

shared understanding of what the organisation's targets and processes mean to the unit. It is very difficult to provide a high level and homogeneous customer service without a common, shared view.

Organisations can enhance the way in which employees learn from the behaviour of others so that clear targets and understandable indicators may be established. Also, it is important to encourage employees to continuously improve their service to customers. Learning one another is linked to the employee's motivation and satisfaction. If employees are unmotivated and dissatisfied, they will not usually be prepared to share their know-how. According to the findings from the interviews, organisations can motivate different groups to work together without seeking their own interests, thus setting a clear vision, making clear job descriptions and providing attainable targets. Further, it is important for the monitoring to be continuous and for the organisation culture to reward success.

The interviewees emphasised the important of information. Employees which work on routine tasks do not have much time to read messages and guidelines. Therefore, the length of the text must be short and the content of the message clear and unambiguous. The service sector uses a lot of part-time and temporary employees. These employees do not always understand the operational environment and the organisation's projects catchwords. Hence, it is also good to avoid abbreviations and work slang.

The interviewees also discussed rewarding, which affects employees' job satisfaction and the way in which they treat customers. These interviewees observed that it is important for the reward system to be fair, justifiable and open. It is important for the supervisor to set the targets at the beginning of the year, so that employees will have enough time to reach the targets. Also, it is necessary for the organisation's middle and top management to stand behind these targets and act as a role model. For example, if the supervisors are not interested in monitoring the standard of activity and the results, it is difficult to expect the employees to adhere to these procedures. Two of the interviewees emphasised that the rewarding system must consist of two parts: individual performance and team performance. They said that this model rewards individuals for outstanding results and yet also takes into account those employees who have their own important role in common projects, although they do not belong the group of top sales people. One of the interviewees noted that if the reward system is based solely on the supervisor's own opinion about an individual employee, an employee who is not the supervisor's favourite might find it hard to receive a merited increase.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The main purpose of this study was to find out how the personnel's work methods are related to customer satisfaction. My qualitative examination is based on two large quantitative research studies: Finland Post's customer satisfaction (n=40,692) and personnel satisfaction surveys (n=1,507) from the year 2000. In this research, I benchmarked post offices wherein customer satisfaction is particularly high (n=10) and post offices in which customer satisfaction is particularly low (n=10). I augmented the results of the analysis by interviewing five service experts in spring 2010.

According to the results, those post offices in which customer satisfaction is particularly high have aimed at certain methods of procedure which are mutually directed at customer satisfaction. Also, target-oriented and dexterous activity, the quality of the supervisor's work, openness and experience of working under a fair amount of pressure are typical of these post offices. This receptiveness showed up especially in conflict and learning situations. In such cases differences of opinion were handled in a constructive way and people had a good chance of learning from the behaviour of others.

In the best post offices, the personnel were satisfied with their working arrangements, and they considered that the workloads are reasonable. In practice, the benefit of a good working arrangement is that the personnel are in less danger of becoming overworked and this means better opportunities to offer a good service to customers.

It was noticeable that in the best post offices, the personnel adhered to established practices and different groups did not seek their own interests. These post offices reacted quickly and flexibly to customer needs, too. One explanation for this finding may be that in the best post offices the personnel were awarded a prize for initiative and responsible action. Also, a target-oriented approach guided the personnel's activities in these post offices. For example, in all the best post offices the personnel knew how their own work unit's targets were related to Finland Post's targets. Target-oriented and parallel action is very important, because it helps to attain Finland Post's targets.

This finding, related to target-oriented action, supports a view that the personnel's understanding of an organisation's target has a positive effect on its profitability (Kaplan & Norton 1996; 2001; 2004). In Finland Post's case target-oriented action affected customer satisfaction positively.

Even the best post offices' personnel, who were satisfied with their own work unit, criticised Finland Post as an employer. This result does not support the view of Grönroos (2000; 2009) that an organisation's internal climate also reflects an organisation's culture. In this research the personnel felt that the work unit's work climate was good—even then they felt that Finland Post's upper management does not appreciate its employees enough. This result supports the opinion that an organisation's internal and external reputations are connected (Bromley 1993; Young 1996). Also, the findings support the theory that a good work climate improves employees working ability (Robbins 1986).

My empirical findings suggest some important managerial implications. First, I found that it is important to identify the organisation's positive and negative attitudes and procedures and determine how these things affect the organisation's activities. In Finland Post's Counter Services in 2000 positive attitudes were reflected in established methods, responsible action based on rewarding systems, flexible procedures, the chance of learning from others' behaviour and constructive methods to handle disagreements. Lack of information, lack of acknowledgement and undervaluation of employment were examples of negative attitudes.

Another important finding is that in the view of the day-to-day management's it is important that supervisors

- check that all employees know and understand the organisation's vision and targets
- check that all employees know and understand their own job descriptions
- encourage employees to work together
- continuously encourage employees to improve customer service
- reward teams and individuals for success
- monitor how employees treat customers
- act as a role model.

One way to encounter future challenges is to improve the organisation's managerial skills and supervisors' actions. The other way to encounter future challenges is to admit that maybe not all wisdom comes from within the organisation; rather from customers. Customer-oriented organisations see customers as active partners and they are able to utilise the customer's know-how. Customers can, for example, test new procedures and products in authentic situations. Employees can also, for instance, observe and follow customers' actions so that they understand better customers' needs. These processes help organisations to make their action comprehensible to the personnel and focus on the right things. In the service innovation's view these new procedures are incremental innovation, because these procedures modify current services and create higher value for customers (Snyder & Duarte 2003; Lin, Chen & Chiu 2010).

LIMITATIONS

The principal limitations of this study concern four aspects: the scope of the study, the task type, the simplicity of the data and the age of the data. First, this study was carried out in the context of the Finnish postal services, which represent public services. Therefore, there may be several possible problems related to cross-national or cultural research. In addition, the employees represented sales persons, whose tasks consist of routine services. For this reason, the results may vary in non-routine services. Because the data consisted of results from only 20 post offices, these data represent only a small part of the post office network and generalisation from the results is impossible. Finally, the quantitative data is 10 years old and only the qualitative data is new. Therefore, the combination of the quantitative and qualitative data is questionable. On the other hand, according to the interviews, the questions concerning developing work methods and rewarding are still current.

REFERENCES

- Allred, A. T. (2001), Creating Customer Service Worth Advertising at Browning Arms, *The TQM Magazine* 13 (1), pp. 6-11.
- Ang, J. and Soh, P. H. (1997), User Information Satisfaction, Job Satisfaction and Computer Background. An Exploratory Study, *Information and Management*, 32 (5), pp. 255–266.
- Bowen, D. E. and Lawer, E. E. (1992), The Empowerment of Service Workers: What, Why, How and When, *Sloan Management Review*, 33 (3), pp. 31–39.
- Bromley, D. B. (1993), *Reputation, Image and Impression Management*, John Wiley and Sons Ltd., New York.
- Buzzell, R. D. and Gale, B. T. (1987), *The PIMS Principles: Linking Strategy to Performance*, The Free Press, New York.
- Chance K. G. and Green, C. G. (2001), The Effect of Employee Job Satisfaction on Program Participation Rates in the Virginia WIC-Program, *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, 7 (1), pp. 10–20.
- Den Hertog, P. (2000), Knowledge-Intensive Business Services as Co-Producers of Innovation, *International Journal of Innovation Management*, 4 (4), pp. 491–528.
- Emery, C. R. and Barker, K. J. (2007), Effect of Commitment, Job Involvement and Teams on Customer Satisfaction and Profit, *Team Performance Management*, 13 (3–4), pp. 90–101.
- Farrell, A. M., Souchon, A. L. and Durden, G. R. (2001), Service Encounter Conceptualisation: Employees Service Behaviours and Customers' Service Quality Perceptions, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 17 (5–6), pp. 577–593.
- Ganesh, J., Arnold, A. J. and Reynolds, K. E. (2000), Understanding the Customer Base of Service Providers: An Examination of the Differences between Switchers and Stayers, *Journal of Marketing*, 64 (July), pp. 65–87.
- Grönroos, C. (1990), *Nyt kilpaillaan palveluilla*, Weilin+Göös, Jyväskylä.
- Grönroos C. (2000), *Service Management and Marketing: A Customer Relationship Management Approach*, John Wiley and Sons Inc., Chichester.
- Grönroos C. (2009), *Palvelujen johtaminen ja markkinointi*, WSOYpro Oy, Juva.
- Hampton, G. M. and Hampton, D. L. (2004), Relationship of Professionalism: Rewards, Market Orientation and Job Satisfaction among Medical Professionals, *Journal of Business Research*, 57 (9), pp. 1042–1053.
- Heskett, J. L., Jones, T. O., Loveman, G. W., Sasser, E. W. Jr. and Schlesinger, L. A. (1994), Putting the Service-Profit Chain to Work, *Harvard Business Review*, (March-April), pp. 164–174.
- Jakosuo, K. (2002), *Hyvä palvelu, huono imago: Tutkimus toimipaikkojen palvelujen laadusta*, Suomen Postin tutkimussarja 14/2002, Helsingin yliopiston Taloustieteen laitoksen lisensiaattityö, Edita: Helsinki.
- Jakosuo, K. (2005), *Asiakas- ja henkilöstötyytyväisyyden väliset yhteydet: Tapaustutkimus Suomen Postista*, Suomen Postin tutkimussarja 39/2005, Helsingin yliopiston Taloustieteen laitoksen väitöskirja, Yliopistopaino, Helsinki.

- Kantabutra, S. and Avery, G. C. (2006), Vision Effects in Customer and Staff Satisfaction: An Empirical Investigation, *Leadership and Organisation Development Journal*, 28 (3), pp. 209–229.
- Kaplan, R. S. and Norton, D. P. (1996), *The Balanced Scorecard*. Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
- Kaplan, R. S. and Norton, D. P. (2001), *The Strategy-focused organization*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
- Kaplan, R. S. and Norton, D. P. (2004), *Strategy Maps*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
- Lin, R.-J., Chen, R.-H. and Chiu, K. K. (2010), Customer Relationship Management and Innovation Capability: An Empirical Study, *Industrial Management and Data Systems*, 110 (1), pp. 111–133
- Little, M. M. and Dean, A. M. (2006), Links between Service Climate, Employee Commitment and Employees' Service Quality Capability, *Managing Service Quality*, 16 (5), pp. 460–476.
- Morrel-Samuel, P. (2002), Getting the Truth into Workplace Surveys, *Harvard Business Review* (February), pp. 111–118.
- Orange, G., Elliman, T., Kor, A. L. and Tassabehji, R. (2007), Local Government and Social or Innovation Value, *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 1 (3), pp. 242–254.
- Parasuraman, A., Berry, L. L. and Zeithaml, V. A. (1991), Understanding Customers Expectations of Service, *Sloan Management Review*, (Spring), pp. 39–48.
- Robbins, S. P. (1986), *Organizational Behaviour: Concepts, Controversies and Applications*, 3rd edition, Prentice Hall International, New Jersey.
- Rollison, D. and Broadfield, A. (2002), *Organisational Behaviour and Analysis: An Integrated Approach*, 2nd edition, Prentice Hall, Essex.
- Román, S. and Ruiz, S. (2005), Relationship Outcomes of Perceived Ethical Sales Behaviour: The Customer's Perspective, *Journal of Business Research* (58) 4, pp. 439–445.
- Saura, I. G., Contrí, G. B., Taulet, A. C. and Velázquez, B. M. (2005), Relationships Among Customer Orientation, Service Orientation and Job Satisfaction in Financial Services, *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 16 (5), pp. 497–525.
- Snyder, N. T. and Duarte, D. L. (2003), *Strategic Innovation: Embedding Innovation as a Core Competency in Your Organisation*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Staines, G. L. and Quinn, R. P. (1979), American Workers Evaluate the Quality of Their Jobs, *Monthly Labor Review*, (January), pp. 3–12.
- Ulrich, D. (1997), *Human Resource Champions: The Next Agenda for Adding Value and Delivering Results*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.
- Yoon, M. H., Seo, J. H. and Yoon, T. S. (2004), Effects of Contact Employee Supports on Critical Employee Responses and Customer Service Evaluation, *Journal of Services Marketing*, 18 (5), pp. 395–412.
- Young, D. (1996), *Building Your Company's Good Name. How to Create and Protect the Reputation Your organization Wants and Deserves*, Amacom, New York.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L. and Parasuraman, A. (1993), The Nature and Determinants of Customer Expectations of Service, *Journal of Academic Marketing Science*, (Winter), pp. 1–12.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L. and Parasuraman, A. (1996), The Behavioural Consequences of Service Quality, *Journal of Marketing*, 20 (2), pp. 31–46.