.

4. Server updates consultants schedule and exception is fully processed.

1. Consultants verbally tell TM of any exceptions that needs inputting.

Communication Model for processing exceptions within phonebank. Figure 4.

0. 1 Communication Model for processing Exceptions within Phonebank. C:

Documents and Settingsbd81qnLocal SettingsTemporary Internet

FilesContent. IE52P1LLCDSMC900364318[1]. WMFC: Documents and

Settingsbd81qnLocal SettingsTemporary Internet FilesContent.

IE5MRH0LOZTMC900383596[1]. WMF

2. TM’s have to email operations about the exception within 30 mins.

C: Documents and Settingsbd81qnLocal SettingsTemporary Internet

FilesContent. IE58MSYPG1WMC900293484[1]. WMF

3. Operations process exceptions on database along with reason and

updates server. C: Documents and Settingsbd81qnLocal SettingsTemporary

Internet FilesContent. IE52P1LLCDSMC900198041[1]. WMF

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Source: Lloyds Banking Group Phonebank Process Models.

The channel has bandwidth that affects the level of information that can be transmitted; bandwidth is a measure of communicative capacity. For example, in modern terms, if we connect to the Internet via a modem, its bandwidth affects how fast we can download data. A channel's bandwidth may also be limited by the form that the communication has. For example, when speaking on a telephone, the channel is limited to audio-only data; visual information isn't communicated. Wiener points out that the effectiveness of communication in such a model is dependent on quality of channel. A high quality channel transmits only the information that the sender communicates, whereas a poor quality channel may be contaminated by extraneous information, or what Wiener referred to as background noise (Wiener, 1948).

The existing communication/information model within phonebank is based on the one proposed by Shannon and Weaver

Figure 4. 0. 2 Adaption of Shannon and Weaver's information theory model of communication.

Verbally

Electronic Signals

Consultant

Server Update

Operations

TM

E-Mail

Other Duties

Noise

Server Updates Consultants Schedule.