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CUSTOMER SERVICE TECHNOLOGY IS A KEY FOR CUSTOMER LOYALTY: A CASE OF MSRTC.

Theme: Interface of IT in Public road transportation Services

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ABSTRACT: *The world has become a global village today. No geographical boundaries can stop the business from acquiring new customer from every corner of the world. At the same time there is a tremendous growth in competition. Keeping in mind the huge opportunity in the market and continuous threat of competition, Businesses can use information technology as a tool for attaining as well as retaining customers. More companies are using technology to handle customer service in an efficient and cost-effective way. Here's how you can use data management and analytics and insight-driven marketing to improve your customer care systems. There is no denying the fact that customer service is important to a small or mid-sized business. The quality of that service will either enhance or degrade customer loyalty to your brand and your business. With the economy in recession, customers have more alternatives than ever. The business that proves to be responsive to customer questions, complaints, or other needs can gain a clear competitive advantage. That's why it's so important to understand how new technologies can help you anticipate customer needs, tailor business processes to best serve customers, and ultimately improve the efficiency of your business – the latter of which can keep costs down. In this Article we have focused on importance of customer service technology for building and enhancing customer loyalty in general and how customer service technology can be used to build customer loyalty among customers of MSRTC.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Customer service changes and improves sometimes through the application of technology or other resources as much as through changes in behavior of those delivering the service. Whilst these changes can bring real benefits they inevitably come at an initial cost which must be taken into consideration. This paper is about the process of managing the application of technology or other resources to a customer service process. It involves a systematic approach to considering and evaluating options, implementing the most appropriate and reviewing the results.

1.1 Information technology (IT)

Information technology (IT) is the application of computers and telecommunications equipment to store, retrieve, transmit and manipulate data, often in the context of a business or other enterprise. The term is commonly used as a

synonym for computers and computer networks, but it also encompasses other information distribution technologies such as television and telephones. Several industries are associated with information technology, such as computer hardware, software, electronics, semiconductors, internet, telecom equipment, e-commerce and computer services.

Humans have been storing, retrieving, manipulating and communicating information since the Sumerians in Mesopotamia developed writing in about 3000 BC, but the term "information technology" in its modern sense first appeared in a 1958 article published in the *Harvard Business Review*; authors Harold J. Leavitt and Thomas L. Whisler commented that "the new technology does not yet have a single established name. We shall call it information technology (IT)."

2. Using IT as a Customer Service Technology

There are a few major areas in which technology now is able to help provide key advantages to businesses in engendering

customer loyalty by improving customer service:

2.1 Websites. Providing areas on your website where customers can answer their own questions or seek answers from others.

2.2E-mail. Using e-mail as a way to improve customer service and more quickly respond to certain needs or help requests.

2.3 Communications. Unifying communications so that you know that the customer who left a voice mail also sent an e-mail with the same request a few days ago.

2.4 Software. Better managing customer relationships with more sophisticated data-gathering

3. Giving Customers What They Want, When They Want It

The goal of your business in terms of its customer interactions is to generate loyalty. There's no better way to do that than to offer quality products and services and to be responsive to your customers. But as new technologies have come to market to make it easier for businesses to provide customer service, they may also be increasing the number of channels through which you interact with customers and the complexity of those interactions. Accenture, the technology consulting firm, suggests that businesses that want to use technology to raise the quality of their customer service focus on the following:

3.1 Data management and analytics. Using data collected from customer to analyze their preferences.

3.2 Insight-driven marketing. Gaining insights into your business from customer data so you can more effectively target marketing.

3.3 Marketing automation. Streamlining and automating business processes to improve efficiency and keep costs low.

3.4 Self-service optimization. Finding ways for customers to interact with your business when they want.

3.5 Workforce effectiveness. Encouraging your staff to embrace new ways improving customer treatment by providing tools and training to deliver better service.

4 Process of Customer Service Improvement using customer service technology

4.1 Identify and specify opportunities for customer service improvement.

- a. Monitor developments in technology and the use of other resources to improve customer service
- b. Review customer service delivery systems with specific reference to use of resources and technology
- c. Identify opportunities and options for improving customer service by applying technology or other resources
- d. Analyse the customer service benefits that could result from options for improvement
- e. Specify the changes in technology or other resources needed to deliver the options

4.2 Evaluate options for applying technology or other resources to improve customer service.

a. Identify the options for improving customer service with the application of technology or other resources *

b. Establish the costs associated with each option for improving customer service

c. List and where possible quantify the benefits from each option for improving customer service

d. Estimate the affordability of each option to improve customer service

e. Recommend the most appropriate options for implementation

f. Identify the probable effects of any recommended changes on your organisation's service offer and customer perceptions *

g. Plan a business case to support your recommendations for improvements through application of technology or other resources

4.3 Oversee the implementation of resource changes to improve customer service.

a. Plan implementation using details of agreed developments to improve customer service

b. Brief every concerned employee in the organisation about the implementation of customer service improvements and the expected benefits

c. Monitor implementation of customer service improvements and the expected benefits

d. Review implementation of customer service improvements with every concerned employee.

e. Make appropriate adjustments to implementation of customer service improvements as a result of review

5. Use of Customer Service Technology in MSRTC

MSRTC (Maharashtra State Road Transport corporation)

The Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation is established by State Government of Maharashtra as per the provision in Section 3 of RTC Act 1950. The M.S.R.T. Corporation is operating its services by the approved scheme of Road Transport Published vide Notification MVA 3173/30303-XIIA dated 29.11.1973 in the official gazette. The area covered by the scheme is entire area of the State of Maharashtra. The undertaking is operating stage and contract carriage services in the entire area of the state of Maharashtra except S.T. undertaking defined under Section 68 A (b) of M. V. Act and other exception published in the scheme. First bus having been flagged off from the Pune to Ahmednagar in 1948. It's a story that had a hesitant beginning, with many people then not giving the State Transport (ST) bus service more than a couple of years of existence. Standing today by this milestone of 65 years, its position of strength speaks for itself - 16,000-odd buses, 1,10,000 employees, about 70 lakh citizens utilizing the service daily.

In the context of liberalization, globalization and privatization policy adopted by Government of India, cutthroat competition has to be faced by MSRTC. To attain and retain customers is a question

of survival for MSRTC today. Therefore MSRTC should use Customer service technology effectively to develop customer loyalty; we have suggested some of the ways how customer service technology would be useful for MSRTC.

5.1 Provide Right Information to Right Passenger at Right Time

As the information around us becomes ever denser, access to high quality facts has gained increasing importance. Within MSRTC environments, effective provision and access to information shifts greater control to the customer. That in turn enables them to make informed decisions about their commute, helps them manage their time and experience.

5.2 Use of Information Technology in MSRTC’s Ticket Management system



Fare dodgers could be automatically flagged without the hassle of everyone validating their tickets. (Source: Infostructure/Oliver Petrie)

The project entitled **Forward Motion** proposes a station environment where digital technologies are seamlessly integrated with the building fabric to enable an innovative mode of ticket validation for public transport users. It can be used at departure and arrival stations by MSRTC.

Described as the “shame security system,” and comprising **Radio Frequency Identification Detectors (RFID)**, a multi-touch sensor system and LED lighting integrated within the flooring, the system detects a customer’s presence, and automatically communicates with their RFID embedded ticket. Or it automatically red-flags those trying to evade paying their fare.

The efficiency of the system primarily lies in the sensor activated ticket validation eliminating the physical act of stamping, tapping or swiping a ticket.

5.3 Updating in real time for passengers of MSRTC.

The mobile phone application designs demonstrate the convenience of access to location-based real time information. Not only does this information travel with you, but it can also be responsive to other context specific information as your

environment changes.

The digital technologies featured here are in many cases already operational in small and large scale applications. RFID technology is used for public transport ticketing in London with the **Oyster** card, Hong Kong’s **Octopus** system, and in San Francisco’s **Clipper** cards. It’s also used for facial recognition with biometric data integrated into passports and augmented reality information applications on many smart phones.

So these technologies are not new, but developments in how they are manufactured and their cost suggest new and innovative applications.

5.4 The challenges to change

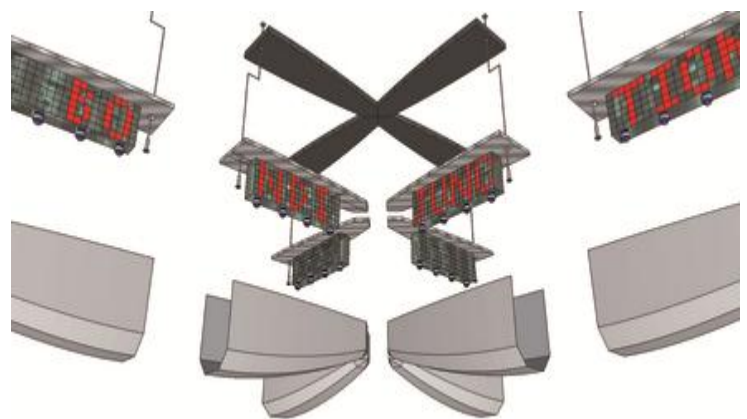
The implementation of urban digital media design-based concepts within the public transport arena is both critically relevant and challenging as operational area of MSRTC is very large and customer base is very diverse.

Any changes to MSRTC transport networks have to be managed carefully. Their sheer scale and public nature means the system must remain operable, well maintained and managed. This is a key constraint to implementing new technologies.

While mobile phone applications circumvent some of the risk and cost constraints, coordination, management and quality of data content sourced from multiple stakeholders can also inhibit implementation.

In each of the scenarios mentioned above, consideration needs to be given to the varying cognitive and interactive capabilities of all users of MSRTC.

5.5 Designing a better travel experience for MSRTC passengers.



Bus stations could become a lot smarter in the future, and help guide you to where you need to be. (Source: Infostructure /Christian Moi)

The integration of digital media technologies with broader design solutions for public transport environments provides opportunities to simultaneously address both operational and customer experience issues. The design of a Bus station – its architecture and the way it defines space, has the potential to operate “informationally.” That means surfaces such as the wall, floor or

ceiling have the possibility to both transmit and receive information. They can become responsive to the user, and therefore focused on the customer.

5.6 Satellite Automated Public System (SAPS) for transit systems

Allows public vehicles like buses to have a real time tracking with playback of previous routes, alerts of urgency, route building, estimated time of arrival to stops, speed, and many others that allow users and dispatchers to know what is happening in real time with the transit system.

5.7 Automated Passenger Information System (APIS)

The automated passenger information system provides riders the necessary tools to use the public service and plan ahead their time with the easy to use online route planner and estimated time of arrival of the public vehicles. MSRTC can use it very effectively.

5.8 Arrival Forecast system

With this system MSRTC can make the promise of mass transit a reality by informing passengers when their bus in route is due to arrival. These and other features ensure customer satisfaction by keeping passengers informed and in control of their own time.

5.9 Route Management & Analytic Reports

This system can manage fixed-route and variable route bus service, define and edit bus routes, fuel efficiency and analyze on-time performance.

5.10 Anti-Bunching System

This system would give MSRTC, total control over bus fleet routing system with Anti-Bunching System, reducing passengers' frustration and operating costs. MSRTC Host Mobile could provide In-Cabin Solution bringing the ultimate control over the public system operation.

6. Conclusion

Information technology leads to customer service technology which will identify needs, wants, desires and demands of customers more effectively and efficiently this is going to be helpful for organizations to attain customers. Providing better product, better process and better service will help to retain the customers. In long term Customer loyalty could be built successfully by organizations. MSRTC, definitely can fight with competition and retain their customers with the help of customer service technology. And these ideas may not be too far away from becoming a reality. Improving the spatial and visual user information technologies for public transport will start very soon. Stand by for your daily commute to get a lot smarter.

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