

Monitoring meeting the needs of customers



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Task 1a) Describe the different type of customers in your selected organisation, identify their needs and expectations

External customers are those who purchase the product through the distributors and require after sales service either through the regular servicing of the cars or when the car does not meet their expectations through mechanical breakdown. The Mercedes-Benz product is targeted at the executive level and high standards are expected as the company has a “reputation for quality, value retention and prestige” (Mercedes-Benz 2004, p. 1). They have highlighted a desire to gain more of the fleet car market and have researched the needs and expectations of the fleet managers and found that the concept of depreciation is more important to them than the initial cost of the car (Mercedes-Benz 2004). Mercedes-Benz has introduced an incentive system for fleet managers to encourage them to purchase from the company. This includes offering a wide range of potential products and a choice in how the financial incentives are paid.

In addition to the fleet managers, Mercedes-Benz also supplies individuals. In many ways, their needs will be similar to the fleet managers but, as they themselves will be the end user, their specific needs have to be identified and fulfilled. Mercedes-Benz fulfils this through the promotion of their brand as a status symbol. Mercedes-Benz also markets vans and offer a comprehensive package to allow customers to add additional features to their van during manufacture to ensure it will be able to meet their exact needs. Since 1992, they have also offered a database of used Mercedes-Benz vans for sale which assists the existing customers in selling their vehicle and attracts new ones into Mercedes-Benz ownership.

The concept of internal customers includes the employees. Mercedes-Benz offers a comprehensive apprenticeship system to its technician and parts specialists which includes training programmes carried out at the new Mercedes-Benz National Apprentice Academy leading to nationally recognised qualifications. They believe their scheme is “ one of the best apprenticeship training schemes in the UK” (Mercedes-Benz website).

Mercedes-Benz sell their products through a series of dealerships as these can also be classed as internal customers. The dealerships need the support of the parent company to be able to provide what they have agreed with the customer. Mercedes-Benz must ensure it has a good, open relationship with it's dealerships as the relationship is of mutual benefit.

b) Give example of how this organisation ensure that their customer receive accurate and reliable information about their services?

The Mercedes-Benz group market their product through a range of dealerships each of whom is allowed a large degree of autonomy in how they operate. They are supported by Mercedes-Benz through their website, probably the first port of call for an individual contemplating purchasing one of their cars. The parent company also offers advice and guidance to their distributors and provides practical support in terms of finance package options. On the main company website there is the facility to locate the nearest dealership to the potential customer. These dealerships also have their own websites where the customer can find the information they require or contact the dealership to make enquiries. The employees responsible to

dealing with customer queries have extensive training on an ongoing basis to ensure their knowledge is current.

c) How does this organisation measure how successful their customer services is?

Each of the dealerships is able to introduce their own system of measuring customer satisfaction. A common method used is that of collecting feedback. The Inchcape dealership, for example, has “robust processes (to) ensure every customer is contacted following their visit, and the feedback is used daily to improve and enhance the quality of their service delivery where necessary” (Inchcape 2006, p. 1). Mercedes-Benz has a range of Key Performance Indicators which cover areas such as sales, customer satisfaction levels and service performance which each dealership is required to report on at regular intervals.

Task 2 Sticking with the organisation that you are already familiar with, carry out further investigation and illustrate five things that are going well and three that are not going so well. to do this

Successful techniques include monitoring sales levels, having people dedicated to the collection and collation of customer service data, incentives for individuals to provide outstanding customer service and a strategy of providing a consistent level of service through using a dedicated call centre.

Improvements that could be made are offering a free call number for customer comments and the introduction of a nationwide customer satisfaction incentive. It would also be beneficial to obtain feedback from

people who expressed an interest in buying the product but did not make a purchase to determine why they did not make a purchase and to identify how a sale could be secured in the future.

a) Explain how monitoring and evaluating of customer services is carried out.

Mercedes Benz express a high level of commitment to providing outstanding customer service and have introduced several initiatives and projects to encourage this. These include “ regular staff CSI (Customer Satisfaction Indicators) meetings, introducing customer service objectives, CSI league tables, and reward and recognition schemes for all employees” (Inchape 2006). Data is also collected from the call centre.

b) How has this improved the service for the customer, the organisations own prospects and for its employees?

Customer service has improved as any issues can be identified and corrected at an early stage, thereby ensuring that future customers receive an ever-increasing service level. Trends can also be seen and proactively managed. The Mercedes-Benz organisation relies both keeping current customers and attracting new business. By developing a good reputation for their customers service levels, people are more likely to buy their product. This increases the sales and profitability for the business which benefit's the employees as it gives them job security and provides a good benefits package.

c) Make constructive comments or suggestions of what improvement that can be made for the future.

As the Mercedes-Benz business operates through a series of dealerships, it would be of benefit for there to be more interaction between the dealerships. Whilst currently Mercedes-Benz itself consolidates the information and shares it between dealerships, it would be useful for the dealerships to be able to speak to each other more directly to discuss specific points as there may be different expectations in different geographical areas.

Task 3 Now customer services is crucial to the survival of most organisation. Most organisations have invested a lot of money in making sure that they get this right.

a) What strategies have been used by your organisation to display a confidential approach when delivering customer service to their customer?

(Confidential) All customer information is kept confidential with access only being allowed to those who need it to be able to do their jobs. The information is held on a computer database which is password protected.

(Confident) The employees of the business, especially those dealing directly with potential new customers must be confident and competent in their role. To ensure this happens, they are given extensive training in presentation and communication skills and are also made aware of the numerous benefits of the product to be able to answer any questions the potential customer may have. The employees are encouraged to have a belief in the product - that it is a high quality, status symbol.

b) Explain why presenting, interpersonal and communication skills are important in delivering effective service to customers

The person dealing with the customer directly must be able to project the right image for the company. As the target market for Mercedes-Benz is at the executive level, they expect a professional approach from the company's representatives. Their role may involve a mixture of providing factual information, advice and descriptions and must be done in a manner which promotes a sale. The individual needs to be able to present information clearly and in a manner appropriate to their audience. They also need to use interpersonal skills to assist them to develop a form of relationship with the customer to be able to ensure they can tailor their message to that specific person and to make the customer feel at ease. As well as being competent in providing the information the customer requires, they need to be able to do it in a way that is tailored to the person to whom they are speaking and have good listening skills to listen carefully to questions and comments from the customer. They also need to have knowledge of non verbal communication such as body language and be able to use techniques to overcome barriers to communication.

Task 4 a) Focusing on two groups of key external which is the customer and maybe distributors and the internal customer which is the employee and the organisation of this organisation, analyse and evaluate how the organisation anticipates and meets the needs of these customers in range of situations.

The customer's needs are fulfilled in several ways and Mercedes-Benz prides itself on being able to offer additional services beyond those offered by their competitors. One example of this is the efficient record keeping service they have for regular maintenance of the vehicle which enables reminders to be sent to customers and ensures the quick diagnosis of ongoing problems. This

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is known as the ASSYST (Active Service System) which advises the owner when a service is due. A further example is the provision of an “end of life” service. There are strict legal requirements as to how a motor vehicle can be disposed of and Mercedes-Benz offer a free service to their customers providing the “certificate of destruction” that is required by law. Mercedes-Benz constantly reviews the car market and is able to develop its range to ensure it meets the needs of the consumer. They also identify new markets which may be available to them.

80% of the Mercedes-Benz service centres operate for 24 hours a day Monday to Friday thus providing a better level of service for their customers (Mercedes-Benz website).

The dealerships are given full support by Mercedes-Benz to allow them to be able to market the product successfully. Mercedes-Benz has a good relationship with their dealerships which allows them to be able to communicate openly and share any concerns or ideas.

Mercedes-Benz ensures all its employees have the skills necessary to be proficient in their job by providing on-going training and development. Where possible these programmes lead to nationally recognised qualifications thereby allowing the individuals to develop their careers elsewhere should there be no opportunities for them within the organisation. Mercedes-Benz ensures it can provide a competitive benefits package to its employees helping not only to retain the high calibre employees but also to attract new ones. This strategy extends throughout the business rather than just being limited to those who have direct customer contact.

b) Analyse using example, how effective customer service benefits the customers, the organisation and its employees

The ASSYST system allows the customer to be able to plan the periods when their vehicle requires regular servicing and this allows them to make better use of their time. This also benefits Mercedes-Benz themselves as they can plan their workloads more efficiently if the customers plan and book their servicing in early. This further benefits the employees as their workload is more consistent and easier to manage.

Through identifying the specific needs of the fleet managers, Mercedes-Benz believe that the fleet manager's organisations will be able to attract and retain higher quality executives by offering them a Mercedes-Benz company car. This benefits Mercedes-Benz and their employees through higher sales and greater profitability.

All the initiatives designed to improve customer service will additionally benefit the organisation and its employees as greater customer satisfaction will lead to more repeat business and new customers and this increases sales and profitability. A business that is growing and profitable is able to offer its employees a greater level of job security, better prospects in terms of career advancement and training and an attractive and competitive pay and benefits package.

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