

Identifying **THE SOURCE** of Your Customers' **FRUSTRATIONS**

by: **Pilaiye Cenac**

“Those girls at the front desk are the worst. I’m going to have to get new people to replace them,” my friend raged as she got off the phone with an irate customer.

Not any customer, mind you, but a longstanding, valued customer who’d threatened to take his business elsewhere if he did not receive a level of service befitting his status. My friend was fired up, ready to put out another fire. I’d grown accustomed to seeing her this way – angry, stressed out, and unfortunately taking a very partial view of the situation.

In six months, she’d changed front desk attendants four times. And apparently she had no qualms about making it five times in six months.

“Listen, I’m going to send you a set of questions, sixteen or so. Answer them honestly. If you answer no, don’t know or not always to the majority of them, don’t fire the girls, at least not yet.” I said to her.

“You see you and your marketing and customer service mumbo jumbo...” she responded, but because she had ‘tried absolutely everything already’ and was ‘so fed up’ she agreed to entertain me and my ‘marketing and customer service mumbo jumbo’.

The questions I sent her are below. If you’re positioned at the management level of an organisation plagued with customer service issues, answer these questions and see what you uncover.

She scored 75% – ordinarily a decent enough score, but this time, not so much. She answered no/don’t know/not always to 75% of the questions! The only positive: the girls at the front desk got a respite. Albeit brief.

This exercise made my friend realise that:

- She’d been blaming the frontline staff for some situations they probably had very little control over
- Changing the staff would not necessarily solve her customer service issues
- She needed to take a holistic approach to evaluating and solving her customer service issues

I recommended an organisational audit as a first step en route to understanding her company’s situation – she needed to appreciate the behaviours and structures influencing performance. And in the spirit of shameless self-promotion, I reminded her that I knew the perfect ‘marketing and customer service mumbo jumbo’ company for the job.

Questions	Yes	No	Don’t Know/Not Always/Not sure
1. Do you consider customer needs above internal needs when deciding on systems/procedures/policies?			
2. Are your employees generally happy/satisfied with the organisation?			
3. Do employees believe in the organisation’s products/services?			
4. Do employees get enough time off?			
5. Are employees empowered to resolve customers’ problems?			
6. Do employees have sufficient training/guidance to do their jobs?			
7. Do employees feel that they are fairly compensated?			
8. Are sufficient resources (including functioning equipment/machinery) provided to complete jobs?			

Questions	Yes	No	Don't Know/Not Always/Not sure
9. Do managers and supervisors at your organization perform exemplarily when handling customers and their issues?			
10. Is your organization's culture customer-centric?			
11. Do lower level employees feel supported by management?			
12. Do you have enough workers to carry out the job at hand?			
13. Do employees feel valued/appreciated by the organisation?			
14. Do all departments work together for the good of the customer?			
15. Do you have a system to help you recruit the best people for the job?			
16. Do you know how your customers generally perceive you?			

