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Organisational Schizophrenia: Impact on Customer Service Quality, by Gopal K. Gureja, Sage Publications, 2013, p.346

One used to see a placard hung in a corner in many public sector banks displaying a quote from Mahatma Gandhi: “A customer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. He is not an interruption in our work. He is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider in our business. He is part of it. We are not doing him a favour by serving him. He is doing us a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so.” The exhortation is used to be seen more in its breach than in observance. That was before the forces of competition induced by globalization and liberalization forced manufacturers and service providers to view consumer satisfaction as an essential element contributing to the success of the business venture. Today many (though not all or even a majority) successful businesses look at consumer happiness as a goal to pursue by itself as a means to maximize profits and shareholder benefits in the long run. Jack Welch’s principle that a company’s sole aim should be maximizing returns to the shareholders seems to be gradually yielding place to the idea that the long term success will depend upon its customer satisfaction. This transition, however, has not been smooth and in many cases, beneath the veneer of cultivated concern for the consumer runs the deep-rooted obsession with the goal of short-term profit maximization.

This seems to be the central theme of Gureja’s book which provides a stimulating analysis of the pronouncements of consumer satisfaction policies by the corporates, the systems put in place by them to operationalize such policies, the gap between policies and practice and the possible reasons for such divorce between what is promised and what is provided. The author observes that “Cultural schizophrenia begins to crawl into the organization when its internal routines, operating processes and management’s priorities do not support the postured policy of a high degree of customer commitment.” In Chapter 7 of the book, he outlines a number of symptoms that forebode the onset of the disease, such as the frontline employees urging the customers to take their complaints to a higher level, passing the buck, fondness for subordination, employees’ willingness to deal with the situation hampered by lack of knowledge, taking customers for granted, etc. His arguments are based on his rich experience and an extensive analysis of his

interviews with executives of various in manufacturing companies, financial institutions, airlines etc. Being the result of a study of practical situations, the author's theorization rings true.

The book has 18 chapters which have been divided in four parts. Part I relates to The Promise which deals with deliverables reflected in the mission and vision statements of companies. Part II is The Performance which deals with the real life interactions that the author had with companies. Part III is The Cultural Schizophrenia which is the outcome of the empirical research; the findings indicate the areas of disconnects reflecting the cultural turmoil and the last Part is 'The Afterthought' which provides a collage of interviews and other quotes. The author has indicated that he collected data from about 200 persons functioning at various levels of hierarchy in 12 companies. The interactions of the author include customers also.

It would have been worthwhile if the author could provide some statistics about the perceptual gaps between the personnel working in the companies and customers. Nowhere the details of 200 people have been given in the book. A table to this effect could be beneficial. The interview schedule has not been annexed in the book.

However, the book is an interesting read and the reader can connect with the cases from his or her own life experiences. The comic illustrations are like a feather in the cap and add to the impact of the book making it a visual retreat.

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