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Book Review: Organisational Schizophrenia: Impact on Customer Service Quality

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What is This?

Book Reviews

Gopal K. Gureja, *Organisational Schizophrenia: Impact on Customer Service Quality*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2013, 346 pp., ₹ 550 (ISBN: 978-81-321-0956-3 [Paperback])

The watershed economic reforms of 1991 resulted in improved competitiveness in all its manifestations, including improved customer care and focus on creating customer delight. Though there were various customer-centric initiatives already existent in the Indian market, the proverb 'customer is king' gained momentum especially after economic reforms. In the present competitive world, where all companies are focusing on creating delighted customers, this book attempts to examine the key question—why does practice at the operating level glide away from the declared vision and mission of creating 'customer delight'. On the basis of primary and secondary research, the author has identified major reasons for disconnect between policies and practices—labelled as 'organizational schizophrenia'—that are even prevalent in customer-centric companies. The book brings out the fact that the reasons for disconnect between policy and practice is due to contradictory communication, inappropriate leadership style, erroneous review processes and lack of employee engagement. In this book, the author also elaborates the critical relationship between human factors and organizational dynamics. It is already a proven fact that the customer's perception about the quality of service delivered is always built on the quality of interaction with the customer-contact executives. Therefore, the present book also provides the reader an insight into the dynamic interplay between employee engagement in frontline executives and customer experience.

This book is based on primary research and data was collected from approximately 200 employees working in 12 different companies. A larger proportion of respondents were frontline customer-contact executives and they have been interviewed by the author himself. Other respondents include employees belonging to different levels of hierarchy in organizations, channel associates and customers. Secondary data was collected from the documents and presentations of respective companies. The author had also participated in several review meetings in the company to understand the intricacies of customer service and delivery. The book reports the positive and negative reactions of respondents as 'VOICES', which provide deep insights about employee's viewpoint about customer services. The author has also aptly used a number of comic illustrations to support the discussion in various chapters.

The book has been divided into four parts. Part I, entitled 'The Promise', meticulously examines the promise of deliverables, especially excellent customer service made by most of the companies. In this section, the author provides an overview of mission, vision and other important internal and external communications of five famous companies. Critical evaluation of these communications clearly demonstrates that most companies make firm promise of high commitment to customer service and customer

satisfaction. In this section, the author has also recounted some of the enabling processes used by these companies to deliver the promise of quality of service and customer satisfaction. For example, the Customer Care System (CCS) of ELGI Equipments and Divisional Apex Response Team (DART) of Thermax are explained in detail in this section. The last chapter of Part I of this book brings out the fact that companies need a high level of employee engagement to deliver excellent customer service. Overall, this chapter specifies key efforts put in by the companies like Thermax, Whirlpool, VIRGO Engineers and ELGI Equipment Limited to develop appropriate organizational structure, operating processes and a positive customer-oriented culture to improve employee engagement.

Part II of the book, entitled 'The Performance', comprises small cases based on personal instances of the author with several reputed companies. These cases range from all major industries like insurance, banking, airlines, hotels, and so on. These cases bring out the widespread experience of poor responsiveness faced by most customers from highly regarded customer-conscious companies. Part III, 'The Cultural Schizophrenia', is devoted to identify the prominent reasons of disengagement between customer-services-oriented policies and actual practices in companies. This section deals with the findings of primary research conducted by the author, specifically it discreetly identifies the areas of disconnect between policy and practice, which eventually leads to a schizophrenic culture in an organization. According to the author, cultural schizophrenia begins when internal routines, operating processes and management priorities do not support the customer-service policy. According to the author, management apathy towards customer-service policies results in dysfunctional symptoms in employee behaviour, for example, passing the buck, low self-esteem, inertia towards exceptional customer care. Most importantly, frontline employees themselves recommend the customers to escalate their complaint to top management.

The author brings out the fact that the most important reason for this cultural turmoil is the soaring focus on numbers during target-setting process. In most of the companies, during target setting, more importance is given to quantitative targets and less to qualitative or customer service-related outcomes. VOICES, reported in this section, are significant testimony to the fact that management gives tremendous importance to financial targets and minimal attention to the quality of service to the customers. Secondly, there are various paradoxes that lead to mismatch between policy and practices. For example, in many companies, organizational structure does not support the celebrated policy of customer service. Also, there are lots of issues and complaints related to Complaint Management Systems (CMS). The author also elucidates the prevalent apathy, lack of empowerment and high role ambiguity among the executives of CMS in many organizations. Poor and inefficient communication between employees within the organization and between customer and the company are equally rampant in many organizations where cultural schizophrenia exists.

According to the author, another important reason for the gap between policy and practice stems from the outsourcing model, which most of the manufacturing companies follow. Due to this widespread outsourcing model, there is a lack of cohesiveness between the principal company and the dealer/channel associates. Instead of outsourcing of task, there is an outsourcing of responsibility of customer service, which eventually leads to customer dissatisfaction. The author also explicitly brings out the major issues of poor administration of training programmes in many companies, which is mainly responsible for ill-handing of customers' queries and grievances by frontline executives. The author also critically evaluates the HRM practices related to recruitment, retention, performance management system and finds a lot of inefficiency in the same. Unsystematic HRM practices ultimately result in low engagement, dissatisfaction and lack of a culture of discipline among employees. A culture of discipline that is based

around the idea of freedom and responsibility is not evident in many customer-centric companies. Overall, the factors discussed above make it clearly apparent that, even with the best of technology and well-established operating processes, organizations can invite cultural chaos, leading to a disconnect between policy and practice.

Part IV, entitled 'Back to the Basics', comprises an anthology of interviews and personal incidents of the author, emphasizing the importance of basic values of customer service and its impact on employee and organizational performance. This section consists of two published interviews—first interview reported in this section is an informative interview of Howard Schultz, CEO Starbucks, where he elucidates how he transformed a company on the downslide by refocusing on the core values and implementing a culture of discipline; second is the interview of Jon Carlzon, former CEO of Scandinavian Airlines, which focuses on important aspects of customer experience management, labelled as 'moments of truth'. In sum, the significance of primal value, genuine concern for the customers and a positive impact on employee engagement is extensively explicated in this section of the book. This book presents a holistic approach to examining the impact of organizational schizophrenia on customer service quality and it is equally valuable for business and academia alike. Overall, detailed examples, case studies, brilliant collection of VOICES and pertinent use of comic illustrations make this book a must-read to appreciate the intricacies of delivering 'customer delight' in the Indian setting.

Snigdha Rai
Assistant professor
International Management Institute
B-10, Qutab Institutional Area
New Delhi, 110016
E-mail: snigdha.rai@imi.edu

Hedwig Lewis, *Body Language: A Guide for Professionals, (3rd revised edition)*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2012, 239 pp., ₹ 450 (ISBN: 978-81-321-0720-0 [Paperback])

Any book on non-verbal communication attracts attention, whether for professional development or for a casual time-pass reading. Most of the books, however, talk of the same information with very little variation. *Body Language* by Hedwig Lewis is a refreshing change from the regular ones available on the shelf.

Body Language cannot be studied in isolation. The introductory chapter, 'Characteristics of Body Language', briefly takes us through the approaches in interpreting the various body movements from the universally common gestures to the micro-momentary signals. The chapter also touches upon the relationship between body language and para-language.

Face is the most versatile part of human body and the prime source of information about our emotional state. It adds a visual appeal to the whole communication processes. Interpreting facial expressions has not always been an easy task. While it is easier to fake the bigger and more visible facial expressions, we have no control over the micro expressions that last hardly for one-twentieth of a second. The Second chapter, 'The Face', deals with facial expressions in two parts. Part one discusses the overall general facial expressions as well as the specific ones. Part two focuses separately on individual prominent