

Customer Service Excellence at B&D

In tough economic times companies that continue to focus on their customers tend to thrive.

For this reason B&D Doors & Openers in Kilsyth, Victoria applied their continuous improvement program to their Customer Service Department.

The team ("CSI Kilsyth") was challenged by the Leadership Team to investigate the key issues in delivering even higher levels of customer service.

Figure 1 – Customer Service Team "CSI Kilsyth"



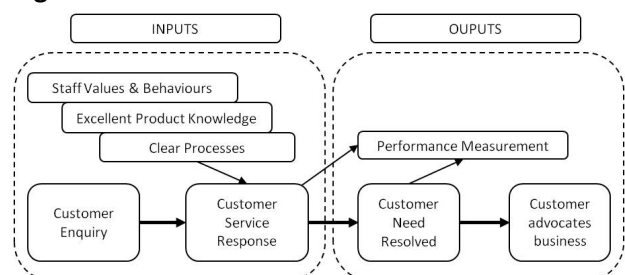
Left to Right: Leon Thebus (Continuous Improvement Coordinator), Pam McKenzie (Major Builder Installation Coordinator), Geoff Brock (Warehouse Supervisor), Gayle Williams (Installations), Motty Padova (Customer Service Manager Vic/Tas), John Fraser-Mifsud (National Sales and Marketing Manager), Sharon Richey (Sales and Service Team Leader), and Paul Burrows (Business Development Manager)

The Customer Service Team at B&D Kilsyth investigated the "5Ps" in relation to Customer Service:

1. Purpose (Customer Service Mission and Policy);
2. Principles (Customer Service Values and Defined Behaviours);
3. People (Staff Knowledge and Skill);
4. Processes (How well the Customer Service processes support delivery of excellent customer service); and
5. Performance Measurement (How Customer Service is measuring performance).

An important principle they followed is that a 'satisfied' customer is not necessarily an advocate for the business. To turn a 'satisfied' customer into an 'advocate' a higher expectation of Customer Service is required.

Figure 2 – The Ins and Outs of Customer Service



The team started by surveying internal customer service staff and asking 3 questions:

- What do we do well?
- What don't we do well? and
- How do you think we can improve?

With the support of the Sales representatives, the team then surveyed their key customers and asked specific questions about how they rated B&D in areas of ease of contact, attitude of staff, understanding of customer requirements and quality of information provided.

"We put ourselves in the customer's shoes"

The team then looked at their internal customer service process and investigate the processes that prevented them from delivering a high level of customer service. They identified some key issues related to the timeliness of product information updates and the clarity of technical information. Solutions for each of the issues identified are being implemented.

A review of the knowledge and skill required within the customer service area was undertaken and the gap between the current situation and the ideal knowledge and skill required at each level was analysed. Based on this analysis the team prioritised and commenced training for various areas of customer service.

During the implementation phase of the team activity “CSI Kilsyth” trialled a “team values” activity that looked at the most important customer service values as judged by the team members. The most important guiding principle they identified was “Commitment to the Customer”. The values they decided were most important in upholding the guiding principle were ‘Respect’ and ‘Ownership of the Issue’.

“Respect – We listen and focus on the issue”

“Ownership of the issue – We take pride in solving a problem for a customer”

The team met weekly and reflected on how they had either demonstrated the values of respect and ownership of the issue or had not upheld the values. If they felt they had not upheld the values the team members discussed why this happened in a ‘no blame’ environment. This activity helped define the values and specific behaviours that B&D want to reinforce with all customer service staff.

To measure progress it has been decided to survey the Customer Service staff and all key customers on a regular basis in the future. This will help distinguish the improvement in the site customer service and also identify further opportunities for improvement that may arise.

The experience of “CSI Kilsyth”, the B&D Customer Service Improvement Team has shown that a motivated team guided by a structured improvement process can achieve impressive results. Based on the work of CSI Kilsyth, the National Sales and Marketing Manager, John Fraser-Mifsud will roll-out similar teams in B&D Doors & Openers sister sites at Revesby (NSW) and Clontarf (QLD).

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