Methods of Developing a Successful Customer Satisfaction Program in an IT Organization

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Abstract:- A customer satisfaction program (CSP) is composed of processes focused on satisfying customers for services rendered. Information technology (IT) organizations provide customers with services and support on software, hardware, network, data storage, and databases, among other service offerings. Customer satisfaction measurement depends on the quality of services provided by support staff. There are some effective methods for maintaining and improving customer satisfaction levels. The aim of this paper is to identify and include the right methods for developing a successful customer satisfaction program for IT.

Keywords:- *Customer Satisfaction Program in IT; Customer Satisfaction Methods; Successful IT Customer Service Approaches; How to develop satisfaction methods for IT customers; Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).*

I. INTRODUCTION

What is considered "outstanding" customer service by some people could be considered "normal" customer service by others. Providing excellent customer service from an IT support point of view does not necessarily mean that all supported IT customers who receive the services are fully satisfied. IT organizations that look for continually improving their business need a program for maintaining their customers' satisfaction with the services provided.

Such a program requires some key methods to be followed to be successful. A healthy service environment validated by positive customer feedback, backed by good communication and recognition of practices, can provide a good starting point to build a sophisticated customer satisfaction program. From this input, organizations can incorporate the best methods in their program.

II. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION METHODS

There are certain methods for achieving customer satisfaction in any IT organization. Following all of these key methods in dealing with customers will ensure smooth delivery of services, avoid issues, reduce the number of complaints, and lead to overall customer satisfaction. These key or main methods are:
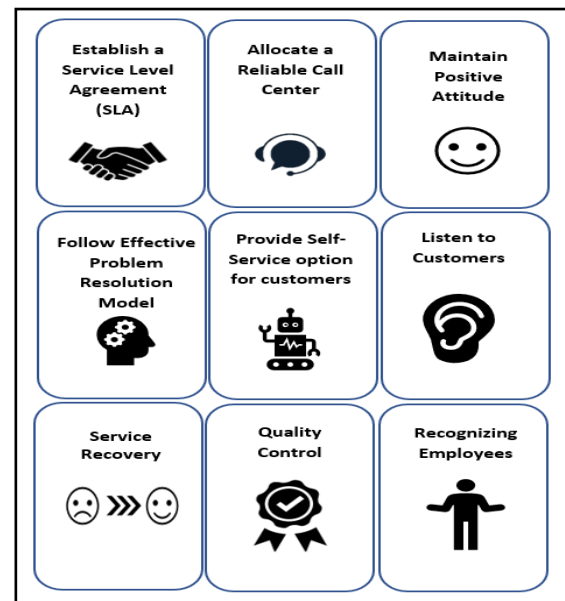

Fig 1:- Customer Satisfaction Methods

➢ *Establish a Service Level Agreement (SLA)*
A Service Level Agreement (SLA) sets the expectations between the service provider and the customers [1]. Service providers should ensure that customers are aware and in agreement with the following conditions and terms to be included in the SLA documents:
- Description of the services to be delivered.
- Measurable guidelines and a clear expectation of the services.
- Clearly spelling out the rights and obligations. This will be a reference in case of confusion or disagreement.
- Addressing clear business-based targets for service performance, so that the delivery of a service can be properly assessed, monitored, and managed against these targets
- A single point of contact for end-user problems

➢ *Allocate a Reliable Call Center*
A call center is the focal point of contact for customers. Its quality reflects the image or the reputation of the business and the services provided. It is very important to have a reliable call center with the following characteristics:

Fig 2:- Characteristics of a Reliable Call Center

- 24X7 availability with an adequate number of agents that can receive all customers' phone calls and emails.
- Receive and respond to customers' service requests in effective ways and in accordance with the SLA terms and conditions.
- Professional and certified agents with required experiences and skills. In addition, intensive continuous training courses on customer services for frontline agents.
- Availability of all service tools and knowledge base to assist frontline agents to provide best services to customers.

➤ *Maintain Positive Attitude Toward Customers*

Frontline agents and support staff should maintain a positive attitude with all customers. This practice can change negative customer experiences into positive customer experiences [2]. Here are some of the practices that can be applied:

- Greeting customers is one of the most valuable steps in communication that generates positive interactions between customers and their support.
- Practicing a positive, helpful and friendly tactic with all customers.
- Smiling or making customers smile can work wonders. It helps with creating a welcoming and friendly frame of mind that is so important for delighting customers [3].

➤ *Follow Effective Problem Resolution Model*

Whenever a customer reports a problem, support staff should follow the effective problem resolution model that should consider the following:

- Define the Service Request. Work on identifying the request or the problem.
- Fast Response. Identify the root cause of the problem and resolve customer queries as quickly as possible. Speed should be of the essence, especially for smaller issues that don't take much time to solve. [2]
- Commitment. Complete the job on time as promised. Ensure that customers get the required services according to the SLAs. An effective incident management system plays a central part in solving customer problems and becomes a key tool for support staff.
- Following up with Customers. Ensure the customer is satisfied before closing the service request. Support can follow up with customers till they receive confirmation the customer is satisfied. This builds trust in the relationship with customers.

- Be Proactively Helpful. Double check with the customer if he/she needs extra services.
- Increase the likelihood of delighting customers. Raise the bar by striving to delight customers rather than simply satisfy them.

➤ *Provide a Self-Service Option for Customers.*

Give customers the luxury of having online self-service as an option. Self-service gives customers the power to find their own answers and resolve their own issues. This can be provided through:

- A One Stop Shop Portal. Customers will be able to submit their requests online instead of approaching the call center.
- Knowledge Base. Customers will get the required information from the knowledge management system instead of asking call center agents.
- Chatbot. Customers will be able to request services and resolve their issues in a conversational interface.

➤ *Listen to Customers*

Listen carefully to customers and pay full attention to customer feedback. Do not interrupt customers while talking, which will help with understanding their real problems and how to effectively solve them. Listening to customers can be accomplished through the following:

- Periodic Customer Survey. It is one of the main ways of collecting customers' feedback. It assists an organization with assessing customer satisfaction, measuring customer engagement, and gauging expectations [4]. Use the right types of questions in the customer service survey to ensure excellent customer service and high customer satisfaction [5]. At the same time, select direct and indirect customers to express their feedback on the quality of the services provided.
- Ongoing Survey. Customers' feedback after closed service requests. This type of survey is sent to the callers of service requests on every closed ticket post resolved. It is embedded in an automated email notification in the ticketing system, which is sent to the customer
- Emails. Customers send emails either to complain about the services that were provided, or to compliment on the services and thank the support staff, or to provide recommendations on the best way to provide services, or to ask questions related to the services. All of these types of emails are important for the support staff to provide best services that satisfy customers.
- Ongoing Communication. Establish and maintain an ongoing dialogue with customers.

➤ *Service Recovery*

Service recovery is the act of reaching out to customers who have had a negative service experience to rectify the situation [6]. Respond to each service failure with a specific stepwise sequence:

- React immediately when customers are not satisfied.
- Analyze the unsatisfied comments and if there is a need contact the customer(s) for more verification.
- Call or visit the customer to understand his/her complaints.

- Apologize and ask for forgiveness. This is to let the customer feels that he/she is right and the support staff are taking his/her input seriously.
- Review the complaint with the customer. This is to explore what he/she needs for a good outcome.
- Fix the problem and then follow up to show continuing concern and appreciation.
- Document the problem in detail to allow you to permanently fix the defect by identifying trends. [7]

➢ *Quality Control*

Quality control is the process that businesses use to ensure that a product or service adheres to a predefined set of quality standards or meets the requirements of customers. Quality control usually requires the business to create an environment where employees and management are always striving for perfection [8]. This requires:

- Senior Management Support. The business should be well supported by upper management in all financial and logistic support.
- Extensive Training. Continually having training sessions for employees, frontline agents and support staff to be up-to-date on business services.
- Benchmarking. Creating benchmarks for measuring product or service quality, and testing to check for any significant variations in quality [8]. Looking at the organization or tasks against different organizations in the IT industry to estimate and develop customer support and fulfillment
- Monitoring Customer Satisfaction. This can be done by setting the types of metrics using key performance indicators (KPIs) to with assist measuring the real level of customer satisfaction.

➢ *Recognizing Employees*

Employee recognition acknowledges the accomplishments and hard work of individuals, teams, and entire workforces within a company. The idea is to encourage business employees to let them feel respected, valued and appreciated. Active frontline agents and support staff need to be encouraged and recognized [9]. There are many ways to recognize them, some of which are:

- Host a private lunch and give gift cards.
- Send emails recognizing active employees for their outstanding accomplishments.
- Give trophies with well written recognition statements for outstanding staff.
- Implement a recognition program within the IT organization.
- Host an employee appreciation day.
- Share positive customer feedback companywide.

III. CONCLUSION

Developing a successful customer satisfaction program in IT organizations is necessary to succeed in business. It requires a commitment from management to create and support a suitable environment. Listening to customers and collecting their feedback is one of the main resources in building this program. Maintaining good communication between customers and support staff will always raise the bar of trust and ensure continuous provision of good services. Continually monitoring services and their quality is an essential practice to consistently deliver solutions customers require. Recognizing employees and support staff who engage in providing the best services will improve morale. All of these can be defined as the best methods in developing a successful customer satisfaction program.

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