



TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA

ACTA TECHNICA NAPOCENSIS

Series: Applied Mathematics and Mechanics

Vol. 54, Issue I, 2011

## STUDIES ON IMPROVING THE QUALITY IN SERVICES

Dorin CIOBAN, Gheorghe ACHIMAȘ, Alina BUDAI

### **Abstract:**

*Communication with customers includes the processing and transmission of information about the provided processes, activities and services using different forms of communication. The interface through which the feed-back is from customer in case of any possible complaint, is also part of the communication process. Based on the analysis of customer complaints and reclamations and the results of customer questionnaires, the customer satisfaction is monitored and appropriate preventive and corrective measures are taken. The organization customers are regularly informed of such actions, directly by means of regular meetings or by writing. Customers are also trained on how to use and take benefit of services provided. For the word "quality" has been assigned a variety of ways without the meaning contained in the concept of "appropriate for use". Researchers and practitioners need to differentiate the multiple meanings that are used.*

**Key words:** quality of service, quality, service.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

All institutions of the society have been created in order to provide products or services to people.

The essential demand requested to products or services is to be "appropriate for use." The term "appropriate for use" is the essential content of the word "quality."

In order to obtain appropriate services for use, the company is involved in a variety of activities, somewhat like a biological organism.

The latter one is carrying out its functions (living, growth, etc.) by means of specific systems or functions (nervous system, skeletal system, etc.). The company, in turn, acts through specific systems or functions (financial department, marketing, personnel, etc.).

Among the company functions it is included a function based on quality, by which it is realized the feature of a service to be "suitable for use." Quality is a function of prime importance; the existence of the company depends on the revenue obtained from the sale of services and the opportunity to be "appropriate for use."

## 2. THE QUALITY OF SERVICES

We are all customers and consumers of services, and some of us, more and more lately we are offering services.

The quality of service is actually the measure of satisfaction of needs, expectations and customer requirements. Under the fierce market competition it is not conceived as a service to ignore customers and their needs and reactions.

A good indicator of the development level, strength and dynamism of the national economy is represented by shares in different sectors. It can be seen that the quaternary sector in the economies of developed countries (representing information services) and tertiary (representing other types of services) are generally more developed than primary and secondary sectors, absorbing through their dynamism the labor that became surplus.

At the end of the millennium, in developed countries, about two thirds of the active population work in the tertiary and quaternary sectors which attained over 60% of their industrial GDP. These sectors had the most important weight in the United Kingdom (80%)

in the U.S. (over 73%), Canada, Germany, France, Italy, and Japan. In these countries the share of active population employed in primary sector accounted for only 1,2 ... 3,3% of GDP and in the secondary sector only 23 ... 38%. Share of working population employed in tertiary and quaternary sector was over 73% in the U.S., about 70% in the UK, over 74% in the Netherlands.

In these developed countries have highlighted the following trends:

- Some global services become more important and diversified: banking services, telecommunications (including Internet), computing, transport, tourism, thus contributing substantially to the acceleration of the competition and trade globalization;
- The share of traditional services (repairs, laundry, hairdressing) decreases sharply in favor of relatively new services (banking, insurance, consultancy, advertising);
- The most dynamic and flexible services are not provided for individuals (population), but those for legal persons (companies or other organizations), so that dependencies between the secondary and tertiary sectors have become increasingly important and visible.

At the same landmark, in Romania's GDP tertiary and quaternary sectors accounted for only 43%, nearly 33%-secondary sector and primary sector, almost 15%.

So, it appears that in Romania, developing-country tertiary and quaternary sectors of the national economy are still underdeveloped although it could absorb much of the unemployed population.

Service development involves either to increase concerns about quality, quality management and its implementation, marked tendency in all fields of Romanian society.

### **3. THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY IN SERVICES**

Quality means different things to different people depending on their experience and their position in an organization, so although the quality preoccupations have appeared since the beginning of mankind, only in the twentieth

century was a spectacular evolution of actions and concepts of quality.

The modern concept of quality is based on four fundamental rules: definition of quality, prevention, zero defects and measurement.

Definitions of this concept highlight two distinct sides: the objective side of quality represents the degree of conformity of a process or of its results with a predetermined set of criteria that are considered essential to the final value that it provides, while the subjective side of quality represents the level of the perceived value reported to the person benefiting from the process or its outcome.

Services represent correspondences of some needs at least as numerous as the needs of material goods but with a more complex and heterogeneous character.

Knowledge of the essence and structure of these needs is a priority for the definition of quality.

Service offering has its peculiarities conferred to a large extent by the immaterial character of many of them. Environmental issues have many implications in the areas of services and in defining quality must to take into account this aspect. Customers are and will be increasingly demanding. To be able to meet their expectations, more or less volatile is necessary to achieve performance in the strictest sense possible.

Services are distinguished by four characteristics:

- Their immaterial form or intangibility;
- The coincidence in time and space or inseparability;
- Heterogeneity or variability;
- Non-storable or perishable character.

In the strict sense of the quality characteristics, some experts have identified the following characteristics of services quality: reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding/knowing the customer, tangibility.

The significance of these features can vary considerably, depending on the nature of the services and their users, so that in assessing the quality, the weight given to different features depends on specific spatial and temporal coordinates of each service.

ISO 9004-2 standard recommends a clear definition of requirements for services, in terms of observable characteristics by the customer and capable of being evaluated by him.

#### **4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES**

Factors that influence customer expectations for service are:

- Communication between the customer and the persons with whom they come into contact when receiving a service;
- The customer's needs;
- Previous experience related to the same kind of services;
- External communication (from the client to organization and vice versa);
- Price.

Managers interested in quality should regularly monitor customer perception relative to the quality of services, to identify the causes that produce deficiencies in quality of services and take positive measures to improve services quality.

The most important discrepancy between the quality perception by customers and by managers comes from the following discrepancies:

- By what means the market leader manages to be a leader?
- How can we adapt what makes the institution's leader?
- How can we overcome the performance?

Management must therefore ensure that the rewards offered by reinforcing these compartments (customer orientation, innovation, sense of social responsibility).

These rewards should include both merit recognition and additional benefits provided by the organization (cars, offices, selection for training programs), not only financial rewards and promotions.

Only when employees are satisfied with their work will give clients the full attention and consideration necessary to meet their expectations.

However, it is possible and desirable for unions and management teams realize that their functions are complementary and not contradictory, succeeding in a work agreement

for the development of relations compatible with the goals of TQM.

One way of doing this is to give the union the opportunity to take part in the organization's policies and strategies establishment. In this way, they will assume and will support them. Once the union leaders will understand the importance and benefits of policies and programs for recruitment, selection and career development will assist them.

A strong organizational culture is expected to lead to better employee-customer interaction, thus to improve the quality of services offered, and so to a higher level of customer perceived quality. In services, quality is defined by the client and, due to this fact, the service organization must do what customers want at minimal cost.

#### **5. TOTAL QUALITY IN THE SERVICES AREA**

ISO 8402-1994 defines TQM as "a system of management of an organization centered on quality, based on the participation of all its members seeking long-term success through customer satisfaction and obtaining benefits for all members of the organization and society."

Under this definition, the concept of TQM is the same as total quality and has the following coordinates: quality is the focus of the activities of the organization, quality is achieved with the participation of all staff, the organization aims to achieve long-term success through customer satisfaction and obtaining benefits for all staff and for society.

In a recent paper, Sureschchandar identified 12 critical dimensions of total quality service in terms of process management [2]:

##### **1. Visionary leadership, involvement and commitment of top management in designing and implementing a TQM system**

The concept of visionary leadership refers to the formulation of a long term vision for organizational development, spreading the vision within the organization, realizing and development of an action plan and ultimately stimulation of the entire organization to carry out these actions in accordance with that vision.

To be successful in implementing TQM organization must have dynamic leaders,

convinced of the values and the need to its implementation, who treasure their employees who have a clear vision of quality, ready to remove the causes of problems not only to combat symptoms.

## **2. Human resource management**

The human resource is one that makes all other resources (capital, technology, information) to be productive.

This is especially true in organizations providing services because the interaction between provider and consumer is so great that eventually determines the perception of quality and the level of the customer satisfaction.

## **3. Technical system**

Design quality management system requires proper design and reliable service to meet or exceed customer needs and expectations, leading ultimately to improved performance.

Experts have proposed two strategies of quality that must be adopted since the design phase:

- Prevention, that is assurance by design, that quality problems can be overcome since the phase of service delivery;
- The "zero defect" strategy which means that if the design is good, employees have to follow procedures and provide a quality service.

A good design leads to excellent quality of service with features that positively influence perceptions of service quality.

## **4. The informational system and data analysis**

Any initiatives related to quality in an organization will be doomed to failure if it does not provide adequate and effective dissemination of general information.

Organizations that wish to implement a TQM system should collect, integrate and communicate critical information for its implementation.

Another important aspect is related to the communication between the customer and contact person within the organization and between these and organization management.

Both from this communication and from other sources will result important information that properly processed and analyzed will constitute measures to prevent the occurrence of non-conformities.

## **5. Benchmarking**

Inspiring from the issues addressed in benchmarking for products, can be realized analyze that highlights the position relative to major competitors in terms of some characteristics of services, processes, costs, strategies.

Also, apart from focusing on the service provided and on the processes involved in this, the organization must focus on the comparison of customer satisfaction relative to the services received, employee satisfaction, even to training programs, the aesthetic environment in which the service is provided.

By benchmarking, the organization tries to answer the following questions:

- How well do we stand compared to others?
- How good we want to be?
- Who is the best on the market?
- By what means the market leader manages to be a leader?
- How can we adapt what the leader do in our institution?
- How can we overcome the performance?

## **6. Continuous improvement**

Deming emphasized the importance of continuous improvement, saying, "consistently and continuously improve manufacturing or service system to improve quality and productivity and thus constantly decrease costs."

Management should not become concerned about the quality of the organization only when the activity becomes unprofitable, when customer requirements change, when appeared a new technology.

Quality must be a continuous concern of the organization leader.

## **7. Focus on customer satisfaction**

on its satisfaction is an important component of the TQM movement because the organizations can overcome the competitors effectively addressing to the needs or demands of customers, anticipating and responding to the evolving interests and their desires.

In terms of customer, service quality can be defined as the amplitude of the gap between his expectations and perceptions about the service.

## **8. Employee satisfaction**

People are turning their energies, skills and talents to those they consider valuable rewards.

### 9. Union intervention

It is noticed that union members believe that TQM initiatives represent a danger to the functioning itself and union influence of employees and therefore vehemently opposed to quality-related initiatives.

### 10. Social responsibility

Every organization has a great responsibility towards society in the midst of which it operates.

Undoubtedly the economic organizations of every type exist to make a profit, but not at any price. They must develop and build a good image, that is to fulfill social obligations and those related to community. This refers to the ethical behavior of organizations, non-preferential treatment of clients, providing quality services at reasonable prices.

### 11. Services capes

Physical environment influences the behavior and create a large part of the image perceived by the customer about the organization and its employees, because in general the services are produced and consumed simultaneously.

### 12. Organization Culture

This culture enables the organization to sustain a common vision and its goals and links the various functions of the organization to these common general objectives, thereby ensuring a proper and sustainable connection of the processes that contribute to providing superior service.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In the service area, quality is defined by the customer and due to this the service organization must do what customers want at minimal cost. Only the service organizations that are organizing their activities based on customer requirements have the chance to succeed in the future.

Quality is considered the best way to ensure customer loyalty and organization own employees, to protect itself from competitors and increase profits in a competitive market conditions becoming more powerful.

Total quality can be conceived as a set of management principles that ensure the

organization's dedication to the customer. In this case the whole business activities, all its employees are oriented towards improving all activities that ensure the satisfaction of the customer desires and expectations.

The concept of total quality in services requires that the organization obtain some results concentrated in four key areas:

#### a) **customers are loyal**

They are more than satisfied with the company's services because their needs were covered and the services were beyond their expectations.

b) **time response** both to customer needs and problems and the opportunities arising were minimal. **Costs** have also been minimized by eliminating activities that do not affect operations and customer value.

c) **The existing climate** within the organization encourages teamwork and provides satisfaction, worker motivation and encouragement.

d) **The ethical behavior** and orientation towards continuous improvement activities underlying all management and employees activities and company regulations.

TQM is also a motivational technique focused on motivating employees to obtain processes quality that take place.

Applying a total quality system (or TQM) cannot be required in any condition. It has to be introduced on a ready field in which must to be a cultural environment of the organization, and a culture of quality.

## 7. REFERENCES

- [1] Constantinescu, D. Managementul calității. Editura Printech, București, 2002.
- [2] Drăgulănescu, N. Managementul calității serviciilor. Editura AGIR, București, 2003.
- [3] Olaru, M. Managementul calității. Editura Economică, București, 2000.
- [4] Rusu, T. Managementul calității. Editura MEDIAMIRA, Cluj-Napoca, 1997.
- [5] Soare, I. și Colceriu, A., D. Certificarea calității. Editura Tribuna Economică, București, 1996.

[6] \*\*\* ISO 9000; 9001; 9002; 9003; 9004/1994. Standarde privind calitatea.

[7] \*\*\* SR ISO 9004-2:1994. Ghid pentru servicii.

### STUDII PRIVIND CREȘTEREA CALITĂȚII SERVICIILOR

**Rezumat:** Comunicarea cu clienții include elaborarea și transmiterea informațiilor despre procesele, activitățile și serviciile furnizate folosind diferite forme de comunicare. Interfața prin care se obțin informații de feed-back de la client în cazul eventualelor reclamații, face de asemenea parte, din procesul de comunicare.

Pe baza analizelor sesizărilor și reclamațiilor clienților și a rezultatelor chestionarelor aplicate clienților, satisfacția clienților este monitorizată, și sunt luate măsuri preventive și corective corespunzătoare. Clienții organizației sunt informați periodic de astfel de acțiuni, direct la ședințele periodice sau în scris. Clienții sunt, de asemenea, instruiți despre felul în care să utilizeze și să beneficieze de serviciile furnizate. Cuvântului „calitate”, i s-a atribuit o varietate de sensuri în afară de sensul cuprins în sfera noțiunii de „corespunzător pentru utilizare”. Cercetătorii și practicienii trebuie să diferențieze sensurile multiple ce sunt utilizate.

**Dorin CIOBAN**, PhD Student, Eng., Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Department of Manufacturing Engineering, Muncii Bvd. 400641 Cluj-Napoca,

**Gheorghe ACHIMAȘ**, Prof. PhD. Dr. h.c. Eng., Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Department of Manufacturing Engineering, 103-105 Muncii Bvd., 400641 Cluj-Napoca, E-mail: Gheorghe.Achimas@tcm.utcluj.ro, Office Phone: 0040 264 401733.

**Alina BUDAI**, PhD Student, Eng., Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Department of Manufacturing Engineering, 103-105 Muncii Bvd. 400641 Cluj-Napoca, E-mail: alyna\_bf@yahoo.com.