



Measurable Results. Immeasurable Value.

Building Block: Systems – Part 1

Bringing the Voice of the Member/Customer Into the Organization Provides Essential Link

Biomedical innovator Medtronic has a very important ingredient at its annual employee meetings: Videos and talks by patients who owe their lives to the heart valves designed and manufactured by Medtronic employees.

While few organizations can present such dramatic results of the everyday work of their staff, every organization can encourage creative ways to bring the member/customer to life within the company. After all, in today's segmented organizations and work processes, it's possible for some staff to never come in direct contact with a member/customer.

People want to know that their work matters, that their efforts somehow make a difference. When work is departmentalized, it's difficult for employees to:

- See results of the end product or service
- Understand the features most important to member/customers
- Appreciate member/customers' reactions, both positive and negative

Work takes on a deeper level of meaning when people can connect with its impact on others – whether internal or external member/customers or other stakeholders.

Choosing Priorities

In many organizations, so many workers are far removed from member/customer contact that it takes considerable effort to bring the message to everyone.

How does the factory worker know the product is important to the member/customer? Can an accounting staffer truly appreciate how products and services they never touch are critical to member/customers?

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Can a senior HR professional feel in touch with member/customer requirements when he or she is constantly overwhelmed with meeting needs of employees, benefits administration and risk-management issues?

A commitment to bringing the voice of the member/customer to all staff doesn't require money, but an allotment of time is a definite factor. However, a failure to inform staff of the importance of the member/customer's reaction to the organization can undermine success.

Sharing the voice of the member/customer can take many forms, including:

- Member/customer comments and feedback, both positive and negative. Share with everyone information from comment cards, e-mails, letters and verbal conversations with other staff. Share how member/customer complaints are resolved and future problems prevented.
- Devote a section of the employee newsletter to member/customer comments
- Use member/customers' actual words and photos in employee communication
- Show how the member/customer's member/customers and suppliers use your organization's products and services. Show how staff efforts impact end users.
- Share information gleaned by front-line and sales staff with the entire company. Create a mechanism for gathering member/customer comments and input and for sharing with management for strategic decision-making. Share with the entire company appropriate input to clarify member/customer expectations and requirements.
- Inform staff of news from member/customers' organizations and industries. What market challenges do member/customers face? How are their industries changing? And, of course, how do these factors affect member/customer requirements and your organization's work and service processes?

Retention Agenda

Develop a specific plan to increase awareness throughout your organization of member/customers' needs and challenges. Assign a creative, driven champion for this effort.

Add to senior management's meeting agendas an ongoing item to review how the voice of the member/customer is being continually brought into the organization and to all staff. At The Center for Association Resources, we can assist you in this vital area with a clear proposal, a game plan that works, and results that will unify and strengthen your organization's immediate and longer-term goals.

**For more information contact
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