



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY PANEL 3 – CUSTOMER SERVICES

21st MARCH 2012

DESKTOP RESEARCH: BEST PRACTICE CUSTOMER SERVICES FACILITIES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its scoping meeting, Scrutiny Panel 3 (Customer Services) agreed that it would receive details of customer services facilities from organisations external to Northampton that have been noted as best practice.
- 1.2 The Organisation Customer Plus, a full service marketing consultancy that works with FTSE100 companies, SMEs, local and central government, social housing and other public sector organisations commended the customer services facilities of two organisations to the Panel:

Ford Retail –The Panel received a presentation on its customer services facilities at an earlier agenda item.

Customer Plus was engaged to design and deliver customer experience improvement programme to support Ford Retail's recognition of the strong link between customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and profitability. Ford Retail won an award for its Moments of Truth programme.

Gentoo Group – An organisation that was created following housing stock transfer from a local authority. The Organisation is based in Sunderland. Customer Plus commended the customer services facilities of Gentoo. Gentoo was awarded 'North East Contact Centre runner up' in 2010 and 2011.

2 Gentoo

- 2.1 The Customer Services Centre is open between 8am and 7pm, Monday to Friday and between 9am and 2pm on Saturdays. There is a 24 hour emergency care line, manned by a conceige team outside the above hours that deals with mainly emergency repairs and individuals presenting as homeless.

- 2.2 Approximately 400,000 calls are made to the Customer Services Centre (CSC) each year. The CSC is headed up by a Director of Customer Services and a Customer Services Manager. There are 32 FTEs in post.
- 2.3 There are various methods for customers to contact the organisation:
- In person
 - Telephone
 - Email
 - Short Message Service (Text)
 - Social media, such as Twitter
- 2.3 The organisation has invested in its website and social media channels in order to introduce a Channel Shift Strategy; the aim being to achieve a 10% shift from face to face/email contact to social media. It is anticipated that this would create an annual saving of £150,000, with extended access for customers. Gentoo will, however, continue to promote the other channels.
- 2.4 Gentoo is a member of a number of groups:
- Customer Services Benchmarking Club
 - Customer Services Network
 - Institute of Customer Services
 - Northern Consortium Network
- 2.5 The Director of Customer Experience commends the Net Promoter Score (NPS) as a key customer service measure. Net Promoter is a customer loyalty metric. The Net Promoter Score is obtained by asking customers a single question on a 0 to 10 rating scale, where 10 is "extremely likely" and 0 is "not at all likely": It is reported that users of the Net Promoter approach claim the score can be used to motivate an organisation to become more focused on improving products and services for customers.
- 2.6 Over the course of the last two year, the NPS has increased from 16% to 68%, putting Gentoo top of British Customer Companies, alongside organisations such as First Direct Bank.
- 2.7 Customer satisfaction levels have increased to 92%.
- 2.8 It is reported that Gentoo takes a quality approach to customer services rather than a quantitative approach; offering quality advice and empathy. It uses a CRM system which creates professional contact with customer. A performance coach is in post, who's role is to improve how the organisation deals with customers. Regular coaching and mentoring takes places.
- 2.9 The Director of Customer Experience confirmed that the organisation 'puts the customer in the heart of everything it does.' The organisation uses the Harvard Business School Service Profit Chain. The service-profit chain, developed from analyses of successful service organisations, puts "hard" values on "soft" measures. It helps managers target new investments to develop service and satisfaction levels for maximum

competitive impact, widening the gap between service leaders and their merely good competitors. Gentoo looks at people requirements, satisfaction requirements, loyalty to promote repeat business etc with the aim of removing non-value added processes from its customer services.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 That details obtained via this desktop research exercise inform the evidence base of the Review.

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