

Employee Empowerment Pays Off

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Establishing procedures builds up brand through employee trust

By Kelcey Thompson

Many of you are comfortable with your market share, the number of customers you have, and the state of your business, and you do not plan on making any changes. However, some of you want to dominate your market and are striving to grow your business—you are who this article is for. You are the one who never believes the status quo is good enough—you believe there is more, and you are always striving to achieve it.

You cannot achieve this on your own, though. You must have the help of your employees—they are the most critical aspect to your success. Times have changed and employees want to be heard—they want to be part of a team and contribute to the company's vision.

Your employees essentially are your business. The business should work with and for the employees. The business from the top down has to create an empowered environment. This may seem upside down, but it will help you reach your goals.

Provide a Road Map

You cannot just send your employees out there and expect them to do what you want them to do. That

would be like telling someone to drive to your business without giving them an address or directions. Processes and procedures are your employees' map and directions. In order to understand processes and procedures we need to define them and understand the differences between the two. Simply put, processes are the overall map of the area. Procedures are the step-by-step directions.

Per Wikipedia, "a process is a set of interrelated activities that interact to achieve a result." In business process mapping, the process is the map for your employees. Processes identify key activities while providing a general strategy to decision-makers on how to handle specific issues as they arise. They provide employees with limits and alternatives that can be used as guidelines in their decision making.

According to Merriam-Webster, a procedure is "a particular way of accomplishing something or of acting." A procedure provides the employee with a clear and easy-to-understand, step-by-step plan of action required to complete a task. A well-written procedure provides clear, precise instructions that eliminate misunderstandings by identifying job duties and establishing limitations. Well-defined and well-written procedures allow managers to control issues and

events in advance. Proper directions prevent costly mistakes.

Efficiency in Empowerment

A combination of processes and procedures is required for consistency in your day-to-day operations. They define limitations, goals and responsibilities when dealing with accountability or issues of critical importance. Above all, processes and procedures empower your employees by providing them with the information required to complete their jobs and make informed decisive decisions while knowing they have the business behind them.

Your employees need those processes and procedures to ensure success, but they do not want to just be told what to do, they want to assist in creating them. Employees want to provide your customers an exception experience. They want to make split-second decisions to resolve a customer's

issue. They have just been waiting for the proper tools and support to be able to do so.

If created and documented properly, processes and procedures provide your employees the authority to make split-second decisions within defined boundaries. Businesses can pour good money after bad into intricate advertising campaigns, but bad customer service and failed resolution of issues can eliminate all of that in an instant.

Importance of Customer Service

We all have experienced moments when dealing with a company that has not responded to an issue, however big or small, in a timely matter. At that moment, you probably did not care how much money the company had put into its advertising or how many of its commercials you had seen or heard. Your issue is your issue, and all you

wanted was for it to be resolved in a timely matter to your satisfaction. Outstanding customer service can be better for your company than a lavish public relations campaign because it shows you not only listen to your customers but you also listen to your employees.

We know customers are in the process of turning the corner from being complacent about whether or not they receive any form of acceptable customer service to demanding a seamless process. By using all of your resources, being proactive and creating processes and procedures, you display to your customers that you care and they matter. You are providing them with the customer experience they deserve. **WQP**

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