

Raise Your Response-Ability



Here's how to become more responsive to your stakeholders' needs.

By Robert B. Tucker

What do your customers most dislike? In a word, waiting. A recent *Wall Street Journal* survey listed “waiting in line” as people’s number-one pet peeve.

Clearly, today’s customer doesn’t want to wait—whether in line or on hold. Today’s harried, time-starved customer wants whatever it is you serve or sell in real time, which is to say, right now. Pronto. Or forget it.

Come up with imaginative ways to keep your personnel focused on the time factors.

So the question is: What are you doing to keep from losing customers because you can’t deliver? How can you lead the charge to become more responsive to your stakeholders’ needs? By paying attention to the issue of time, and making changes.

Below are five important strategies for winning and keeping customers by improving your organi-

zation’s “response-ability”:

1. Decide How Important Speed is to Your Customer. Perceptions of responsiveness are changing. How do your current customers rate your organization on delivering what they want promptly? What improvements are other organizations introducing?

2. Challenge Time-Based Assumptions. Most organizations are stuck in existing patterns of operation. They don’t continue to challenge themselves to perform “real time” for their customers. Yet that’s the very attitude necessary to gain a responsiveness advantage.

3. Measure the Time between Request and Satisfaction. If you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it, goes the expression, and it’s true. Measure how long it takes you today to answer that phone call or get back to a client with a problem. Then measure improvement over time.

4. Offer More Speed to Those Willing to Pay for it. Often, you’ll find customers more than willing to pay rush charges for faster service—provided you don’t spring it on them after the fact.

5. Offer Time Guarantees. Some innovative organizations offer their customers \$5 in cash if they have to wait in line more than five minutes. Come up with imagina-

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tive ways to keep your personnel focused on the time factors in responding to customers’ needs. ■

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