# CUSTOMER SATISFACTION FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES GROUP, INC.:

## Development of an Online Customer Satisfaction Survey

by

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ABSTRACT

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The benefits of good customer satisfaction on business as well as the costs of poor customer satisfaction have been clearly demonstrated in the research literature. The Met-Expectations Model of Customer Satisfaction is based on the premise that quality can be defined by the differences between the customer and the organization on the perceptions, expectations, and actual delivery of service. These gaps provide information that can be used to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of the processes and components of service. In turn, the business is able to implement adjustments in service delivery that directly improve customer satisfaction and profit. SERVQUAL, an instrument based on this model, has been utilized in various service industries with mixed results. The purpose of this study was to develop an online customer satisfaction survey for a private human service agency and collect data from both internal and external sources. A modified version of SERVQUAL was emailed to 52 agency staff and 41 customers. The two groups were similar in responses. Significant differences were only found on three specific items – Intensity and Depth of Service, Service Innovation, and Convenient Hours to Customers, Clients, and Families. Internal and external respondent groups differed in the rank order of importance of the service dimensions. Possible explanations for these results, similarities and differences of previous research, and problems with the study are discussed. The study concludes with recommendations for the organization.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## Importance of Customer Satisfaction

Satisfying customers is one of the main objectives of every business. Businesses recognize that keeping current customers is more profitable than having to win new ones to replace those lost. (Leadership Factor, N.D.). Management and marketing theorists underscore the importance of customer satisfaction for a business's success (McColl-Kennedy & Schneider, 2000; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Accordingly, the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award recognizes the role of customer satisfaction as the central component of the award process (Dutka, 1993). Some recent statistics demonstrate the benefits of good customer satisfaction and the costs of poor customer satisfaction on businesses.

Good customer satisfaction has an effect on the profitability of nearly every business. For example, when customers perceive good service, each will typically tell nine to ten people. It is estimated that nearly one half of American business is built upon this informal, "word-of-mouth" communication (Gitomer, 1998; Reck, 1991). Improvement in customer retention by even a few percentage points can increase profits by 25 percent or more (Griffin, 1995). The University of Michigan found that for every percentage increase in customer satisfaction, there is an average increase of 2.37% of return on investment (Keiningham & Vavra, 2001). Most people prize the businesses that treat them the way they like to be treated; they'll even pay more for this service.

However, a lack of customer satisfaction has an even larger effect on the bottom line. Customers who receive poor service will typically relate their dissatisfaction to between fifteen and twenty others. The average American company typically loses between 15 and 20 percent of its customers each year (Griffin, 1995). The cost of gaining a new customer is ten times greater than the cost of keeping a satisfied customer (Gitomer, 1998). In addition, if the service is particularly poor, 91% of retail customers will not return to the store (Gitomer, 1998). In fact, if the service incident is so negative, the negative effects can last years through repeated recollection and recounting of the negative experience (Gitomer, 1998; Reck, 1991).

The message is obvious - satisfied customers improve business and dissatisfied customers impair business (Anderson & Zemke, 1998; Leland & Bailey, 1995). Customer satisfaction is an asset that should be monitored and managed just like any physical asset. Therefore, businesses that hope to prosper will realize the importance of this concept, putting together a functional and appropriate operational definition (McColl-Kennedy & Schneider, 2000). This is true for both service-oriented and product-oriented organizations (Sureshchander, Rajendran, & Kamalanabhan, 2001).

The primary issue with developing an operational definition with the specific components of customer satisfaction is to clearly identify the nature of the organization's business. This further extends into the effective collection, analysis, and application of customer satisfaction information. Services and products are the two major orientations of business. Products – also referred to as goods, are the physical output of a business. These are tangible objects that exist in time and space. These are first created, then inventoried and sold. It is after purchase that these are actually consumed (Sureshchander, Rajendran, & Kamalanabhan, 2001; Berry, 1980). Products might include computers, automobiles, or food at a restaurant.

Services, on the other hand, are less materially based. In fact, Bateson (cited in Sureshchander, Rajendran, & Kamalanabhan, 2001) noted that there is one major distinction between a service and a product. This differentiation is the intangible nature of a service – it cannot be touched, held, and so on. Another difference is the issue that consist primarily of social interactions or actions (Berry, 1980). The consumption of a service involves the interaction between the producer and the consumer. Also, services are produced and consumed simultaneously (Carman & Langeard, 1980). Services might include computer repair, automobile sales, or the attendance of a server at a restaurant. Delivering quality service is a business necessity (Cullen, 2001).

**Components and Requirements of Customer Satisfaction**

The concept of customer satisfaction is composed of several components from distinct sources (McColl-Kennedy & Schneider, 2000). Customer satisfaction begins with clear, operational definitions from both the customer and the organization. Understanding the motivations, expectations, and desires of both gives a foundation in how to best serve the customer. It may even provide information on making improvements in the nature of business. This is the heart of research into customer satisfaction (Naylor & Greco, 2002). The importance of clearly defining the key concepts and elements of satisfaction provide a template by which information can be gathered about what is, and what is not, working. This includes both the *hard* measures – those that are more tangible and observable (i.e., number of complaints, average wait time, product returns, etc) and the *soft* measures – those less tangible aspects (i.e., friendliness, helpfulness, politeness, etc) (Hayes, 1998). These definitions often start with the most vague and general, and become more to the highly specified and precise examples. The bottom line is that in order to know about customer satisfaction, one needs to know what to look for (Mitchell, 1999). The organization needs to seek this information from both within and without.

The organizational requirements of customer satisfaction are the internally based processes, components, standards, and criteria that a business strives to achieve. These are the performance goals and benchmarks set forth by the business, for the business. These are the elements of corporate culture (Hayes, 1998). Meeting or exceeding these is often an indicator of success or failure. At times, these indigenous components of customer satisfaction may overlap with those set forth by the customer; at others they may be divergent.

Those processes, components, and standards that are deemed important by the customer are another important source of information. In order for a business to meet the needs and desires of the customer, the business must know the needs and desires of the customer. This information is vital not only for successful business, but also for understanding and improving customer satisfaction. This important component helps to set the standards and components of satisfaction from the perspective of the consumer (Hayes, 1998).

Satisfaction dimensions are developed from the previously identified requirements. These are the specific components that make up the requirements. For example, if a customer and organizational requirement is for customer service, the satisfaction dimensions may include interactions, timeliness, and responsiveness. These are the clusters that define the requirements (Hayes, 1998).

Critical incidents are the specific operations that relate to the satisfaction dimensions. These are often the concrete and measurable behaviors and actions of employees, groups, or organization. This may also include policies, procedures, and protocols in place within an organization (Hayes, 1998).

From this continued definition and distillation of various sources of data, the actual development of a customer satisfaction instrument or tool can begin in earnest. As always, the planning of the research is the most important component in a successful information-gathering process. It is further helpful that a model of customer satisfaction that incorporates the organizational and customer requirements exists and is applicable in practice.

**A Model of Customer Satisfaction**

One model of measuring customer satisfaction that has received considerable attention in the service industry is the Met-Expectations Model. This is also known as the Discrepancy Model, Disconfirmation of Expectations Model, or Gap Model for Managing Quality (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1985, 1993). The basic premise of the model is that quality can be defined by the differences between the customer and the organization in terms of service quality (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1985). This is true of perceptions, expectations, and actual service delivery from the two perspectives. These differences, or gaps, can be used to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses in service quality of an organization (Grapentine, 1999). Furthermore, this provides a measure of performance quality in an area that has been more difficult to operationalize (Patti, 1987).

The Met-Expectations Model of Customer Satisfaction is based upon a framework of five potential service quality gaps (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1985). The first four are those on the provider side of service. The fifth relates to the customer side of service. These gaps are -

**Gap 1**: *The difference between customer expectations and management perceptions of customer expectations.*

Simply, this is the point of knowing what the customer expects. It is important for an organization to being clearly aware of what it is exactly that the customers expect. Failure to do so can lead to poor perceptions of satisfaction with service quality. This is a cornerstone of effective business – knowing one’s customer (Dutka, 1993).

**Gap 2**: *The difference between management perceptions of customer expectations and service quality expectations*.

This gap relates to the consistency between the organization's established specifications of service quality and expectations of its customers. The intended service must meet the expected service. The more exact these are the more likely that the organization is measuring the important qualities of service anticipated by its customers. The customer must determine the standards of service delivery for satisfaction to be positive (Shostack, 1990; Takeuchi & Quelch, 1990).

**Gap 3**: *The difference between actual service quality specifications and the service actually delivered.*

This is referred to as the service performance gap. This is the difference between what an organization stipulates as service standards and practices and what employees actually deliver to customers. These differences could be due to either the inability or the unwillingness of staff to perform as the organization describes. An organization must be closely and carefully monitoring the provision of service. Failure to do so will lead to lower customer satisfaction (Gitomer, 1998).

**Gap 4**: *The difference between service delivery and what is communicated to customers.*

The consistency between organizational assurances of service delivery and actual service delivery is the issue of this gap. The premise is the follow through on promises made to customers by an organization. Failure to deliver as promised can lead to customer dissatisfaction, not only with the service, but the agency as well. This is identified as a significant reason for customer defection (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990).

**Gap 5**: *The difference between customer expectations and perceptions.*

Another key difference that affects satisfaction is between customer expectations and perception. The service delivery that is perceived must meet or exceed anticipations. Failure to do so can lead to customer dissatisfaction – outrage in the extreme - while meeting or exceeding these can lead to satisfaction – or delight in the extreme. (Keiningham & Vavra, 2001). Obviously, happy customers help and angry customers harm business.

The model is appealing both in its simplicity and intuitive logic. Customer expectations of service that are closely matched with perceived actual services will be satisfied customers. If expectations exceed actual services, the client is dissatisfied (or worse). Conversely, if the actual services surpass expectations, the customer is very satisfied.

The Met-Expectations Model of customer satisfaction has been applied in a wide variety of service settings. These have included library usage (Cullen, 2001), tourist services (Swan & Bowers, 1998), public health services (Bryant, Kent, Lindenberger, Schreiher, Canright, Cole, Uccellani, Brown, Blair, & Bustillo-Hernandez, 1998), medical and dental services (Taylor & Cronin, 1994), and human services (Selber & Streeter, 2000).

**Methods of Collecting Customer Satisfaction Information**

There are several methodologies of research that can be utilized to collect information regarding customer satisfaction. Factors such as information need, resources, accessibility to customers, sample to be used, time, and so forth must be considered prior to selection of a methodology. As would be expected, each has its own strengths and weaknesses in relation to one another (Dutka, 1993; Leland & Bailey, 1995). The following is a brief overview of the more commonly selected methods.

*Written Surveys*. Using this common method, customers are asked to complete a document that poses a series of specific questions regarding specific dimensions and items of satisfaction. These are tailored to fit the identified needs of both the organization and the customer base. Questions or statements may be closed-ended or open-ended, and often involve Likert-type scales. These can be completed in person, through the postal system, or online.

Advantages include a lower cost per completed survey and the lack of pressure on customers to provide quick answers. Disadvantages include poor response rates (average returns of 30 to 50%) (Leland & Bailey, 1995), incomplete surveys, poor quality control due to lack of monitoring, bias due to non-response, and respondents need to be reasonably literate to comprehend the survey (Dutka, 1998).

*Telephone Surveys*. This method involves the utilization of interviews via telephone of customers that either follows a planned, specific series of questions, or involves the discussion of information based upon the responses given. Sometimes geographic distances or time constraints direct the adoption of this methodology.

Advantages include monitoring of interviews for improved quality control, higher response rates, less bias due to non-response, shorter time requirements for completion, reasonably low cost. Disadvantages include sampling bias (telephone ownership), difficulty reaching respondents, and the quick responses to telephone surveys do not always allow for adequate thought. (Dutka, 1993; Leland & Bailey, 1995).

*Focus Groups*. This method involves bringing together eight or more customers by invitation to answer prepared specific questions presented by a moderator. The average group lasts about one to one and half-hours and the dynamics often provide a wealth of feedback in a short time. All comments are usually recorded and transcribed, and techniques such as content analysis may be used to identify themes.

Advantages include the possibility to ask complex questions, more in-depth responses, and group interactions providing otherwise unavailable data. Disadvantages include the often-qualitative nature of data and the inability at times to generalize to larger populations. (Dutka, 1993; Leland & Bailey, 1995).

*In-Depth Interviews*. This method is utilized when the most anecdotal information is required regarding customer satisfaction. This often provides a more personal format in a one-on-one setting that can encourage a customer to discuss possible controversial or difficult issues. This includes customers who have stopped using an organization, use competitors, or employees discussing issues about the organization. This is a requisite for customized or individual client gap analyses – identifying the break between expectation and actual performance.

Advantages include the possibility to ask complex questions, more in-depth responses, responses that may be viewed more negatively by a group are obtained, and a longer interview is often possible. Disadvantages include a greater cost that other methods, a greater time needed for completion, and the number of completed interviews is usually much less than other methods. (Dutka, 1993; Leland & Bailey, 1995).

**Methods Using the Met-Expectations Model**

The Met-Expectations Model of customer satisfaction has been applied in the development of an instrument to measure service quality. Known as SERVQUAL, this instrument was developed and refined by Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml in particular response to the fifth gap – that of expected versus perceived service (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1988). SERVQUAL is composed of 22-items describing service quality, along five dimensions (Selber & Streeter, 2000), as follows:

*Tangibles*. This quality dimension involves the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, materials, and personnel of the organization. This is the only dimension related specifically to the palpable and readily discernible of service provision.

*Reliability*. This quality dimension involves the consistent, dependable, and accurate delivery of promised services. The actual provision of service is the element in this case.

*Responsiveness*. This dimension of service quality encompasses those aspects of personnel that demonstrate a willingness of an organization's personnel to help customers and provide prompt service. The service-orientation of the staff members is the characteristic.

*Assurance*. This dimension includes the knowledge, skill, and ability of personnel, as well as the level of courtesy and ability to inspire trust and confidence from customers. This relates to the expected and perceived aptitude and abilities of personnel.

*Empathy*. This dimension of service quality relates to the level of caring, and individualized attention that personnel provides to customers. The "person-to-person" or "people skills" of staff is the question.

The items are arranged as a pair of structured statements related to specific elements of service quality. The customer is asked to rate each statement in terms of expected levels of service and in perceived levels of actual service. Each statement is rated along a seven-point Likert scale that is anchored by "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1988). See Appendix A for a complete list of the SERVQUAL items.

The measure was extensively tested in diverse service firms such as banking, credit card, repair and maintenance, and long-distance telephone service (Grapentine, 1999). Findings were statistically significant, with coefficient alpha ratings exceeding 0.70 (Grapentine, 1999). In addition, Selber reported promising results in the use of SERVQUAL as a measure of customer satisfaction in twenty human service agencies (as cited in Selber and Streeter, 2000).

However, not all research has supported the five dimensions of service quality as forwarded by SERVQUAL. There has been considerable research critical of the efficacy of

SERVQUAL (Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Babakus & Boller, 1992; Carman, 1990). In fact, research conducted by Sureshchander, Rajendran, and Kamalanabhan (2001) on the items of SERVQUAL have found that the service quality dimensions were better represented by a different set altogether, as below:

*Core service*. This dimension is essentially the content of a service. It encompasses the actual service, over and above how it is delivered. These are the appreciable features of the service being delivered.

*Systematization of Service Delivery*. This dimension of quality refers to the processes, procedures, systems, and technology that make service efficient and effective. The issue is the smooth delivery of consistent service without undue snags or extreme variation.

*Social Responsibility*. This dimension relates to ethical behavior and actions by the corporation in business and other dealings. The authors contend that this contributes to customer perceptions of a quality organization.

*Tangibles of Service*. This service dimension, also known as servicescapes, is similar to the tangibles of SERVQUAL. Items on the instrument are essentially unchanged or have been modified from SERVQUAL. Two items were deleted after being judged as irrelevant or too “generic” (p.115) by the authors.

*Human Element of Service Delivery*. This service dimension is the conglomeration of the human-related dimensions of SERVQUAL - namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. However, several items were modified.

The forty-one items are presented as structured statements related to specific elements of service quality. The customer is asked to rate each statement in terms of performance. This is done along a seven-point Likert scale that is anchored by "very poor" to "very good"

(Sureshchander, Rajendran, and Kamalanabhan, 2001). See Appendix B for a list of the items that are not repeated on SERVQUAL.

**Uses of Customer Satisfaction Information**

Regardless of the method selected, there are several possible uses of information about customer satisfaction (Dutka, 1993). Some include -

1. *Customer satisfaction results can help to present the current standing of customer satisfaction*.

This utilization often goes beyond reporting statistical data such as mean, range, and standard deviation. These descriptive data can assist in identifying specific strengths and weaknesses in satisfaction dimensions, the specific items under each, as well as information about overall scores. However, different types of data analysis can be used to identify not only aggregate but also individual information. From here emerges the distinct patterns or gaps between different individuals, groups, or among particular items.

2. *Customer satisfaction results can help to identify important customer requirements.*

Identification of the specific customer requirements for achieving satisfaction is useful at a very fundamental level. An organization is able to clearly focus efforts in those areas that are most important to the customer. Distinguishing those requirements most valued by customers allows for pinpointing efforts for service modifications as well as further data collection. Comparisons of specific items to the satisfaction dimension or overall score can assist in determination of those items that are more closely linked with satisfaction.

3. *Customer satisfaction results can help to monitor customer satisfaction results over time.*

Quite simply, the same information gathered at different points in time can assist in identification of trends and patterns that develop as an organization evolves and changes.

Furthermore, this can be helpful in demonstrating the levels of effectiveness of interventions, services and so forth at particular points in history. What may work during a certain point in time may not at another. This temporal collection and comparison of information allows for an organization to adapt and modify services and products to meet the changing requirements of its customers.

4. *Customer satisfaction results can help to provide comparisons to other organizations.*

Comparisons either within an organization by department or sub-group as well as with outside agencies can provide a wealth of information. This includes not only structural and organizational strengths and weaknesses, but also effectiveness of service components and service delivery. This can assist in coordination of planned changes specific to each area, as opposed to general, “blanket” approaches. Also, this can give a perspective of how one organization is performing in relation to others, namely one’s competition. This gives the customer the information necessary to make informed choices and selections.

5. *Customer satisfaction results can help to determine the effectiveness of business practices.*

Data gathered from customer satisfaction studies can provide valuable and accurate information that can assist in evaluation of service components and delivery. Services can be altered to become more effective, and business practices can be altered to meet the standards of excellence within a certain business. In essence this is the comparison of a particular item against a standard predetermined by the customer. Those scores above the standard are positive, while those below are in need of improvement. This enables more thoughtful and considered prioritization of any possible plans of action.

The message is clear: customer satisfaction is essential for the success – and continued success – of any business. Not only does positive customer satisfaction help business, but also a lack of satisfaction takes an even bigger toll on the bottom line. For an organization to remain solvent, information regarding customer satisfaction must be adequately collected and analyzed.

**Difficulties with Customer Satisfaction in Human Services**

In 1986, Gibelman and Demone estimated that over half of all public service dollars were spent on purchasing services (cited in Peat & Costley, 2000). The have also been increased calls for accountability of outcomes and processes in the human services field (Bachman, cited in Selber &, 2000). This includes pressures not only to measure quality services, but also to manage them from a customer’s point of view (Moore, Kelly, & Lauderdale, 1998). This trend is likely to continue and grow (Wagenheim & Reurnik, 1991). Project design in the human services field has often has traditionally been based upon the medical model, but the customer-oriented shift has expanded the roles and participation of customers (Selber & Streeter, 2000).

However, considerable difficulties arise from actually collecting customer satisfaction information in the human service field. First, there are problems with defining the very definitions, goals, objectives, and outcomes of human services. There are issues with a lack of clarity from the initiation of the contract and conflicts between the funding source, service provider, and identified clients (Paulson, 1988; Poertner & Rapp, 1985; Kettner & Martin, 1985). Related to this is the fact that many services in this sector involve are highly complex and individualized (Hasenfeld, cited in Selber & Streeter, 2000). Many are also carried out in crisis situations. Simple definitions are not easily developed. Even when definitions are forwarded, there remains the issue of which definitions, goals, objectives, and outcomes to select (Richard, 2000). It has been noted in the research literature that global measures are more common, but tend to be less precise and more prone to inflated satisfaction due to social desirability (Lebow, 1982; Sanbourin, LaFeiriere, Sicuro, Coallier, Cournoyer, & Gendreau, 1989). Research suggests that any measure of satisfaction in human services should be multi-dimensional (Richard, 2000).

Despite these obstacles, some dimensions of quality in human services have been identified and include accessibility, continuity, timeliness, consistency, and efficiency (Bryant, et al, 1998; Pruger & Miller, 1991). However, much of satisfaction research in human services is based upon the dimensions of quality from the perspective of the professional (Heppner & Claiborn, 1989). Further research (Tucker, Parker, Parham, Brady, & Brown, 1988) has shown that there is a clear difference between the dimensions identified as important by the provider and those by the customer. However, these are often moderated by other variables, as well. These include socio-emotional factors, which refer to the interactions between the customer and provider, and systems factors, which refer to the physical and technical processes of the interaction. Other factors include socio-demographic factors, which refer to individual characteristics of the customer and providers; health or situational factors; and family or collateral influences, such as family or friends (Sharma, Durand, & Gur-Arie, 1981).

It is not only important to understand quality service from customer information, but also who the customer actually is (Martin, 1993). There are often several levels of people involved – for example, the perceived client, his/her family members, court officials, county agency staff, provider staff and management of those agencies. It is also important to consider the interactions between the customer and the provider in assessing satisfaction with service quality (Swan & Bower, 1998). Therefore, in order to remain a sound organization within the human service field – not only in provision to customers but also fiscally - it is recommended that an agency identify and address a multitude of needs and perspectives (Richard, 2000; Danek, Parker, & Szymanski, 1991).

**Agency Description and History**

Professional Services Group, Inc. (PSG) is a private, for-profit social service agency founded to provide consultations, as well as outpatient treatment to the mental health and drug abuse service areas in the state of Wisconsin. It was incorporated in December of 1982 and currently provides services in Kenosha, Racine, Marathon, Milwaukee, Portage, Eau Claire, Wisconsin Rapids, Wood, and Trempealeau Counties. The goal and mission statement of PSG is "to provide cost effective and innovative programming in the area of human services." These services currently include vocational, mental health, outpatient alcohol and other drug abuse, group home alcohol and other drug abuse, delinquency intervention services, and assessment services, both psychiatric and psychological.

PSG is recognized as an innovative organization known for its ability to work successfully with difficult populations. A summary of the board-approved agency operational goals follows:

1. To provide high quality and cost effective mental health outpatient services.
2. To provide high quality and cost effective alcohol and other drug abuse treatment to individuals and families
3. To provide innovative and cost effective delinquency intervention services.
4. To continue to work with clients in vocational, educational, and work related experiences. To make every effort to move these clients toward private sector and non-subsidized employment.
5. To provide high-quality employee assistance programs and student assistance programs.

6. To continue to innovate and experiment in an effort to provide cost effective and high quality services.
7. To provide assessment services to the Job Center of Kenosha County.
8. To utilize the latest technology for treatment of delinquency.
9. To provide high quality and cost effective alcohol and other drug abuse treatment in a group home setting.

Professional Services Group, Inc. strives to be an innovative and effective organization in the social services field. In addition, the agency prides itself on providing better-than-expected service to its customers and clients. As such, PSG needs to identify satisfaction elements in a manner that is accurate, appropriate, and adequate.

**The Current Process of Customer Satisfaction Information Collection**

According to the Professional Services Group Supervisor's Manual (2002), the process for collecting Quality Assurance data is as follows. Program supervisors are responsible for collecting quality assurance information on ten percent of the current cases. This involves a thorough file review, a case manager survey, and a parent/guardian survey. These may be collected either via telephone interview – which seems to be by far the most common method – or face-to-face interview. For complete instruction, see Appendix C.

The instrument used to collect information regarding Customer and Client Satisfaction is the Quality Assurance (QA) survey developed by Professional Services Group. According to the agency's Supervisor's Manual, QA surveys are internal measures of customer and client satisfaction, as well as evaluations of program processes. It is intended to "be used as a tool to regulate the quality of services being provided to our clientele" (p. 26).

The Quality Assurance Survey is comprised of three separate but related sections. The first section is known as the File Inspection. The purpose of this section is to ensure that employees have maintained updated files and that the lead worker is familiar with all aspects of the clients' cases.

The second section is known as the Case Manager Survey. The purpose of this section is to estimate the satisfaction a case manager has with the quality of services being offered. This is collected as Customer Satisfaction data. This is the primary section for development in this project.

The third section is known as the Parent Survey. The purpose of this section is to estimate the degree of satisfaction parents have with the services being provided to their child. This is collected as Client Satisfaction data.

For the purposes of continuity, the same or very similar questions are asked in both the Case Manager and Parent Survey. General questions that were asked on both surveys were:

- Are you satisfied with the services from PSG?
- Are you satisfied with the written and verbal communication from PSG?
- Do you feel that you are being informed of necessary information?
- Do you feel that this program has helped the youth and family to be more successful?
- Is there anything we at PSG can do to make the program more successful?

However, each program has specific information needs and may have program-specific questions.

**Difficulties with the Current Process**

The fundamental issues that define the purpose of this project have been identified in previous research conducted by the author. Earlier analysis found customer and client satisfaction data collected by agency staff to be problematic for several reasons (Davis & Macomber, 2002). This analysis recommended development of a more standardized instrument for collection of satisfaction data. An online version with both quantitative and qualitative questions was recommended for customers, as they were more likely to have computers and Internet access.

Some of the problematic issues with the current collection method may be corrected by the development of a new survey. These problems include:

Response Rates. The choice whether or not to respond is always available. However, lower response rates may be due to less investment in the validity of the instrument or questions or in the utility of the results. Front-end involvement by both customers and agency staff may facilitate better investment and support for the instrument. This may translate into improved response rates.

Data Collection Methods. The lack of standardized collection and differences in those collecting the data create a vast array of interactions and effects. Therefore, the researchers suggest that the Quality Assurance process be redesigned and standardized in format. The simplest method to achieve such an end is to provide a computerized or online version of the satisfaction survey. This eliminates all of the effects of the individuals collecting the data.

The Questions. Finally, the closed-ended and often repetitive nature of current questions suggests that an evaluation of importance and relevance may be necessary. The researchers suggest that the organization make a concerted effort to improve the Quality Assurance Survey.

First, it would be important to clearly define the dimensions of satisfaction that the organization and the customer find to be most important. This information should be integrated into a prioritized list.

Finally, questions should be developed that address the essence of the information needs. However, this requires a balance between depth and time spent in completion and analysis Questions in a Likert-type format may be most practical.

# CHAPTER TWO

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

As identified in the Customer Satisfaction review, the importance of any agency achieving and maintaining positive customer satisfaction is paramount to survival. As such, Professional Services Group, Inc. is in need of an appropriate measure of satisfaction from its primary source of customers. The instrument should be based on the definitions and priorities set forth by both the administration and the program staff. This information needs to be adequately detailed and useful for continuing satisfactory programming components and altering those that are less than acceptable. In short, the tool must be a useful instrument for the detection of both strengths and weaknesses in the organization, as well as possible suggestions for improvement or alterations.

The method of acquiring this information from the customer sources needs to be both easy to use and understand. The measure should ask appropriate questions to the intended respondents – face validity, if you would. The method of collection should be straight- forward and involve only the respondent and the measure. By incorporating technology, an online instrument could fill the need.

This study is an investigation into one of the five identified gaps from the Met-Expectations Model of customer satisfaction. As previously discussed, the basis of the model states that service quality can be defined by the differences between the customer – external elements - and the organization – internal elements. This is true of not only of the actual delivery of a service, but also those perceptions and expectation of the service delivery and its accompanying processes. Any differences, or gaps, can be used to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses in service quality of an organization and assist in correction of any problems.

The specific gap that this project will investigate is known as the Expectations Gap. This is the difference between customer expectations and management perceptions of customer expectations. It is the internal agency being aware of the external expectations. It is important for an organization to being clearly aware of what it is exactly that the customers expect in comparison to its own. It is the vital first step in the process of developing an accurate measure of customer satisfaction that is useful. From here, an organization is able to set organizational standards, or benchmarks, that meet customer standards for service delivery. The next step in the progression is identification of any gaps between the accepted standard and actual performance. The final step is the use of this customer satisfaction information to implement effective changes in organizational processes or components that please the customers, and add to the bottom line.

There are two types of information that this project will examine with respect to the Expectations Gap. Both types may be used by the sponsoring agency to develop a current understanding of its customers and their perceptions about satisfaction. First, data will be gathered about the processes and methods involved in collecting customer satisfaction information. This process-oriented information will provide a basis for the development of adequate and appropriate measures of satisfaction. In addition, if those meet the preferences of customers, the likelihood of collecting useful information is increased. Second, data will be collected about the service dimensions and specific items that relate to quality service and satisfaction. This information may allow the agency to maintain a clear understanding of not only what is important to service, but also the requirements of customers. In addition, it can be used to make the method and process not only efficient, but meet customer demands.

This study has attempted to identify the internal, organizational as well as the external, customer-identified requirements of customer satisfaction. Differences, if present, can be recognized and thereby reduced.

# CHAPTER THREE

# METHODOLOGY

## Participants

Information for this study was collected and integrated from two primary sources of participants. The first group of participants was considered an internal source, as these individuals are employees of the sponsoring organization. The second group of participants was considered an external source, as these individuals work for agencies outside of the sponsoring organization. Participants were selected from employee lists made available to the researcher by the sponsoring agency.

These were identified as two distinct comparison groups, as follows:

*Internal Respondents:* This comparison group was composed of staff members at three levels from within the sponsoring organization, Professional Services Group, Inc, and Community Impact Programs. The administration level includes the agency's directors and regional coordinators. This rank includes the top executives and the seat of organization power for decision-making, program development and so on. The rationale for use of this subgroup is simple- this is the project's sponsor, and the results of the study will be used by these individuals.

The second level of internal respondents included program supervisors and assistant supervisors from Professional Services Group, Inc. and Community Impact Programs. The rationale for the use of this subgroup is that many of these participants are the individuals that directly oversee and sometimes provide the service of the organization. They may have immediate use of results from satisfaction surveys in terms of program processes and outcomes.

The third level of internal respondents included direct service providers from programming within Professional Services Group, Inc. and Community Impact Programs. The rationale for inclusion of this subgroup is that these individuals are the immediate conveyers of services to customers, clients, and families. Any information about what is and what is not effective has evident bearing on job performance.

*External Respondents*: This comparison group included staff members from the Eau Claire County Department of Human Services, Kenosha County Department of Human Services, Racine County Human Services Department, and Trempealeau County Department of Social Services. These agencies all presently contract with the sponsoring organization for services in their respective communities. Quite simply, these are the customers. For this group, the population was composed of staff members at three levels. The administration level includes the agency's directors and contract administrators. Similar to the internal group, this subgroup wields the power to form and end contracts for services.

The second level of external respondents included program supervisors and managers from these four customer agencies. The rationale for the use of this subgroup is that many of these participants directly oversee authorization of services being provided by the sponsoring organization.

The third level of external respondents included direct service providers from the customer agencies. This subgroup has the most immediate and frequent contact with the sponsoring organization's personnel. The clients and families that are receiving services are common to both respondent groups at this level in particular.

**Instrumentation**

The instrument for collecting customer satisfaction data in this study was developed by the author. The measure is a modification of other instruments that are used to collect customer satisfaction information. It consisted of 41-items, including a three demographic items for comparison purposes, five questions about the process of customer satisfaction, and 33 service dimension statements. Possible responses are provided for each question.

The first step in development of this instrument involved the development of simple demographic items that could be used for comparison purposes without identifying respondents. It was necessary to distinguish those internal as well as external to the sponsoring organization. In addition, it was important to determine the level or position of the participant within the organization. The purpose is to determine whether any differences exist between levels in terms of customer satisfaction information. A third item inquired on the length of time in the current position, the purpose being to determine if job experience has any affect.

The second step in development involved questions about the process of collecting customer satisfaction information. The purpose of these questions was to determine participant feelings about the collection of customer satisfaction information. It was intended that these items generate information to be used in development of an accepted and efficient measurement tool and process of data collection. From this, five items were generated. Respondents were asked to rate the general importance of collecting customer satisfaction information. Another item asked respondents to rate the quality of the current method of collecting information as used by the sponsoring organization. In order to get more specific preferences for methodology and time investment for customer satisfaction data collection, respondents were asked to identify the best method for this and the amount of time adequate for that purpose. A fifth item was added at the request of the sponsoring organization. This item asked if respondents had ever held back negative information about customer satisfaction. The sponsoring organization had concerns that the information currently collected has not always been completely forthright due to concerns by customers for jobs being effected as a result.

The third step in development was the aggregation of service dimension items. These were collected from the SERVQUAL instrument, the suggested measure forwarded by Sureshchander, Rajendran, and Kamalanabhan (2001), and from various program descriptions provided by the agency. Any modifications that were needed to keep the item consistent with human services were also made at this time. The initial contained 72 potential items within 17 different dimensions. For a complete list of all items and dimensions, see Appendix D.

The final step in the development of the instrument involved pooling similar items together into comparable dimensions. For example, many of the service dimensions suggested by the agency description could rationally belong under the dimension of tangibles, core service, or systematization of service delivery. Therefore, all of these items were clustered into one new dimension – tangibles. In addition, any repetitive or duplicated items were also removed from the item pool. In addition, any modifications needed were made to keep items consistent to human services. The final pool was reviewed by the project sponsors and approved for use. The final collection consisted of 33 items. For a list of the final service quality dimensions and items, see Appendix E.

Each service dimension item is presented as a structure statement. Participants were asked to rate the importance of each item toward a measure of customer satisfaction. Each item dimension was rated using a seven point Likert-type response format, with semantic anchors of "Not Important" at 1 to "Very Important" at 7. See Appendix F for a copy of the instrument.

**Procedure**

The procedure for this project involved two steps. The researcher sent out an individual email message to each participant regarding the purpose and nature of the project. In addition, this document contained the informed consent elements that describe the potential benefits and risks, safeguards, confidentiality, voluntary nature of participation, and so forth. This message included a link to the actual online survey.

The introduction to the instrument briefly repeated the purpose of the project with the elements of informed consent regarding voluntary participation, confidentiality, potential benefits and risk. The participant was informed that submission of the survey was considered consent to participate in the project.

One week after the survey instrument was sent the researcher sent a reminder email message individually to each participant. The purpose of this message was to prompt return of the surveys by the end of data collection. As there are no identifying questions on the instrument, the researcher had no knowledge of who had completed the survey. Therefore, this notice was sent to all participants.

Data from the responses were conveyed to an Excel database for conversion to an SPSS database. All of the data was entered into SPSS for analysis procedures.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESULTS

The Online Satisfaction Surveys were collected from April 2 through April 18, 2003. A total of 93 surveys were sent to potential participants in six separate agencies. Of these, 59 surveys were collected, for a response rate of 63.4 percent. Of the 52 surveys sent to staff members of the internal agencies, a total of 33 surveys were collected for a response rate of 63.5 percent. Of the 41 surveys sent to staff members of the various external customer sources, 26 surveys were collected for a response rate of 63.4 percent.

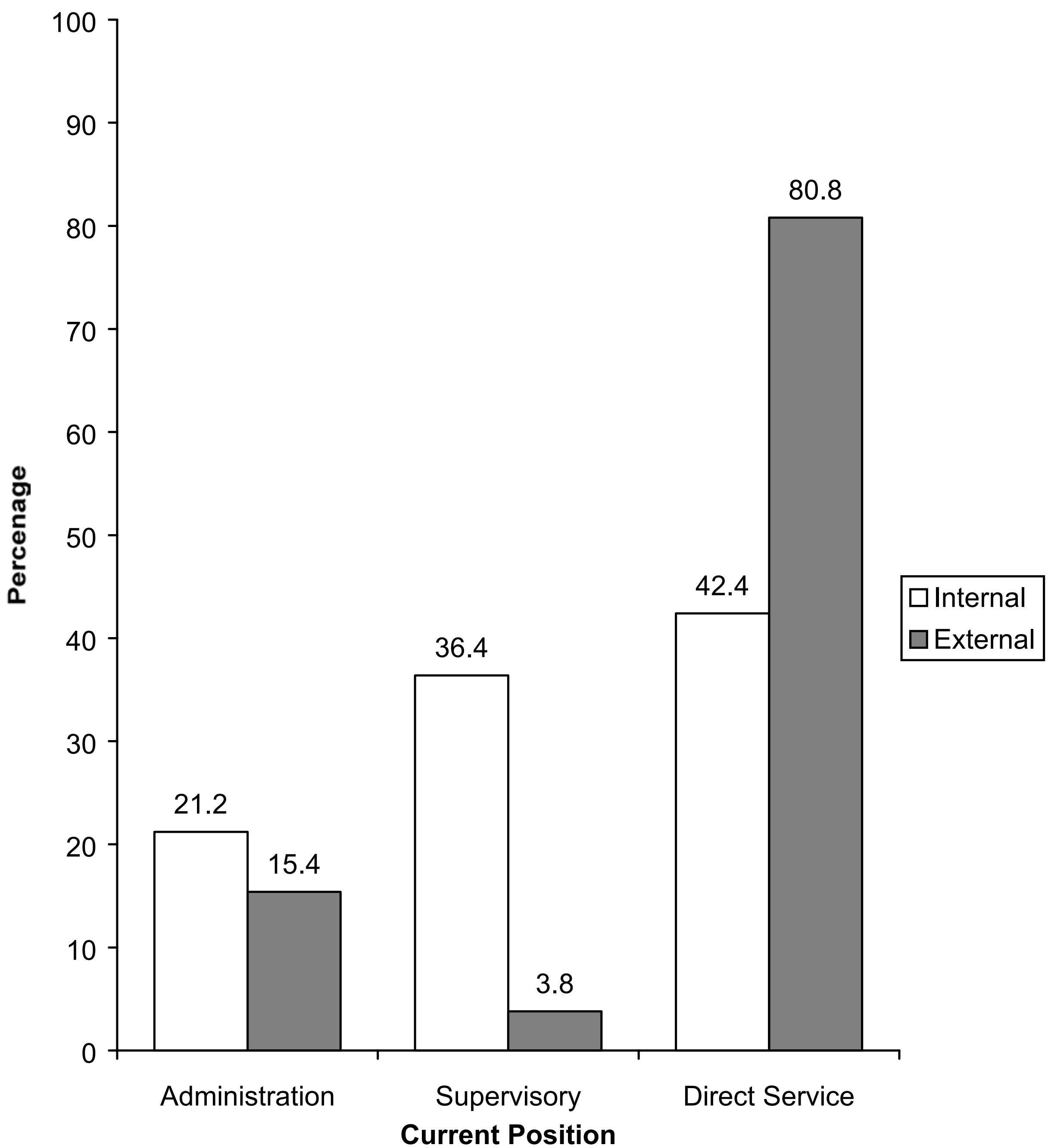
An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

## Demographic Items

### *Respondents by Current Position*

Respondents were asked to report their current position held in their agency or organization. See Figure 1 for a representation of the responses.

Figure 1: *Current Position*



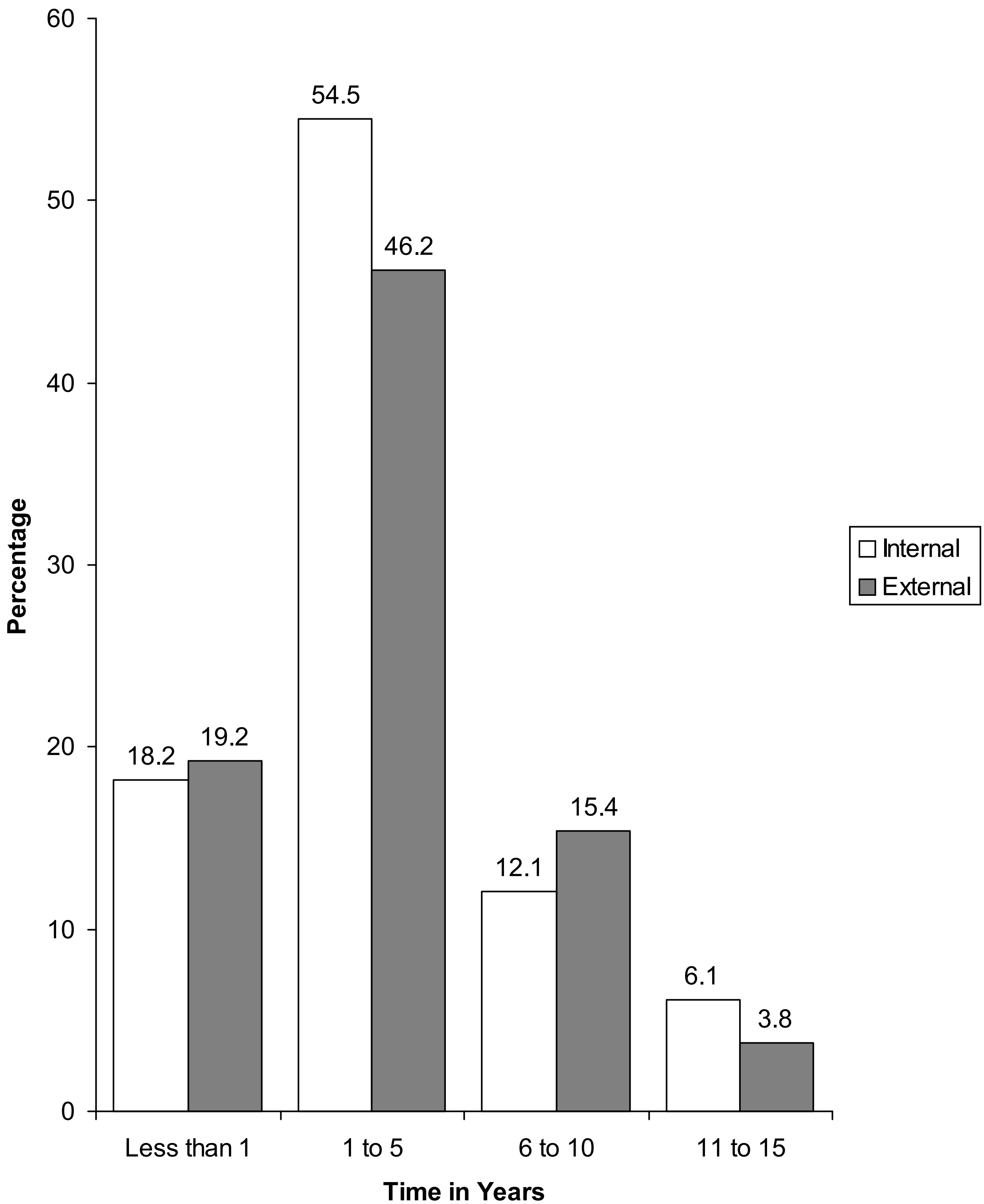
The figure shows that internal and external groups are similar in the percentage of respondents identifying themselves in an administrative position. However, large differences exist between percentage of internals who report their position as supervisory and external respondents. A large difference was also evident at the direct service position, except more external respondents indicated this as their current position.

Chi-square tests were conducted to determine whether any difference existed between the two groups in terms of position. The only significant difference was found between internal and external respondents at the supervisory level ($x^2$ (1, $N$=13) = 9.308, $p$=.002).

*Total Years in Current Position*

Respondents were asked to report the total years in their current position. See Figure 2 for a representation of the responses.

Figure 2: *Time in Current Position*



The majority of both groups have held their current positions between one and five years. For each category, similar percentages have been identified for both respondents groups.

Chi-square tests to determine any differences between the internal and external respondent groups in terms of job experience were non-significant.

**Process Items**

*General Importance of Collecting Customer Satisfaction Information*

All respondents were asked to rate the general importance of collecting customer satisfaction information. Internal respondents had a mean rating of 5.48 for importance, while external respondents had a mean rating of 5.00.

Independent means t-tests were conducted to determine if there was a difference between these groups in their importance ratings. No significant difference was found

One-sample t-tests were conducted for each group to determine if the mean rating was significantly different than a neutral rating. Results indicated that both the internal group ($t(32)=5.137$, $p=.000$ (two-tailed), $d=1.48$) and the external group ($t\ (25)=3.407$, $p=.002$ (two-tailed), $d=1.00$) rated the general importance of collecting customer satisfaction significantly greater than neutral.

*Current Method of Collecting Customer Satisfaction Information*

Participants were asked to rate the current method of collecting customer satisfaction information used by the sponsor agency. Internal respondents had a mean rating of 3.15 for the current method while externals had a mean rating of 3.38.

Independent means t-tests conducted to determine if a difference existed between groups found no significant difference.

One-sample t-tests were conducted for each group to determine if the mean rating was significantly different than a neutral rating. Results showed that only the internal group rated the current method of collecting customer satisfaction information as significantly less than neutral ($t(32)=-2.494$, $p=.018$ (two-tailed), $d=-.85$).

*Best Method for Collecting Customer Satisfaction Information*

The survey asked respondents to identify the best method for collecting customer satisfaction of information. Table 1 shows how the groups indicated methods of preference.

Table 1

*Best Method of Collecting Customer Satisfaction Information*

| Method | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| Written Surveys | 24.2% | 23.1% |
| Focus Groups | 3.0% | 7.7% |
| Telephone Surveys | 9.1% | 3.8% |
| Personal Interviews | 33.3% | 26.9% |
| Online Survey | 15.2% | 30.8% |
| Not Sure | 15.2% | 7.7% |

Internal respondents indicated a preference for personal interviews and written surveys while external respondents indicated a preference for online surveys, personal interviews, and written surveys.

*Length of Time Adequate for Collecting Customer Satisfaction Information*

Individuals were asked to identify the amount of time that would be adequate for the collection of customer satisfaction information. Table 2 shows the percentages of method by group.

Table 2

*Length of Time Adequate for Collecting Customer Satisfaction Information*

| Time | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| Less than 15 Minutes | 72.7%** | 69.2%** |
| 15 to 20 Minutes | 12.1% | 19.2% |
| As Long as Necessary | 15.2% | 11.5% |

** *p*<.01

Chi-square tests were conducted to determine any significant differences either between or within groups on this item. No significant differences were found between the two groups. However, both internal respondents ($x^2$ (2, *N*=33) = 23.091, *p*=.000) and external respondents ($x^2$ (2, *N*=26) = 15.308, *p*=.000) indicated that less than 15 minutes time is adequate for collecting customer satisfaction information, significantly more often than the other choices.

*Held Back Negative Customer Satisfaction Information for Concern of Job Affects*

Respondents were asked whether or not they had ever held back negative customer satisfaction information out of concern for another's job being affected. See Table 3 for the results. Note that the "not applicable" response was treated as missing and not included

Table 3

*Having Held Back Negative Customer Satisfaction Information*

| Response | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 12% | 19.1% |
| No | 76%** | 76.2%** |
| Not Sure | 12% | 4.7%% |

**p<.01

Chi-square tests were conducted to determine any significant differences either between or within groups on this item. No significant differences were found between the two groups on any response.

However, results demonstrated that significantly more respondents in both the internal and external groups indicated that they had not held back negative customer satisfaction information out of concern for job effects [($x^2$ (2, $N$=25) = 20.480, $p$=.000) and ($x^2$ (2, $N$=21) = 18.000, $p$=.000), respectively].

**Customer Service Dimensions and Items**

The bulk of the survey included specific items for each of the six service dimensions. Respondents rated the importance of each item in relation to customer satisfaction. The specific items were summed to obtain a mean rating on the dimension. In addition, the service dimension means were summed to obtain a mean overall satisfaction rating.

*Overall Customer Satisfaction Importance*

The overall customer satisfaction ratings are the summation of every specific item under each of the six service dimensions. It is intended to be a generalized score of the importance of these service dimension and items perceived by each group.

Internal respondents had a mean importance rating of 6.28 while external respondents had a mean rating of 6.29. Independent t-tests revealed no significant difference between the groups in rating of overall customer satisfaction.

*Tangibles Dimension*

This service quality dimension involves the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, materials, and personnel of the organization. Table 4 shows the mean ratings of importance for internal and external respondents for the dimension and each specific item.

Table 4

*Tangibles Dimension and Specific Item Mean Ratings of Importance*

| Dimension / Item | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| Tangibles Dimension | 6.02 | 5.83 |
| • Adequate and Necessary Facilities and Equipment | 5.55 | 5.69 |
| • Employees with Neat, Professional Appearance | 5.61 | 5.50 |
| • Quality of Materials, Groups, Activities | 6.24 | 6.15 |
| • Diversity and Range of Services | 6.24 | 5.92 |
| • Intensity and Depth of Service* | 6.39 | 5.80 |
| • Service Innovation* | 5.94 | 5.23 |
| • Convenient Hours to Customers, Clients, and Families* | 6.18 | 6.62 |

*$p$<.05

Overall, internal respondents identified the Tangibles dimension and most of the specific items higher than did external respondents. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether any difference existed between the internal and external groups in either the dimension or any specific item. No significant difference was found between groups on the dimension.

However, significant differences were found between for three specific items of the Tangibles Dimension. Internal respondents rated the items Intensity and Depth of Service ($t(57)=2.242$, $p=.029$, $d=.59$) and Service Innovation ($t(57)=2.364$, $p=.022$, $d=.71$) as more important than external respondents. For Convenient Hours to Customers, Clients, and Families, external respondents rated this item higher than internals ($t(57)=-2.108$, $p=.039$, $d=-.43$).

*Service Delivery Dimension*

This dimension of service quality refers to the processes, procedures, systems, and technology that make service efficient and effective. These are the appreciable features of the service being delivered. Table 5 displays the mean ratings of importance for the dimension and specific items.

Table 5

*Service Delivery Dimension and Specific Item Mean Ratings of Importance*

| Dimension / Item | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| Service Delivery Dimension | 6.23 | 6.49 |
| • Efficient Referral and Intake Process | 5.97 | 6.31 |
| • Explanation of Program Services and Expectations to Customer, Client, and Family | 6.18 | 6.54 |
| • Identification of Resources and Needs of Client and Family | 6.24 | 6.40 |
| • Appropriate Services and Delivery Based on Needs of Client and Family | 6.48 | 6.44 |
| • Adequate Client Contacts | 6.48 | 6.72 |
| • Adequate Family Contacts | 6.16 | 6.52 |

External respondents rated this dimension and each specific item higher than did internal respondents. However, independent samples t-tests conducted to determine whether any difference existed between the internal and external groups in either the dimension or any specific item revealed that no significant differences were found between groups on either the dimension or for any item.

*Reliability Dimension*

This quality dimension involves the consistent, dependable, and accurate delivery of promised services. Table 6 represents the mean ratings for this dimension and items.

Table 6

*Reliability Dimension and Specific Item Mean Ratings of Importance*

| Dimension / Item | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| Reliability Dimension | 6.34 | 6.45 |
| • Providing Services as Promised | 6.67 | 6.72 |
| • Dependability in Handling Service Problems | 6.53 | 6.48 |
| • Providing Services at Promised Time or in a Timely Manner | 6.41 | 6.56 |
| • Availability and Accessibility of Staff | 6.53 | 6.44 |
| • Adequate Written Communication | 5.61 | 6.04 |
| • Adequate Oral Communication | 6.41 | 6.44 |

External respondents rated this dimension and most items higher in importance than did internal respondents. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether any difference existed between the groups in either the dimension or any specific item. No significant differences were found.

*Responsiveness Dimension*

This dimension of service quality encompasses those aspects of personnel that demonstrate a willingness of an organization to help customers and provide prompt service. See Table 7 for a display of the responses.

Table 7

*Responsiveness Dimension and Specific Item Mean Ratings of Importance*

| Dimension / Item | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| Responsiveness Dimension | 6.48 | 6.42 |
| • Willingness to Respond to Questions or Concerns | 6.53 | 6.42 |
| • Prompt and Timely Service to Customers, Clients and Families | 6.47 | 6.58 |
| • Helpfulness and Courteousness | 6.53 | 6.42 |
| • Fast Correction of Service Problems | 6.41 | 6.27 |

Responsiveness as a dimension and most of the specific items were rated slightly higher by internal than external respondents. In fact, this was the highest rated service dimension for internal respondents.

Independent samples t-tests conducted to determine whether any difference existed between the groups in either the dimension or any specific item found no significant difference existed.

*Assurance Dimension*

This dimension of service quality includes the knowledge, skill, and ability of personnel, as well as the ability to inspire trust and confidence from customers. In addition, this relates to ethical behavior and actions by the corporation in business and other dealings. Table 8 follows with the mean ratings for the dimension and each item.

Table 8

*Assurance Dimension and Specific Item Mean Ratings of Importance*

| Dimension / Item | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| Assurance Dimension | 6.39 | 6.47 |
| • Accuracy and Confidentiality | 6.66 | 6.77 |
| • Competence of Management | 6.55 | 6.54 |
| • Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities of Personnel | 6.55 | 6.73 |
| • Ethical Conduct | 6.70 | 6.62 |
| • Organization as a Good Corporate Citizen | 5.70 | 5.85 |
| • Regular Collaboration with Customers, Clients, Families and/or Other Providers | 6.30 | 6.31 |

External respondents rated the dimension as well as a majority of items slightly higher in importance tin comparison to internal respondents. In addition, both groups rated one item in this dimension – Accuracy and Confidentiality – above all others in terms of importance.

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether any difference existed between the internal and external groups in either the dimension or any specific item. No significant difference was found between groups on either the dimension or for any item.

*Empathy Dimension*

This dimension of service quality relates to the level of caring and individualized attention that personnel provide to customers and clients. Table 9 shows the mean ratings for this dimension and each item.

Table 9

*Empathy Dimension and Specific Item Mean Ratings of Importance*

| Dimension / Item | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| Empathy Dimension | 6.39 | 6.27 |
| • Empathetic to Customers, Clients, and Families | 6.30 | 6.19 |
| • Advocacy and Support for Client and Family | 6.36 | 6.35 |
| • Individualized Attention to Customers, Clients, and Families | 6.42 | 6.24 |
| • Equal Treatment to Customers and Clients | 6.44 | 6.38 |

Internal respondents rated the overall dimension and each specific item higher than did external respondents.

However, no significant differences were detected between groups on either the dimension or any specific item in independent samples t-tests conducted

*Service Dimension Ratings*

The internal and external respondent groups had different rankings of the importance of individual service dimensions. The results are presented in Tables 10.

Table 10

*Group Rankings of Service Dimension Importance*

| Rank | Internal | External |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Responsiveness | Service Delivery |
| 2 | Assurance | Assurance |
| 3 | Empathy | Reliability |
| 4 | Reliability | Responsiveness |
| 5 | Service Delivery | Empathy |
| 6 | Tangibles | Tangibles |

Internal and external groups have similar rankings for two dimensions. Both groups rated Assurance as the second most important dimension and Tangibles as the least important dimension. On every other dimension, the two groups differ. Internal respondent rated Responsiveness as the most important while external respondents identified Service Delivery as the most important dimension.

Paired samples t-tests were conducted to determine if there were differences within groups on service dimension ratings. There were several significant differences between dimensions within each respondent group.

Internal respondents showed several significant differences between service dimensions. The results are as follows:

- Responsiveness was rated significantly higher than Tangibles ($t(31)=-2.469$, $p=.019$).
- Assurance was rated significantly higher than Tangibles ($t(30)=-5.897$, $p=.000$).
- Empathy was rated significantly higher than Tangibles ($t(31)=-4.181$, $p=.000$).
- Reliability was rated significantly higher than Tangibles ($t(31)=-4.150$, $p=.000$).

- Service Delivery was rated significantly higher than Tangibles ($t(31)=-3.951$, $p=.000$).
- Reliability was rated significantly higher than Service Delivery ($t(29)=-2.162$, $p=.039$),
- Responsiveness was rated significantly higher than Service Delivery ($t(30)=-2.674$, $p=.012$).

There were no other significant differences found.

External respondents showed several significant differences between service dimensions. The results are as follows:

- Service Delivery was rated significantly higher than Tangibles ($t(23)=-5.140$, $p=.000$).
- Assurance was rated significantly higher than Tangibles ($t(23)=-4.151$, $p=.000$).
- Reliability was rated significantly higher than Tangibles ($t(24)=-3.167$, $p=.004$).
- Responsiveness was rated significantly higher than Tangibles ($t(24)=-4.351$, $p=.000$).

There were no other significant differences found.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# DISCUSSION

## Summary

This study was an investigation of one of the five identified gaps from the Met-Expectations Model of customer satisfaction. The basis of this model states that service quality can be defined by the differences between the customer – external elements - and the organization – internal elements. This is true of not only of the actual delivery of a service, but also those perceptions and expectation of the service delivery and its accompanying processes. These gaps can be used to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses in service quality of an organization and assist in correction of any problems.

The specific gap that this project investigated is known as the Expectations Gap. This is the difference between customer expectations and management perceptions of those expectations. Businesses need to maintain a clear awareness of its customers' demands. The smaller this gap is the more likely that an organization can adequately meet the needs of its constituency. This project examined the internal and external ratings of the importance of specific items regarding quality service in the human service realm.

Two types of information were examined in this project with respect to the Expectations Gap. First, data was collected regarding the processes and methods involved in collecting customer satisfaction information. Process-oriented information provides a foundation for the development of adequate and appropriate measures of satisfaction. In addition, if these measures meet the preferences of customers, the likelihood of collecting useful information is increased. Second, data was collected regarding the service dimensions and specific items that relate to quality service and satisfaction. This information may allow the agency to maintain a clear understanding of not only what is important to service, but also the requirements of customers. It can also be used to make the method and process not only efficient, but meet customer demands.

The results suggested that the Expectations Gap, with few exceptions, does not exist between the organization and its customers. The individuals from the business and from the customers who participated in this study were similar in both their ratings of the process-oriented items and the service dimension and specific items in achieving customer satisfaction. This may be good news for the sponsoring agency. There is no business – customer gap. There are, however, several interesting findings worthy of commentary.

**Process Items**

*General Importance of Collecting Customer Service Information*

Both groups rated the importance of collecting customer satisfaction significantly above a neutral rating. This result suggests that customers and organizational staff alike recognize the inherent value in collecting and using satisfaction information in the improvement of service quality. The potential impact of this finding is that this appreciation by customers may relate to improvement in response rates to the processes and methods employed.

*Current Method of Collecting Customer Service Information*

There were two noteworthy findings regarding the current method of collecting customer satisfaction information. First, both groups rated the present method and process employed by the organization below the neutral point. This suggests that neither those internal nor external to the organization are satisfied with the process as it currently exists. Second, internal respondents were significantly below the neutral rating of the current method. The importance of this finding is that those who are collecting much of the satisfaction information may not feel that the method employed is effective. This may in turn influence how or how well this information is actually collected. These findings suggest the sponsoring agency may need to consider exploration of changes in methodology that is more acceptable to both customers and staff members. The potential impact of this finding is that better methods may result in refined processes of collection of satisfaction information by internal staff members and improved response rates by customers.

*Best Method of Collecting Customer Satisfaction Information*

Regarding the best method of collecting customer satisfaction information, two findings stand out. First, neither group identified the current method being utilized – telephone surveys – as the most popular choice. In fact, for the external respondents, it was the least frequently chosen method. The second point the results demonstrate is that external participants most frequently indicated online survey as the preferred selection. The results again suggest the organization review and modify current methods of data collection.

*Length of Time Adequate for Collecting Customer Satisfaction Information*

A majority from both groups identified fifteen minutes or less as adequate time to collect customer satisfaction information. This suggests that the process and method utilized should be time-efficient. This underscores the results from the previous item, as online surveys can often collect a wide variety of information in a relatively short amount of time.

*Having Held Back Negative Customer Satisfaction Information*

The majority of both internal and external respondents identified that they had not held back negative customer satisfaction information. At face value, this suggests that the information collected about customer satisfaction is honest. However, it is possible that the response is an issue of social desirability.

**Service Dimensions and Items**

There were few differences between the internal and external groups for mean ratings of importance for either service dimensions and specific items related to quality service and customer satisfaction. However, the groups did rate the particular dimensions differently. The two groups had differences between the rankings by mean score for the six service dimensions. In particular, the groups differed on the most important service dimension.

*Most Important Service Dimension*

Customers rated the dimension of Service Delivery most important. This dimension relates to the actual provision of services to the customer by the organization. This may be a result of the issue of service delivery being the most immediate and discernible indication of business between the organization and the customer. It relates directly to satisfaction with service meeting expectations. As such, it would seem to be most important to the customer.

Internal respondents rated the Responsiveness dimension most important. This dimension relates to performance and quality of the delivery of service. Since this essentially relates to how well one carries out the job, it follows that this dimension would be most important to those within the organization.

*Similarities with Service Dimensions*

Both groups rated the Assurance dimension second highest in importance. There are possible explanations for this for both groups. First, customers would like to be confident that the business is going to provide services as expected in an expected manner. This is the issue to which Assurance speaks. This dimension is important because customers demand that businesses inspire trust, confidence, and continued patronage from them.

Second, personnel from the organization want to feel not only effective as individuals but also in terms of performance. Assurance relates to issues of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of staff, and the ability to inspire the trust and confidence of customers. This appears to link to self-esteem and self-efficacy. Therefore, this dimension would be viewed as important within the organization as it relates to performance.

An interesting note is that one specific item in the Assurance dimension, Accuracy and Confidentiality, was the highest rated item above all others for both groups. This suggests that both groups may naturally hold precision and client privacy in high regard and priority, as it is held in the human service field.

However, another possible explanation from the current timeframe is the fact that the federal government enacted strict guidelines regarding confidentiality during the data collection phase. These regulations, known as HIPPA (Health Insurance Privacy and Portability Act) Protocols, came into effect for both internal and external organizations during the middle of data collection. These high importance ratings may simply be a result of this recent history.

Both internal and external groups rated the Tangibles dimension of least importance. This may suggest that neither group rated as much importance in appearances of staff, materials, and equipment, and so on as they do to processes and interactions. Simply, it is not necessarily what the business has, but how it performs.

However, significant differences were only found on three specific items in this service dimension. The first was Intensity and Depth of Services, with internals rating this more important than externals. This may be due to this being related to performance standards. Personnel of the organization are those being rated. It is a matter of who is delivering the service (internal) and not who is receiving (external). Thus, it would seem logical that internal respondents would find this more important than customers as it relates directly to their job performance.

The second item was Service Innovation, with internals rating this item more important than externals. This seems to be in keeping with the sponsoring agency's mission for providing innovative services. Organizational staff may have internalized the agency's mission statement. It is interesting to note that this item was the least important item of all to external respondents. This suggests that quality services, provided as expected, are more important to customers than innovation.

The third significant difference between respondent groups was for the item Convenient Hours to Customers, Clients, and Families. In this case, customers rated this item more important than did internal staff members. A possible explanation for this result is that convenience is a central issue in customer satisfaction. It is an issue of providing a service when it is demanded or in a timely manner.

**Similarities and Differences with Previous Research**

These results share similarities and differences with previous research. One apparent similarity is the successful use of a version of the SERVQUAL measure of customer satisfaction. The measure has been extensively tested in a wide variety of service firms, including human service agencies (Grapentine, 1999; Selber, as cited in Selber and Streeter, 2000). Coefficient alpha ratings have exceeded 0.70 in the research (Grapentine, 1999). Despite this evidence, there still has been criticism of the dimensions of SERVQUAL and other dimensions have been suggested in the research literature (Cronin & Taylor, 1994; Babakus & Boller, 1992; Carman, 1990).

The online survey developed for this project was a modification of the original SERVQUAL instrument. It included many of the original items, along with adaptations of several as well as additional items from research literature regarding service quality and human service. The results suggest that this instrument does indeed measure many of the specific dimensions and specific items that relate to customer satisfaction in human services. This would be true of both the original items and the suggested revisions from the research literature.

In one-sample t-tests conducted to determine whether the dimensions or items were rated significantly higher than neutral, each of the six service dimensions and all of the 33 items were rated significantly above neutral. The alpha coefficient for the specific dimensions was 0.8673 while for items it was 0.9247. Taken in total, this suggests that the instrument performed similarly as SERVQUAL in other research.

Another similarity from this project to previous research is the difference between the service dimensions identified as important by the organization and the customer. Although there were no significant differences between the importance ratings for the dimensions, the rank order of these did differ. It would seem that while internal and external groups may agree on the importance of the dimensions, there is a contrast in terms of their importance relative to one another. This finding is congruent with previous research (Tucker, Parker, Parham, Brady, & Brown, 1988).

The major difference in this project to others has been its nomothetic approach. Most of the gap-analyses of customer satisfaction have been ideographic in nature. Ideal models are applied on an individual, customer-by-customer basis. However, due to issues of client confidentiality, logistical constraints, and resource limits, the organization has opted to develop and apply an aggregate approximation approach.

Another difference in this project from the research literature has been the respectable response rate using a type of written survey. Research states that poor response rates are a disadvantage of using of this method of collecting customer satisfaction (Leland & Bailey, 1995). However, response rates for this project were over 60 percent overall and for both internal and external respondents.

**Cautions and Limitations**

Although the respondent groups in aggregate appear to be very similar, it is possible that these two groups may differ. The respondents as groups were essentially the same in terms of response rates and the time of position. However, there were significant differences in the current positions of the respondents. The internal respondent group had more in the administrative and supervisory level and fewer in the direct service level than did the external respondent group.

Despite this difference, this was more likely a function of sampling and not response rate. The internal sample was taken from an organization-provided email listing. These were limited to those primarily in supervisory and administrative positions. In contrast, the customer-provided email lists consisted primarily of direct service providers.

Another limitation relates to the samples from the customer agencies. These were often small portions of the entire agency’s personnel. It may be possible that this truncated population may explain the results.

In addition, the results may be an artifact of non-response bias. Although the response rates were respectable, over one-third of potential respondents chose not to complete the survey. Those who did not respond may have had very different responses than those that did.

The use of a written survey for collection of data has common shortcomings. The potential respondents need to be reasonably literate to comprehend the survey and also attend to every item. While it may be assumed that the sampled individuals meet the literacy requirement, it may not be true that each question was carefully attended. There may have been some respondents that decided to select the same answer regardless of the item. This would influence the results.

Another limitation with the instrument was the exclusive use of closed-ended items. This is an issue not of what is there, but what may be missing. There was a limited range of responses. Open-ended items may have provided much more information.

Although the results show that all service dimension items were deemed important to customer service, the list may still be far from complete. There may be items that are also applicable and worthy of consideration that were either not included or recognized by the author. This, too, may have been addressed with open-ended items.

Another limitation is the use of global measures of customer satisfaction. Many services in this human service are highly complex and individualized. Additionally, it has been noted in the research literature that global measures tend to be less precise and more prone to inflated satisfaction due to social desirability. The survey may best be used for general purposes of an organization's customer satisfaction collection, but much of its business is done on a case-by-case basis.

A final limitation is the lack of validation. Simply refining a process or tool without any connection to the organizational goals and objectives is wasteful of resources. To have items of satisfaction that correlate little, if at all, with the objectives of the programming, provides meaningless information with little connection to the "bottom line". The criterion validity of the instrument must be established. It is essential to link any measure of satisfaction with the summative outcomes of the business, program, or project. These outcomes for this organization could be both treatment-related goals, such as client success rates, and more business-related, such as customer loyalty and retention. This connects satisfaction with the indicators of success for the business, thereby allowing for more informed decision making about implementing changes, adjustments and so forth.

**Recommendations for Application**

Developing a valid and reliable tool for collecting customer satisfaction information involves several steps. It is a shaping process that entails integration of the expectations, perceptions, and requirements from sources internal and external to the organization. The information must provide an accurate reflection of the elements that define quality service and relate directly to goals and objectives that determine success. Optimally, any gap-based measure of satisfaction would be individually based in terms of service delivered and customer served. However, the current online survey would probably best serve the information needs for the sponsor agency about global customer satisfaction. This is in keeping with organizational preferences noted earlier.

As discussed early, once an organization has clearly identified the customers' expectations, it becomes necessary to develop standards for quality service. The organization will need to align its criteria for quality service and treatment and business objectives in relation to customer expectations. This synchronization will help to determine the minimally acceptable levels of performance for the specific items. These benchmarks are gauges of performance that directly relate to customer satisfaction. Meeting these standards results in customer satisfaction. Failure to do so results in dissatisfaction. In either case, this will provide the organization with a set of rules by which to measure customer satisfaction based upon customer requirements and still remain within contractual specifications. In addition, this will provide useful information for the sponsor agency to adjust or improve program components, elements, and processes. The results from this project can be the necessary foundation for this action.

Any method that is used to collect customer satisfaction information should meet an organization's informational needs, but adhere to preferences identified by its customer base. These preferences include fundamental questions of actual manner of collection and time involved. Using a process or tool that customers favor is more likely to garner not just support, but responses. This project demonstrated that a majority of customers indicated a propensity for online surveys, personal interviews and written surveys over other methods. Furthermore, a majority indicated that the amount of time adequate for collecting satisfaction information is fifteen minutes or less. This suggests that an online survey may be the best choice, as personal interviews are often more time consuming. In addition, a fairly large number of items can be included that gather a large array of useful information and remain within time constraints.

Another recommendation would be the inclusion of more open-ended items on any measure of customer satisfaction. There may be rich information lost if the opportunity to share more in-depth responses is not available. However, these should be used with care, with consideration of limitations on response length. This not only will keep completion time at adequate levels, but also keep the data manageable.

In conclusion, this project provided an intriguing opportunity to collect and analyze information from both sides of the same coin – the business and the customer. The goal was to identify the gaps – if any – between the two regarding the important elements of quality customer service in the human service field. This project produced several thought-provoking results. These suggest that that few differences exist, which may be reassuring.

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# APPENDIX A

## SERVQUAL Items by Dimension

### Tangibles Dimension

- Modern equipment
- Visually appealing facilities
- Employees who have a neat, professional appearance
- Visually appealing materials associated with the service

### Assurance Dimension

- Assure customers of accuracy and confidence in transactions
- Employees who are consistently courteous
- Employees have knowledge to answer customers' questions
- Employees who instill confidence in customers

### Reliability Dimension

- Maintaining error-free customer orders and records
- Dependability in handling customers' service problems
- Providing services as promised
- Providing service at the promised time
- Performing services right the first time

### Responsiveness Dimension

- Readiness to respond to customers' questions
- Keeping customers informed when services are performed
- Prompt service to customers
- Willingness to help customers

### Empathy Dimension

- Convenient business hours
- Giving customers individual attention
- Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion
- Employees who understand the needs of their customers
- Having the customers' best interest at heart

# APPENDIX B

## Modified SERVQUAL and Other Items by Dimension

### Tangibles of Service Dimension

- Effectiveness of customer grievance procedures and processes
- Having house keeping as a priority and of the highest order in the organization
- Visually appealing materials and facilities
- Providing services as promised
- The ambient conditions such as temperature, ventilation, noise, odor, etc. prevailing at the organization's premises
- Physical layout of equipment and other furnishings is comfortable for the customers to interact with the employees
- Providing services right the first time
- Prompt service to customers
- Visually appealing signs, symbols, advertisements, boards, pamphlets, and other artifacts in the organization
- Providing services as per the promised schedule

### Systematization of Service Delivery Dimension

- Adequate and necessary personnel for good customer service
- Adequate and necessary facilities for good customer service
- Enhancement of technological capability to serve customers more effectively
- Degree to which the procedures and processes and perfectly foolproof
- Having a highly standardized and simplified delivery process so that services are delivered without any hassles or excessive bureaucracy
- Having a highly simplified and structured delivery processes so that services are delivery times are minimum

### Core Service Dimension

- Diversity and range of services
- Intensity and depth of services
- Service Innovation
- Convenient operating hours and days
- Availability of more service operations in most branches/departments of the service organization

## Social Responsibility Dimension

- Equal treatment stemming from the belief, every one, big or small, should be treated alike
- Giving good service at a reasonably minimal cost, but not at the expense of quality
- "Service transcendence"- making customers realize their unexpressed potential by giving more than what they expect
- A sense of public responsibility among employees
- A social responsibility characterized by deserving service to people belonging to all strata of the society
- Having branch locations in most places convenient to all sections of the society
- Extent to which the organization leads as a good corporate citizen, and the level to which it promotes ethical conduct in everything it does

## Human Element of Service Delivery Dimension

- Willingness to help customers and the readiness to respond to customers' requests
- Apprising the customers of the nature and schedule of services available in the organization
- Employees who instill confidence in customers by proper behavior
- Having the necessary skills and ability, and, more importantly, the willingness of the employees for action whenever a critical incident takes place
- Employees who understand the needs of their customers
- Employees who have the knowledge and competence to answer customers' specific queries and requests
- Extent to which the feedback from customers is used to improve service standards
- Making customers feel safe, secure, satisfied, and delighted in their transactions
- Giving caring and individual attention to customers by having the customers' best interests at heart
- Employees who are consistently pleasing and courteous
- Whenever a critical incident takes place, the degree to which the organization succeeds in bringing the condition back to normalcy by satisfying the customer
- Employees who have a neat and professional appearance
- Regularly apprising the customers about information on service quality and actual service performance versus targets in the organization

# APPENDIX C

## Quality Assurance Procedures

The Quality Assurance plan proposed herein is intended to be used as a tool to regulate the quality of services being provided to our clientele. The plan offers a standardized method of surveying several different methods aspects of a program's performance. It should be noted that this plan has been developed as an aid to continue to provide quality services and does not supercede existing policy and procedures as outlined in the Employee Handbook.

**Program Description**

In order to avoid confusion over the roles of employees in different programs, each program has developed a PROGRAM DESCRIPTION that outlines the various roles and expectations of that program. The program description will become integrated into the intake procedure and a copy will be distributed to the parents and/ or guardian as well as the client being served. The purpose of the program description is to define the role of the employee and to clarify the expectations of the program on the participant and their families.

**File Inspection**

Each supervisor is responsible for inspection of a representative number of client files from each program (10% of the total current program population) on a monthly basis and submitted to the director of your program by the first working day of the following month. File inspections will be rotated so that no employee's caseload is either neglected or over-emphasized. The purpose of the file inspection is to ensure that employees have maintained updated files and that the lead worker is familiar with all aspects of the clients' cases. A standardized form for assessing an employee's knowledge about a particular case has been developed. This form promotes agency uniformity; however, it also allows for the diversity inherent to each of the varying programs.

**Parent Surveys**

A number of program specific parent surveys have been developed to estimate the degree of satisfaction parents have with the services being provided to their child. The cases selected will be consistent with the files that are being inspected for that month. The survey may be completed in person or by phone. Once again, the survey was developed to promote agency uniformity while allowing for differences among the different programs.

**Case Manager Survey**

A survey has been developed to estimate the satisfaction a case manager has with the quality of services being offered. Each supervisor will be responsible for surveying case managers of the clients whose files are being inspected that month. The survey may be completed in person or by phone.

# APPENDIX D

## Initial List of Service Quality Items by Dimension

### Tangibles Dimension

- Modern equipment
- Visually appealing facilities
- Visually appealing materials associated with the service
- Employees who have a neat, professional appearance
- Quality of materials, groups, and activities

### Reliability Dimension

- Maintaining error-free customer records
- Providing services as promised
- Performing services right the first time
- Providing service at the promised time
- Dependability in handling customer's service problems
- Availability of staff

### Responsiveness Dimension

- Readiness to respond to customers' questions
- Keeping customers informed when services are performed
- Willingness to help customers
- Prompt service to customers
- Helpfulness and Courteousness of staff
- Accessibility of staff of staff
- Flexibility to demands
- Fast correction of service problems

### Assurance Dimension

- Employees have knowledge to answer customer questions
- Assure customers of accuracy / confidentiality of transactions
- Regular and effective communication of case issues
- Employees who instill confidence in customers
- Employees are consistently courteous
- Competence of management
- Skills and expertise of staff

**Empathy Dimension**

- Employees who deal with customers in a caring fashion
- Employees who understand the needs of the customers
- Convenient business hours
- Giving customers individual attention
- Having the customers' best interest at heart

**Core Service Dimension**

- Diversity and range of services
- Service innovation
- Operating hours convenient to customers and clients
- Intensity and depth of service

**Systematization of Service Delivery Dimension**

- Adaptation of services or processes to improve effectiveness
- Structured and appropriate service delivery process
- Adequate and necessary personnel
- Adequate and necessary facilities and equipment
- Simple and efficient referral process

**Social Responsibility Dimension**

- Equal treatment to customers and clients
- Ethical conduct
- Organization as a good corporate citizen
- Giving customers more than expected
- Sense of public responsibility among staff
- Quality services at a reasonable cost

**Referral and Intake**

- Adequate explanation of program services and expectations to client
- Efficient referral and intake process

**Program Assessment**

- Adequately assess resources and needs of client system
- Timely assessment of service needs

**Plan of Care**

- Adequately addresses service needs of client
- Review and revision of service plan on a timely basis
- Collaboration with customers and clients in development of service plan
- Timely development of service plan

**Communication and Coordination**

- Regular updates regarding progress and problems
- Regular staff meetings with customer and/or other providers
- Written communication
- Oral communication
- Special Requests (i.e., compliance reports)
- Court appearances, as needed

**Monitoring**

- Face-to-face contacts
- Curfew checks
- Telephone contacts
- Family contacts

**Advocacy and Support**

- Advocate for client and family needs
- Crisis intervention for client and family as needed
- Support to client and family

**Transportation**

- Transportation to appointments, school, etc as appropriate

**Groups and Activities**

- Appropriate groups and/or activities available

**Enforcement of Consequences**

- Appropriate use of progressive consequences
- Collaboration with customer, family, and clients
- Timely application of consequences (i.e., electronic monitoring)

# APPENDIX E

## Final List of Service Quality Items by Dimension

### Tangibles Dimension

- Adequate and necessary facilities and equipment
- Quality of materials, groups, and activities
- Convenient hours to customers, clients and families
- Employees who have a neat, professional appearance
- Diversity and range of services
- Service innovation
- Intensity and depth of services

### Service Delivery Dimension

- Efficient referral and intake process
- Explanation of program services and expectations to customer, client, and family
- Adequate client contacts
- Appropriate services and delivery based on identified needs
- Identification of resources and needs of client and family
- Adequate family contacts

### Reliability Dimension

- Providing services as promised
- Dependability in handling service problems
- Written communication
- Availability and accessibility of staff
- Providing service at the promised time or in a timely manner
- Oral communication

### Responsiveness Dimension

- Willingness to respond to questions or concerns
- Helpfulness and courteousness
- Prompt and timely service to customers, clients, and families
- Fast correction of service problems

### Assurance Dimension

- Accuracy and confidentiality
- Competence of management
- Knowledge, skills, and abilities of personnel
- Ethical conduct
- Organization as a good corporate citizen
- Regular collaboration with customer, client, family, and/or other providers

**Empathy Dimension**

- Empathetic to customers, clients, and families
- Advocacy and support for client and family needs
- Giving customers, clients, and families individualized attention
- Equal treatment to customers and clients

APPENDIX F

Customer Satisfaction Dimensions Survey

**Demographic Information**

*These items will be used for comparison purposes only.*

Your Agency / Organization: ___ Professional Services Group, Inc.

___ Eau Claire County Department of Human Services

___ Kenosha County Department of Human Services

___ Racine County Human Services Department

___ Trempealeau County Department of Social Services

___ Community Impact Programs

Your Position: ___ Administration (i.e., Director, Coordinator)

(Chose the option that ___ Supervisory / Management (i.e., Supervisor, Unit Leader)

best describes your position) ___ Direct Service (i.e., Youth Worker, Social Worker)

Total Years in Current Position: ___ Less than 1 Year

___ 1 to 5 Years

___ 6 to 10 Years

___ 11 to 15 Years

___ More than 15 Years

*The next few questions are related to your personal feelings about the collection of information about customer satisfaction. Please answer these questions as to what these questions mean to you as an individual professional.*

1. How important to you as an individual is the collection of customer satisfaction information?

| Not Sure | Not at All Important | | | | | | Very Important |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

2. How would you rate the current method of collecting customer satisfaction information by Professional Services Group, Inc.?

| Not Sure | Very Poor | | | | | | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

3. Which method do you think works BEST in collecting customer satisfaction information? (Select one)

___ Written Surveys ___ Telephone Surveys ___ Online Survey

___ Focus Groups ___ Personal Interviews ___ Not Sure

4. How long do you as an individual think collection of customer satisfaction information should take?

___ Less than 15 Minutes ___ 21 to 30 Minutes

___ 15 to 20 Minutes ___ As Long as Necessary

5. Have you ever held back negative information about services provided by Professional Services Group, Inc. during collection of customer satisfaction information out of concern about someone's job status being affected?

___ Yes ___ No ___ Not Sure ___ Not Applicable

*The next section contains a variety of specific service dimensions related to measuring customer satisfaction with services like those provided by Professional Services Group, Inc.*

*Based upon your personal beliefs, please rate how important each service dimension is in achieving customer satisfaction from your perspective as an individual.*

| *Service Dimension* | **Importance in Terms of Satisfaction** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not At All Important | | | | | | Very Important |
| 6. Adequate and necessary facilities and equipment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. Employees who have a neat, professional appearance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. Quality of materials, groups, and activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. Diversity and range of services | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. Intensity and depth of services | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. Service innovation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. Convenient hours to customers, clients and families | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. Efficient referral and intake process | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. Explanation of program services and expectations to customer, client, and family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. Identification of resources and needs of client and family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. Appropriate services and delivery based on identified needs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 17. Adequate client contacts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. Adequate family contacts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19. Providing services as promised | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20. Dependability in handling service problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21. Providing service at the promised time or in a timely manner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22. Availability and accessibility of staff | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23. Written communication | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 24. Oral communication | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 25. Willingness to respond to questions or concerns | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 26. Prompt and timely service to customers, clients, and families | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 27. Helpfulness and courteousness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

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| 28. Fast correction of service problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 29. Accuracy and confidentiality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 30. Competence of management | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 31. Knowledge, skills, and abilities of personnel | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 32. Ethical conduct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 33. Organization as a good corporate citizen | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 34. Regular collaboration with customer, client, family, and/or other providers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 35. Empathetic to customers, clients, and families | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 36. Advocacy and support for client and family needs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 37. Giving customers, clients, and families individualized attention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 38. Equal Treatment to Customers and Clients | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |