

## Closing the perfection gap in service

Excellence happens when you identify a gap and can close that gap. Let me give you an example of how a company I did some work with reject orthodoxy to do that.

The company sold and serviced motorized equipment. As an independent distributor they had a little more autonomy in the way they could work with customers than the traditional big company distributor.

The big company wanted to be very good at customer service and to know where it stood it so it conducted surveys of its customers. The down side was how the big company used the survey data that came back; they did not use it well.

### Situation

The big company having decided it wanted to have good customer service then decided to set a target of 4.5 out of 5 as the minimum score each dealership should score. If a dealership scored less than the required 4.5 management were called in and admonished for their performance. This resulted in pressure then being exerted on the sales people to ensure they always got 5 star feedback.

This management pressure then resulted with the sales persons on completion of the sale pressuring the customer to give 5 star feedback. This often put the customer in the uncomfortable position of giving dishonest feedback or letting down the salesperson. Alternatively the sales person would handout extras like company jackets or during negotiations throw in extras such as free serving to achieve the critical 4.5 average score.

The end result was the big company got its average 4.5 star score but not the level or type or customer service it wanted.

### The solution

The client wanting to genuinely improve customer service did much the opposite. It asked for customer feedback but never expected or even wanted 5 star feedback. What it wanted to know was where the gaps were and so asked where the service gaps were. And when it got that feedback it celebrated it as an opportunity to improve. Customers giving feedback on service were called back by the manager and thanked for their honesty and additional feedback.

### Results

The client gained a true picture of its problems and where opportunities existed. These were systematically tackled and customer service improved in meaningful ways for the customer in turn improving customer retention and profitability. The client estimated the initiative added about 5% to company volumes.