



Best practices in achieving a customer-focused culture

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims: to provide practical insights into how organisations can become more customer-focused; to share with researchers and organisations a framework that can be used to research “customer focus culture” and assess an organisation’s level of customer focus; to describe how New Zealand’s first consortium approach to benchmarking was managed so that others interested in planning a consortium study can learn from this experience.

Design/methodology/approach – The benchmarking study was conducted by member organisations of the New Zealand Benchmarking Club and facilitated by a doctoral student from Massey University’s Centre for Organisational Excellence Research. The methodology involved conducting an extensive literature review to identify national and international best practices in customer focus, developing a survey that was completed by 32 potential best practice organisations, and selecting seven of these organisations for a best practice visit.

Findings – A framework for the examination of customer-focused culture was developed and the findings from the study reveal practical “new” insights into best practices in customer focus.

Research limitations/implications – Benefits would have been gained from extending the study to include a larger international group seeking further examples of good-to-best practices.

Practical implications – Insights into how organisations can become customer-focused; a framework that can be used by researchers to research “customer focus culture” and by organisations to assess their level of customer focus; insights into how to run a benchmarking study.

Originality/value – This paper reports on the first consortium approach to benchmarking that has been used within New Zealand; it shares some of the latest best practices in customer focus; a customer focus culture framework has been developed – the first of which the authors are aware.

Keywords Benchmarking, Customer relations, Best practice, New Zealand

Paper type Research paper

Background

The strong link between an organisation’s culture and its performance has been widely recognised by both practitioners (Basch, 2002) and academics (Kotter and Heskett, 1992). For enduring relationships and loyal customers it is vital for organisations to be equipped with an effective customer-focused culture which facilitates successful product and service delivery (Macaulay and Clark, 1998; Martin, 1992). Put simply, without such a culture, organisations should not expect survival, let alone success, in the long-term. So, what does a good customer-focused culture look like? What are its key components and characteristics?

These were the questions being asked by the 18 organisations that were members of the New Zealand Benchmarking Club[1] (NZBC) between March 2001 and June 2002. The NZBC, formed by Massey University’s Centre for Organisational Excellence Research (COER) in partnership with the New Zealand Business Excellence Foundation, was established to achieve the ambitious vision of achieving



“World-class performance by its members, and widespread adoption of excellent business practices within New Zealand”. Improvements by club member organisations are measured against the criteria for performance excellence (Figure 1) on an annual basis. The criteria reflect the successful management practices identified in high performing organisations (NIST, 2004).

Customer and market focus is one of the six “enabler” categories of the framework, labelled 1-6. When the Club formed in May 2000, it decided that the most effective way for its member organisations to improve would be to operate benchmarking studies in each of the six enabler categories. These would be facilitated by doctoral students and identify good to best business practices which would then be implemented. Members voted for the first study to address the customer and market focus area. The specific topic for study was selected after club members voted on which customer focus issues were most important to them. Table I shows the full list of issues and how they rated in terms of priority. Based on the votes, the club decided to undertake a benchmarking study to “determine how best practice organisations work towards a customer-focussed culture”. The decision to work on this study was also supported by the results from the club’s annual assessments against the criteria for performance excellence. These assessment results are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2, shows the spread of performance excellence scores of 15 club member organisations. A strong, positive and statistically significant relationship is shown between the scores of organisations for their “customer-focussed results” and their “financial and market results”. This data indicates that if club members improve their customer-focussed results it is likely that their financial and market results will improve.

A strong positive relationship was also identified between the “customer and market focus” approach club member’s use and the “customer focus results” achieved (Figure 3) indicating that there is a link between customer-focussed culture,

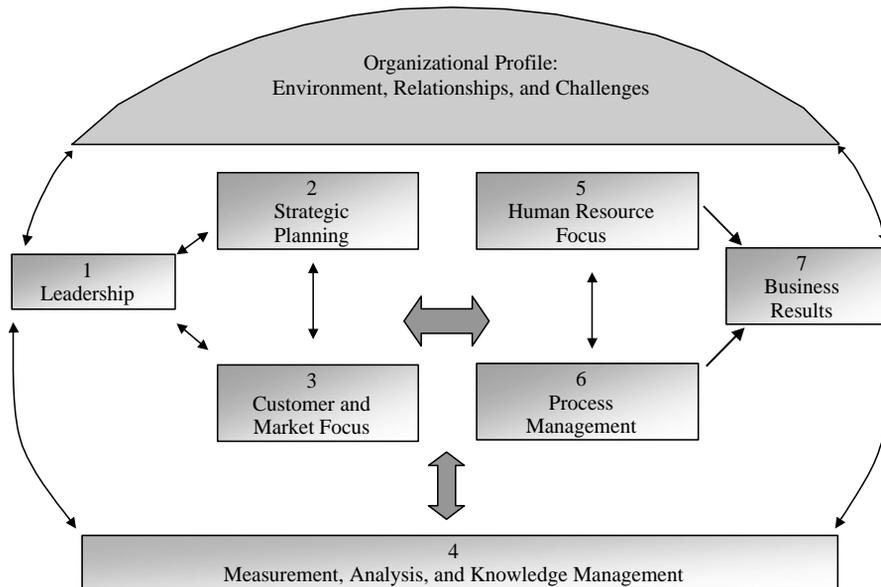
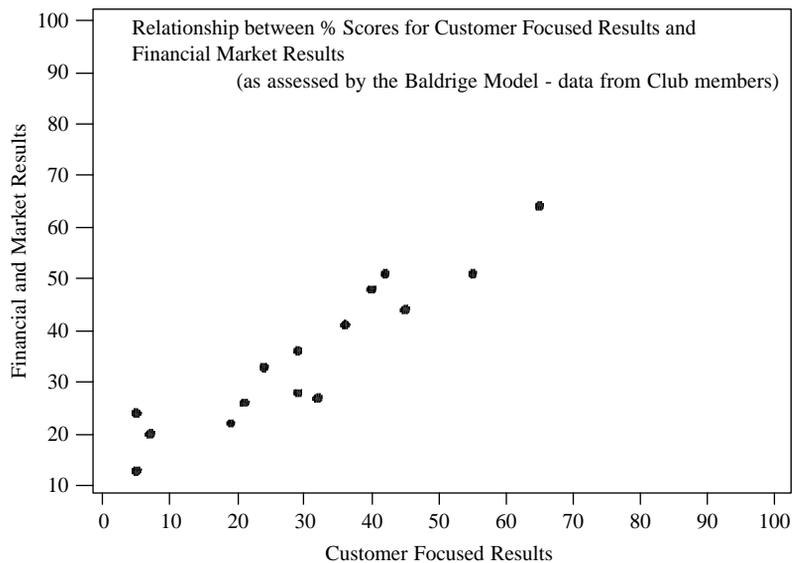


Figure 1. The criteria for performance excellence

Customer and market focus issues	Priority rating
Customer focus/relationship management	22
Development of customer service KPIs	20
Forecasting	17
Induction and training strategies	17
Customer survey action planning	17
Greater understanding of the impact of service delivery on customers	16
E-commerce	12
Perfect order transaction	8
Gap between provision and understanding of information	7

Table I.
The most important customer and market focus issues identified by the NZBC

Notes: At a NZBC meeting held on 25 October 2000, the club members identified nine customer and market focus issues that were of concern to them. Members subsequently voted on the priority of these issues to their business. Each organisation then allocated three points to the area of most concern to them, two points to the area of 2nd most concern, and one point to the area that was third in concern. The results are presented below in order of importance



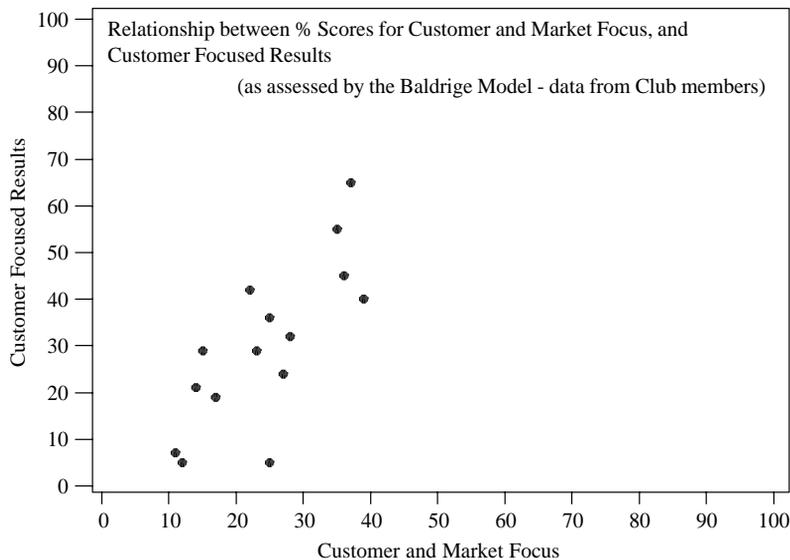
r. = 0.937, P=0.000

Figure 2.
Spread of self-assessed performance excellence scores

customer-focussed results, and financial results achieved. For a more in-depth analysis of the criteria for performance excellence assessment results refer to Mann and Saunders (2005).

Purpose of the paper

Despite the acknowledged importance of “customer focus” surprisingly little academic attention has been paid to the description and analysis of a customer-focused culture. Certainly the authors’ and the NZBC study team found little practical information on frameworks or approaches to developing a customer focussed culture. This paper



$r = 0.767, P = 0.001$

Figure 3. Relationship between percentage scores for customer and market focus, and customer-focussed results

addresses this shortfall through presenting the findings of a benchmarking study set up to “determine how best practice organisations work towards a customer-focussed culture”.

In addition, this paper provides valuable information on how New Zealand’s first consortium study in benchmarking was managed. This information will be useful to those considering setting up benchmarking studies.

For the purpose of this paper the term “Best Practices” or “Good Practices” is defined as:

... activities or systems that have been shown to produce superior results. Best practices are selected by a systematic process, and judged as exemplary, good or successfully demonstrated. They can be adapted and to fit an organisation’s specific needs” (APQC, cited in Jarrar and Zairi, 2000).

The paper begins by providing an overview of the club’s benchmarking methodology. This is followed by the findings from two key parts of the benchmarking process, the literature review and best practice visits.

New Zealand Benchmarking Club’s benchmarking methodology

The benchmarking study was conducted by members of the NZBC and facilitated by a doctoral student from Massey University’s COER. Of the 18 member organisations of the NZBC, 11 volunteered to be part of the benchmarking team[2]. In most cases these organisations nominated a staff member with the most experience in customer relationship management to be part of the team. Team members were actively involved in all aspects of the study. The club’s eight-step benchmarking methodology is summarised in Table II.

Step 1 – agreeing on the terms of reference	<p>Clarifying the study topic (the business practice/process to be studied)</p> <p>Agreeing on the roles of team members</p> <p>Deciding method, resources, and timeframe</p> <p>Deciding key outcomes and performance indicators</p>
Step 2 – literature review and expert opinion	<p>Scene setting presentations by acknowledged expert(s)</p> <p>Study members learning from each other’s current practices and experiences</p> <p>An extensive literature review to identify national and international best practices in the topic area</p>
Step 3 – survey	<p>Developing key questions for a survey (using the knowledge gained from Step 2)</p> <p>Identifying potential “best practice” organisations that will be specifically targeted for the survey</p> <p>Conducting the survey</p>
Step 4 – survey analysis meeting	<p>Reviewing the survey responses</p> <p>Writing a survey report describing the findings</p>
Step 5 – best practice visits	<p>Selecting 5 to 7 best practice organisations to be approached for a visit</p> <p>Developing the site visit approach/questionnaire</p> <p>Undertaking the visits (most benchmarking study members participate in at least two visits each)</p>
Step 6 – visit analysis meeting	<p>Study members sharing the lessons learnt during the visits</p> <p>Reaching agreement on the best practices</p>
Step 7 – best practice report	<p>Writing and publishing the best practice report</p>
Step 8 – share findings and celebrate	<p>Holding a best practice sharing meeting in which the study team shares their findings with invited work colleagues and the NZBC, and celebrates the success of the study. It will include best practice presentations from one or two of the organisations that were visited</p>

Table II.
NZBC’s benchmarking methodology

The study began by clarifying the aim, scope, objectives and key results required (Step 1). The terms of reference that was agreed to at the team’s first meeting is shown in Table III. This was referred to throughout the study and refinements to it were made as necessary.

An extensive review of the literature relating to customer focus culture followed Step 1. Firstly, the purpose of the literature review was to gain a common understanding of what is meant by a “customer-focussed culture”. For instance, what sort of service would customers expect, and what sort of systems and processes would be found, within a customer focussed organisation? Secondly, the literature review focussed on identifying customer-focussed practices that had been successfully used by high-performing organisations.

From the literature review a framework and survey of 56 questions investigating customer focus culture was developed. The aim of the survey (Step 3) was to identify organisations reporting high levels of performance in the area of customer focus culture so that they could be interviewed to determine what practices they had in place.

The survey was sent electronically to 44 organisations that were likely to have good customer-focussed systems. These organisations belonged to one of three different target groups:

<i>Study name</i>	Customer-focussed culture
Brief description in a single statement	1 March 2001
<i>Date initiated</i>	
<i>Study aim (scope)</i>	Determine how best-practice companies work towards a customer-focused culture
Overall purpose, including a scoping statement if appropriate	Define customer-focused culture. The definition is likely to include areas such as: How do best-practice companies find out about customers' key expectations? How do they integrate this information throughout the organisation? How do they collect feedback and use it to make changes? How are customer front-line contacts managed to effectively build relationships
<i>Study objectives</i>	Develop a tool for assessing the customer-focussed culture within an organisation Undertake a benchmarking study based on the assessment tool Identify the customer focussed best-practices exhibited by high performing organisations
Specific study objectives	
<i>Key results required</i>	Identify key components of a customer-focused culture, incorporated in a report based on a literature survey, and backed up by the verification study Develop an assessment tool for assessing customer-focussed culture Identify high performing companies Produce best-practice report for club members incorporating the three outputs above
Results and outputs that must be provided which contribute to the study aim	
<i>Study team</i>	
Study leader	Diane Watson, Royal and Sun Alliance
Study members	Robert Crow, N.Z. Sugar Anne Bridges, Kiwi Dairies Robin Mann, Massey University Michelle Buckley, Montana Wines
Study facilitator	Bronwen Bartley, Massey University
<i>Study parameters</i>	
Timeframe: resources required:	As per attached schedule
estimated cost(s):	
<i>Benefits</i>	The study will provide members with information on how they can improve their company's customer focus culture

Note: Original copy from the first meeting

Table III.
The terms of reference for the benchmarking study

- (1) members of the New Zealand Business Excellence Foundation;
- (2) members of the NZBC, both of which are voluntary collectives consisting of organisations with a common interest in performance excellence/improvement; and
- (3) a selected group of other New Zealand organisations with a reputable customer focus, recommended by the benchmarking study team (some of these were identified through the literature review).

A high level of response was obtained with 32 organisations completing the questionnaire. Findings from the benchmarking survey will be shown in a forthcoming paper or can be obtained from the Club’s Best Practice Report (NZBC, 2004).

Following analysis of the responses (Step 4), seven organisations that exhibited high levels of customer-focus were selected for detailed interviews (Step 5). As Table IV shows, these organisations were from a range of business sectors and of different sizes. The interview questions were developed and approved by the whole study team. The interviews were conducted by the team’s facilitator along with two different team members attending each interview. This was to ensure consistency of approach and allow all study team members to directly learn from the case study organisations. Initially, all members of the team wanted to attend all the interviews. However, it was felt that this may be too daunting for the case study organisations and that the interviews may become less focussed with so many individuals wanting to ask questions.

The information obtained from the interviews was discussed at a meeting between all the team’s members (Step 6). The purpose of this meeting was to obtain agreement on the good to best practices that had been identified. Once this verification of good to best practices had been achieved the Best Practice Report was written (Step 7). This report captured all the findings from the study and was later published (NZBC, 2004). The report was important for four reasons, to:

- (1) share the findings of the study with other club members that did not actively participate in the study;
- (2) assist club members in getting buy-in from their own organisation to the findings from the study;
- (3) share the findings with all organisations within New Zealand (the club was focussed on raising the performance of all New Zealand businesses as well as its members); and
- (4) provide recognition to study team members who had contributed a significant amount of time to the study.

The final step in the methodology was a best practice sharing meeting in which the study team shared their findings with invited work colleagues and all members of the NZBC. It included best practice presentations from one or two of the organisations that were interviewed. After the best practice sharing meeting club members were then ready to implement the study’s findings.

Industry type	Size (No. of employees)
Banking and finance	Large (> 500)
Confectionary manufacturing	Large (> 500)
Workplace apparel manufacturing/retail	Medium (200-500)
Power supply/home appliances retail/customer services	Small (50-200)
Mail management service	Very small (< 50)
Non-profit trust – vocational training for the disabled	Very small (< 50)
Printing	Very small (< 50)

Table IV.
Case study organisations

Gaining an understanding of “customer-focused culture”

Within this section, an overview of the benchmarking study findings from the literature review is provided. This review was undertaken to understand what is “organisational culture” “customer focus” and “customer-focused culture”. From this understanding, six key characteristics of a customer-focused organisation were identified.

Organisational culture

As humans work together in stable groups over time an all-pervasive, collaboratively learned, shared perspective on the world is developed. This mutual understanding frames and permeates the group’s communally held values, attitudes, understanding and thus influences its consequent behaviour. The phenomena we have come to accept as “organisational culture” are forged in the organisation’s past, simultaneously shaping its present and informing its future.

Schein (1999) refers to “organisational culture” as:

... a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.

Culture is thus “caught” and “taught”. It is a human dynamic, adapting and reinventing itself as the environment and group composition changes over time. The result is the popularised notion of “how we do things around here” (Schein, 1999). Understanding culture is important because, as Schein (1999) points out, it is a set of powerful, latent and often subconsciously operating forces. If these forces are not surfaced and understood, they may undermine any attempt to direct an organisation’s efforts and behaviour towards the ends deemed desirable by the leadership in carrying out the organisation’s mission and achieving its strategies and goals.

Customer-focus

In their study of Japanese firms, Deshpandé *et al.* (1993) described customer focus[3] as:

... the set of beliefs that put the customers’ interest first, while not excluding those of all other stakeholders such as owners, managers, and employees, in order to develop a long-term profitable enterprise.

While capturing the essence of the concept, the above definition calls for clarification on two points. Firstly, “customers” can be both/either internal and/or external; it has been argued that in order to cater for external customers’ interests properly, organisations need to treat their own employees (internal customers) with similar care and attention (Conduit and Mavondo, 2001). Secondly, customer-focus is not restricted to the areas of business operation where customers are directly involved; instead, it applies to numerous (if not all) aspects of business, from front-line staff members’ interaction with customers, product/service designs and development, problem/complaints handling, to customer relationship maintenance. Taking these points into consideration, customer focus is defined here as “organisations’ concerns with their (past, present, and future) customers’ needs, wants, and expectations and their strong commitment to understand and satisfy them in a proactive manner for long-term growth[4]”.

Customer-focus culture

Therefore, a culture focused on customers encourages and directs employees to take appropriate actions in accordance with this orientation. As Nwankwo (1995) pointed out, customer focus is not a philosophy that can be developed through an emphasis on peripheral service attributes. Rather, it has been argued that organisations can truly embrace customer focus only if they entrench it as a culture throughout their organisation (Kennedy *et al.*, 2002). Narver and Slater (1990) go even further to describe that customer focus (market orientation) is the organisational culture that “most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviours for the creation of superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business”.

To be successfully focused on customers, organisations must ensure a high level of consensus and cohesiveness around the belief that its existence relies on being responsive to the needs of its customers. Thus, it is essential to ensure alignment of this effort throughout every aspect of organisational life and through all the myriad sub-cultures that may exist within the main organisational umbrella. Employees must have a shared understanding of how they should respond to any given situation in an expected, uniform manner (in this case, a customer-focused fashion). As a result, organisations are expected to perform better as a whole (Mallak *et al.*, 2003). In other words, effective customer-focused performance can be provided on a constant and sustainable basis only when a pervasive customer-focused culture is present throughout the whole organisation. Considering the proven connection between customer focus and performance of organisations in individual operational areas (such as service quality, customer and employee satisfaction) as well as overall profitability (Appiah-Adu and Singh, 1998; Agarwal *et al.*, 2003), organisations have powerful incentives to equip themselves with a strong customer-focused culture.

The six characteristics of customer focussed culture

Through the benchmarking team’s improved understanding of customer focussed culture it then set about identifying its key elements. This led to the development of six characteristics of customer-focused culture. These were later validated and refined through the findings from a benchmarking survey and best practice visits. The six characteristics along with the names of other researchers’ work, in parentheses, that support the benchmarking team’s findings are provided below:

- (1) *Leadership*. Customers drive organisational direction and actions (Brooks, 1997; Whiteley, 1991; Galbreath and Rogers, 1999).
- (2) *Listening*. Customers’ views are actively sought and it is easy for them to make contact/conduct business (Scheuing, 1999; Plymire, 1991).
- (3) *Analysis and understanding*. Customer expectations and their key requirements are understood (Brooks, 1997; Wikström, 1996).
- (4) *Integration and deployment*. Customers’ expectations are acted upon (Martin, 1992).
- (5) *People*. Customer-focused culture is understood and embedded throughout the organisation (Kennedy *et al.*, 2002).
- (6) *Review and improve*. Customer-focus strategies, procedures, and processes are regularly reviewed and improved (Alam and Perry, 2002).

Good to best practice findings

Using the six characteristics described in the previous section as an analytical framework, the remainder of the paper provides examples of practices and behaviours used by customer-focused organisations. These practices and behaviours can be used as a check-list by organisations to assess how customer focussed they are or they can be used by researchers as a starting point for conducting research into customer focussed organisations.

The list of practices and behaviours underneath each characteristic were identified either through the literature review, survey, or best practice visits. They were only included in the list if the study team agreed by consensus, based on the research evidence, that the practices were likely to produce superior performance results. Following on from the list of practices and behaviours, examples are given on how specific practices were applied in one or more case study organisations.

Leadership – customers drive organisational direction and actions

Leadership practices/behaviours:

- vision, mission and values have a strong customer focus and are well communicated;
- senior leaders personally demonstrate their commitment through customer-centred behaviours, including participating in the development of customer relationships;
- business strategy is driven by customer and market knowledge;
- senior leaders ensure their people/processes are responsive to customer needs;
- the organisation is structured to meet customer needs;
- a strong focus is on customer retention and building long-term relationships.

Within most case study organisations' induction courses were used as a key tool to communicate and reinforce customer-focused expectations. One organisation encouraged its existing staff to join newly hired staff in a "refresher course" on how the organisation's values and mission are given expression in day-to-day operations. Another organisation provided every staff member with a small "wallet card" stating the organisation's vision and commitment to its customers and staff. An excellent example of how senior leaders personally demonstrated their commitment to customer focus was shown by a leading confectionary manufacturer. This organisation used a system of regular "top to top" meetings between its managing director and the CEOs of its major customers. Together, they explored mutual opportunities and sought solutions to problems. The strategic direction set at these meetings was implemented in "trickle down" fashion throughout the two organisations to the benefit of both.

Listening – customers' views are actively sought and it is easy for them to make contact/do business

Listening practices/behaviours:

- a wide variety of mechanisms for customers to contact the organisation easily and effectively (for example, 0800 number, e-mail and web site) are available;

- a wide variety of mechanisms for seeking and learning customers' needs and expectations (for example, focus groups, customer surveys, customer visits and reviews) are in place;
- a complaints process and guidelines are established/complaints are properly recorded; and
- customer relationships and partnerships are fostered.

A similarity between the case study organisations was that they all tried to ensure that customers can talk to a "real" person. They avoided substituting technology for person-to-person contact. For example, several organisations did not use voice-mail facilities preferring that customers' calls were answered in person. Another similarity was that they regarded complaint handling as crucial and as an opportunity to learn and improve. For example, a bank provided wallet-sized leaflets to instruct staff on how to handle complaints, and brochures for customers on how to make a complaint and a description of the process that would be followed.

To improve communication and especially the organisation's ability to listen to the customer a mail house paired each sales representative with a customer services officer. This system enabled the customer services officer to concentrate on the entire customer liaison activity whilst the sales representatives concentrated on sales. At any time the customer services officer would be available for contact by the client to address any issues that may arise and thus ensure that each job is carried out to the customers' satisfaction.

Analysis and understanding – customer expectations and their key requirements are understood

Analysis and understanding practices/behaviours:

- the performance of product and service delivery processes are measured;
- system for capturing and storing customer information is in place;
- surveys, customer information and complaints, including the trends of results are analysed;
- key customer requirements are identified; and
- comparative or competitive data are used.

Most of the case study organisations made extensive use of customer data to understand the needs of customers. For instance, most documented their interactions with all customer contacts. This information was available to all appropriate staff, online, and in real time.

Three of the case study organisations sent their customer service personnel out to customers' premises to see how their services added value to the customer's product. This helped them to fully understand the requirements of the customer. All the case study organisations encouraged customers to physically visit them to understand their own business. This interaction provided customers with a working knowledge of what products may be of use to them and assisted the case study organisations in obtaining new product ideas.

Integration and deployment – customer’s expectations are acted upon

Integration and deployment practices/behaviours:

- product/service design, development and delivery are based on meeting the needs of the customer;
- plans are made and action is taken based on customer surveys/customer information with a focus on agility and flexibility;
- attention to “delighting” the customer;
- customers are kept fully informed of the on-going development of new/improved products and services;
- actions are internally communicated within the organisation; and
- service standards and a published “service promise” are defined and communicated.

The case study organisations generally used a team-based approach to meeting customers’ needs. For instance, a mail house formed cross-functional teams to brainstorm product improvements, problem solutions and innovation. When a customer need was identified, the company policy was to find a way to meet it, whether or not the product or service had ever been offered before. Teams could also include the customer and sometimes their customers’ customers so that a common approach was taken to meeting a need or working on a solution to a problem.

All the case study organisations had systems in place to ensure that customers are kept informed of the progress of jobs or complaint resolution. These systems were generally available online in real-time to all staff members dealing with customers. Follow-up calls were common by sales representatives or management staff to ensure that the customer was completely satisfied with the outcome of an inquiry or complaint.

People – customer-focused culture is understood and embedded throughout the organisation

People practices/behaviours:

- recruitment and induction processes emphasise customer focus;
- communication and training processes emphasise customer focus;
- performance appraisal/management systems (including reward and recognition) emphasise customer focus; and
- employee objectives and goals are aligned to meet the organisation’s customer-focused strategy.

All the case study organisations’ placed a strong emphasis on recruiting people who fitted in with their customer-focused culture. In two case study organisations, new employees spent time in different areas of the organisation as observers prior to attending formal induction training (to get a feel for the organisation and what is expected of them). In two other organisations, the CEO or senior management met one on one with new staff members to personally reinforce the customer-service ethic and explain “how things are done here” and why customer service is afforded top priority.

Employee empowerment was actively encouraged in all case study organisations. Staff in most organisations were given freedom to fix problems as they saw fit if

customer needs were not met. To support a culture of empowerment, staff training and development were of crucial importance. If mishaps occurred the case study organisations regarded errors as possible indicators of training needs rather than occasions for allocating blame.

Review and improve – customer-focused strategies, procedures and processes are regularly reviewed and improved

Review and improve practices/behaviours:

- customer-focused strategies and approaches are continuously reviewed for further improvement; and
- key processes which impact the customer are continuously monitored and improved.

All the case study organisations undertook regular customer reviews. The timing of these depended on the volatility of the market they operated in. These organisations used benchmarking information to measure their performance, identify trends and assist in their search for better work practices. One organisation rewarded staff members who had shown excellence in customer service by giving them the opportunity to go on overseas study tours to seek new practices that could be adapted for their own use. These trips served as both a reward for staff and a fact-finding exercise.

Conclusion

Culture is “the way things are done around here”; it is formed as a result of shared experience and driven by an organisation’s leaders. Culture is both “taught and caught”. The importance of focussing an organisation’s culture on its customers has been highlighted by the criteria for performance excellence assessment results shown within this paper and other research results from around the world.

The benchmarking study endeavoured to reveal some of the mystery behind how organisations can move towards a customer-focussed culture. It achieved this through developing a framework, based on a literature review and verified through survey data, that shows the key characteristics of a customer-focussed organisation. Good to best practices were identified for each characteristic that can assist an organisation in achieving superior performance results. These practices came from organisations that had scored well in a survey on customer focus.

Whilst the study identified successful practices of customer-focussed organisations it is acknowledged that the study could have been of even greater value. In particular, benefits would be gained from extending the study to a larger international group seeking further examples of good-to-best practices.

In conclusion, it is the authors’ view that customer-focused services and practices cannot be developed or sustained in the long-term unless organisations develop a pervasive culture (a philosophy, values, and assumptions) which supports and ensures the effective delivery of these services and practices. The authors’ encourage more organisations in New Zealand and worldwide to seriously take on the challenge of developing a customer-focussed culture through considering how the findings from the NZBC’s study can be applied to their own circumstances.

Notes

1. For more information about the NZBC and its members, visit: www.nzbc.org.nz
2. This paper is based upon the research conducted by the Customer Market Focus Team of the NZBC. The authors wish to thank its members for their valuable contributions. They were: Matt Anderson, Roger Biggs, Anne Bridges, Rose MacFarlane, Pat Sandbrook, Mike Author, Robert Crow, Liz Bellis, Dianne Watson (Study Leader), Barry Cooper, and Robin Mann. Bartley was the Facilitator of the study.
3. In this paper, the terms “customer orientation” and “market orientation” are treated as synonymous to “customer focus”.
4. This definition is in line with what Slater and Narver refer to as a “market-oriented philosophy” as opposed to a “customer-led philosophy” which is essentially short-term in focus and reactive in nature. See Slater and Narver (1998).

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