Learning to walk in the customer

Learning to Walk in the Customer's Shoes Christina Guzman Kaplan University MT203: Human Resources Management LaDonna Holley, MSA PHR August 2, 2010 There's an old saying in business: " The customer is always right. " Through proper planning, training and evaluation, businesses have the opportunity to focus their efforts on this concept. Unfortunately, sometimes this focus becomes a bit clouded. In this case, there has to be strategic planning in order to find solutions to the problem and to make sure that customer satisfaction is number one.

This case study presents information on a Customer Loyalty Boot Camp Program" the customer relationship developed by the managerial staff of Texas Instruments (T'). The boot camp presented is a series of simulations allowing Tl managers to experience what it is like to be a Tl customer. Elements which make up the program include: a discussion on how the program operates, and the impact of the combination of simulation and videos of actual dissatisfied customers to Tl employees. The following analysis describes: how BTS USA was able to help the high-tech giant, Texas

Instruments, regain its focus on its customers; why training the executives first achieved quicker results; and where to look for information to calculate the program's ROI. Review/Analysis of the Case In 2002, Texas Instruments' (T') marketing and sales strategies had been product- centric. Due to increasing financial pressures and reports of customer frustration, the semiconductor company sought to implement new initiatives to attract and retain customers. Tl called on BTS USA to design a program that would " shock" Tl managers into developing a more customer-conscientious mind-set resulting in a pur in sales.

BTS created the Customer Loyalty Boot Camp program, a series of simulations that would allow Tl managers to fully experience what it is like to be a Tl customer (Bohlander & Snell, 2007, p. 339). The 2 h day simulation addressed all of Tl's issues around customer-centric thinking: poor planning and execution; irresponsive to customer requests; and not keeping a long-term view. The simulated customer, STREAVO, relied on its interestingly named supplier Terrific Instruments to efficiently meet its cost, time, and performance standards to allow STREAVO to enter the market with its own products.

Executives were broken up into teams and through business simulations they experienced challenges given to customers daily. After the multiday workshops team members talked about their experiences and heard teedback on their strategies and the results ot their business decisions. The exercise simulated a span of three years; five teams of five managers each acted as StTREAVO employees trying to Juggle optimizing trade-offs with severe engineering problems. In simulated Year 1, the chip supplier failed STREAVO in such areas as missed chip speed, performance, and delivery.

In the second year, the Tl managers had an option to select a new chip supplier. Other suppliers were introduced, who had excellent knowledge of STREAVO's business, customers, and markets. Tl managers, while running the Streavo business, actually switched away from the supplier that resembled Tl because new chip competitors exhibited much better knowledge of STREAVO's business and needs. In year three, SREAVO once again partnered with a chip supplier to tackle an emerging market opportunity.

The simulation, along with videos of actual dissatisfied customers, elped motivate Tl employees to elevate their performance levels (Bailor, 2004). Boot camp participants also took steps to embrace customer centricity by making written commitments such as spending more time with customers and generating more practical schedules. The success of the BTS simulation was extended to simulations for more than 2000 other Tl managers throughout the organization. Tl's overall focus was redirected onto the customer. Tl has seen growth in sales and customer service, earning increased market shares and customer service awards.

Analysis of Findings When training is implemented in my company, the direction and focus is communicated by the executive director, to the direct manager, then to our team members. Team members will accept new training if they understand that it comes directly from upper management. Employees become aware of and begin to understand its importance. As employees, we trust the fact that new training needs to be implemented. We are more committed knowing that our managers are involved and are sharing new information and ideas. Training definitely requires upper management commitment and support.

It needs to be given in small doses and be urtured (facilitated) through direct supervisors and applied in the workplace to overcome workplace challenges and meet the company's objectives. Recommendations Tl's approach to improving its customer satisfaction by focusing on its executives conveys a top-down philosophy. The strategic planning and philosophies are generated by the top execs. These philosophies trickle down to the middle management and then to the frontline managers. This shows Tl's overall commitment to change in the right direction. To put in simpler terms, without well trained generals the army falls.

Batemen and Snell (2009, pg. 25) describe a three-step process for facilitating change: unfreezing (breaking from the old ways of doing things); motivating (instituting the change); and refreezing (reinforcing and supporting the new ways). The middle and frontline managers will accept change more readily if the top execs first adapt and initiate it. If the training is implemented in the opposite direction, meaning from the bottom-up, the solutions will be more short-term than long-term. This concept would be more of a " quick fix" rather than a strategic goal. Human Resource Manager's can determine if a training program is successful by