



Do you deliver what you promise?

By Peter Buckingham



It amazes me to see many companies spend a fortune trying to put forward a caring, sharing attitude... and yet their staff perform in a completely different manner. Whilst you feel like abusing the employees for being non respondent and uncaring, you often wonder what pressure is on them to try and perform as management try and convey. I live under the apprehension that most people try to do their best, however this may not always be correct, or they just do not have the tools to deliver.

We all seem to be busier than we have ever been with emails or webmail, mobile phones and internet access available worldwide. Management in many companies sees this as the answer to cut staff and pass on the responsibilities of their previous clerical staff to the coal face. Working in a multinational oil company that adopted SAP many years ago, the commitment to less staff was met as part of a Management commitment, yet the systems did not pass on the efficiencies originally anticipated for some time.

Many businesses spend a great deal of money trying to convince us that they care and yet the interface to customers is a joke.

ACCESS TO PEOPLE

If you appoint a Manager, then surely people should be able to contact them on relevant manners. I was seeking the Property Manager of a 2nd tier bank recently with a WA address. Nobody could give me his number, all I could obtain was his email address. I subsequently sent an email to the address given and surprise, surprise, I received no reply. By the way, we have a six figure sum invested with them personally, so maybe I should march with my feet!

If you have given a person a job, surely people should be able to contact them, (or at least an assistant) on relevant matters. If people see you as important enough that they want to call you, then surely it should be important enough for you to respond?

TELEPHONE ACCESS

I am continually amazed by companies putting their calls to a call room or voicemail, and then have a sappy message to say how important you are, and how they apologise for wasting your time, but still wish to help you. Then put some staff on! Business Engineering Managers may convince you how efficient it is to operate that way, but try and ring a bank or utility company, and then convince yourself that you are getting service!

I was surprised by a voice mail message on a mobile phone the other day that said the owner would do their best to call me back within 2 hours - what a promise doomed to failure! This person rarely rings anyone back, let alone a lowly consultant like myself!

On some occasions there are people who I wonder why they have a mobile phone. I would rather see on their business card NO MOBILE PHONE, than a number that I know is never turned on, or if it is, never answered but just filtered through to voicemail. I guess I have become sick of wasting my money via the



telecom carriers leaving fruitless messages. I am sure Optus, Telstra and Vodaphone must love these people, as they generate huge call volumes.

I must admit to being guilty of similar actions in a past life, whilst working in an oil company. Having had our numbers gutted following a Management Review by one of the world's greatest corporate toe cutters, we were then told that if a phone rang it must be answered. The problem was that there were double the numbers of phones on desks than people, and nobody left doing some of the jobs that Senior Management still thought existed. If you picked up a phone, all you copped was someone else's problem. I stress it is many cases a Management problem that causes this, and Management should address it and not necessarily blame the employees.

In a previous article I challenged Senior Management to actually ring their own companies and employees (maybe off a different phone number, or have a friend do it), and see how your customers and partners are really treated. Make some calls and take some real measurements like:

- how many rings before the phone is answered?
- how long is it on "hold"?
- are you happy with the voice response?
- does the call go to where it needs to go?
- is it really "actioned" or just passed off?

This is the real response your customers receive, not the sanitized way you may believe.

EMAIL RESPONSES

Do you ever look up a website and then want to contact the company? How many websites do not provide a contact phone number and the only point of contact is through a set contact webpage. I normally find I have to use www.whitepages.com.au to then look up the phone number to ring the company anyway. Recently as Treasurer of the Institute of Management Consultants (Vic), I used one of these to contact



the bank mentioned above, to invest around \$15K, and never received a response or a reply! Nothing puts you off a company more than that.

THE CHALLENGE

I believe we should all challenge the companies we deal with to deliver on the promise of service they make to us. In many cases, poor performance or lack of response should be passed on to the CEO. In Caltex 20 years ago, if ANY letter arrived to the Company at ANY level with the word COMPLAINT on it, it was placed on the State Manager's desk, and in those days he had real power!

It would be very good if some of these processes were re-introduced in many franchises and service providing companies. Senior Management would then really see how their customers, and the public feel, rather than what is filtered through in many cases by middle management or bean counters trying to look good, rather than acknowledge the problems it causes to the image of the company.

In summary, DO YOU DELIVER WHAT YOU PROMISE, or are you another company making excuses for poor service to your customers? At Spectrum Analysis, we pride ourselves on NO VOICEMAILS between 8.30 AM and 5.00 PM, and every call is answered normally in 3 rings, and I personally want to know why if I hear 4 rings. Try it someday.



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