Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Acquisition and Cataloguing Processes: Changes as a Result of Customer Value Discovery Research

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Abstract

Objective - This study seeks to highlight the profound effect of Customer Value Discovery research on the internal business processes of two university libraries in the areas of cataloguing and acquisitions.

Methods - In this project, "Customer Discovery Workshops" with academic staff, students, and university stakeholders provided library managers and staff with information on what services and resources were of value to customers. The workshops also aimed to discover what features of existing library services and resources irritated the students, staff, and faculty. A student satisfaction survey assessed longer-term impact of library changes to students in one university.

Results - The findings resulted in significant changes to collection development, acquisitions, and cataloguing processes. A number of value added services were introduced for the customer. The project also resulted in greater speed and efficiency in dealing with collection development, acquisitions, and cataloguing by the introduction of more technology-enhanced services. Overall customer satisfaction was improved during the project period.

Conclusion - The changes to services introduced as a result of customer feedback also improved relationships between librarians and their university community, through the introduction of a more proactive and supportive service.

Introduction

The role of a library director is to establish a vision, based on knowing where a service ought to be heading, and then to allow staff to make the vision become a reality. This is easily said, but quite a bit harder to implement. What should our vision be? This paper describes how customer feedback has been collected and used as the basis for establishing a vision of excellence for the library.

This paper describes a case study where customer feedback was used to effect changes in acquisitions and cataloguing processes in academic libraries. The case study draws on the results and changes made over a number of years following Customer Value Discovery research undertaken in two universities (Deakin University Library, Australia and Nottingham Trent University, UK). The paper builds on a presentation to the 'Exploring Acquisitions Conference' held in Cambridge in April 2007, and it focuses on those actions that resulted from the research that impacted on acquisitions and cataloguing.

Enzyme International (<http://www.enzymeinternational.com.au/>) served as an external facilitator and provided analysis of data gathered from the Customer Value Discovery (CVD) research used to drive change at both universities.

Objectives

The aim of the research was to gather data that would be used by library management to ensure that service and resource delivery within the organisation are aligned to the actual needs of the customer. Evidence from the research regarding perceptions of current value delivered, when compared to what customers desire, provides a gap analysis.

By ascertaining hierarchies of 'value' and 'irritation,' priorities for action can then be developed to inform operational planning, service standards, key performance indicators, and individual work objectives.

Over time, after implementing changes based on results of the Customer Value Discovery research, it will be possible to re-test to determine whether the service is increasing customer value, reducing customer irritation, and closing the gap between actual and desired performance against the original datasets.

Methods

The Customer Value Discovery Process
Researchers used Customer Value Discovery (CVD) methods to gather data on customer needs. CVD is based on a model known as the Hierarchy of Value (Albrecht, 2000). Its continuum describes the potential experiences of interactions between customers and service providers.

In a service industry, such as a library, all interactions, either with a staff member, a resource (e.g., book), or a service (e.g., Web page) can both satisfy and irritate a customer at the same time. The aim is to *consistently* deliver on the *basic and expected* services, and to deliver *desired and unexpected* services (but not at the expense of neglecting the basic/expected services) and doing these without causing irritation to the customer. While simple to explain, it is not so easy to implement on a consistent basis, for all services, at all campuses.
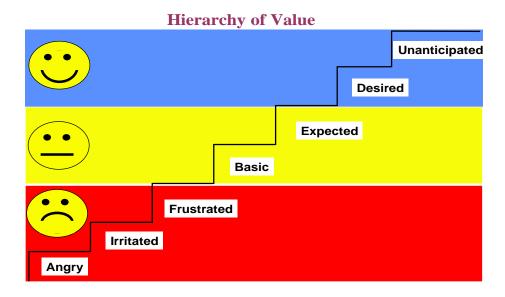
Hierarchy of Value

Figure 1. Hierarchy of Value ©: Enzyme International (Aust.)

Customer Discovery Workshops
The process of customer value discovery research involves holding 'customer discovery' workshops with customer/market segments (e.g. undergraduate on-campus students, post-graduate researchers, distance learners, mature students, or academic staff). The goal of the workshops is first to ascertain what irritates these customer groups about existing services and resources and, second, to determine how they would define an excellent service. The participants in the workshops are then asked to rate their perceptions of the current services against the ideal service levels.
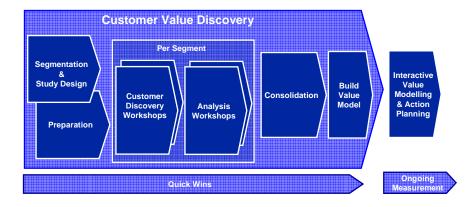
Analysis and Consolidation
Following the customer discovery workshop, which is held in the morning, a facilitated Analysis workshop is held in the afternoon to thematically arrange the irritants that were identified at the customer value discovery workshop. Once all customer value discovery workshops have been held,

a Consolidation workshop is conducted with all the staff who observed the workshops, plus library managers. At both the Analysis and Consolidation workshops, staff delve into the individual customer comments that have been thematically arranged and assigned a topic classification. This process allows everyone to be clear of the meanings and intentions, even if they did not personally attend a particular workshop.

Interactive Value Modelling
Through a process called Interactive Value Modelling, all the staff observers and manager participants use mathematical modelling software to model how value (or satisfaction) is improved and irritations reduced if certain actions are taken. By using the Interactive Value Modelling technique, priorities for further action can be established, based on top-level assumptions about how to respond to customer feedback. McKnight describes further details about Interactive Value Modelling.

"Customer" refers to a target group

Figure 2. Customer Value Discovery Process (Enzyme International)

This research was conducted between 1996 and 2003 at Deakin University, a multi-campus higher education institution with libraries in Melbourne, Geelong and Warrnambool, Australia with a number of different customer segments. It was repeated in 2005 at Nottingham Trent University (NTU) in the U.K. with undergraduate on-campus students and academic staff. Over 70 students and 50 academic staff participated in the workshops held on NTU's three campuses. One-on-one interviews with academic staff were conducted at the smallest campus, using the same workshop methodology and workbook.

Longer-term impact was assessed at NTU using a student satisfaction survey**.** In 2005 3,492 students completed the survey; and another group of 5,611 students completed the survey in 2007. These surveys, the first held two months after the Customer Value Discovery research was undertaken, enabled comparison of the data from the CVD process with the formal survey. There was close alignment in results between the two groups; however, the CVD process provided more detailed data on which to act. The NTU student satisfaction surveys also enabled a longitudinal study to ascertain whether satisfaction had improved as a result of initiatives introduced after the CVD.

Results
Results of the workshops held at both universities are combined in the following tables in order to illustrate the type of evidence obtained and how it was used.

Values and Irritations
The Customer Value Discovery research process provides hierarchies of students' Values and Irritations to help with decision making. Below are examples, however, the identification of the particular library is not given.
The highest value or irritation is given a value of 100%, and the others are expressed as percentages of the highest ranked item. Graphical examples of the Hierarchy of
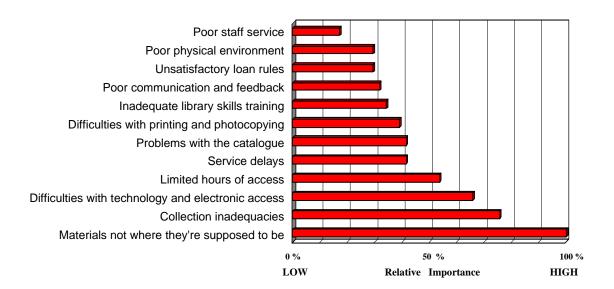
Hierarchy of Irritants - Students

Figure 3. Hierarchy of Irritants, Students

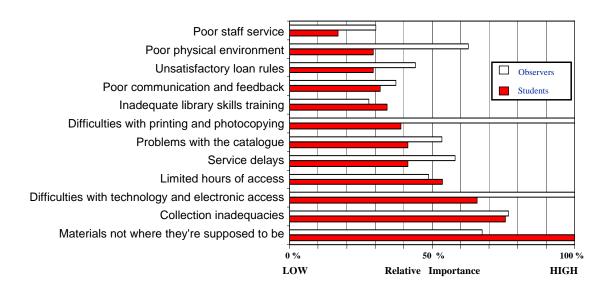**Hierarchy of Irritants - Students - Gaps**

Figure 4. Hierarchy of Irritants, Students, Gaps

Values	Irritations
Easy access to materials where and when I need them.	Cannot find materials I need. Problems with the catalogue.
Resources are comprehensive, available, and relevant.	Inadequacy of the collection and its management.
Academic staff and librarians have a proactive partnership.	Inadequate academic liaison and communication.
	Lack of training and support when I need it.
Reliable up-to-date technology and facilities are available.	Unreliable, limited information technology facilities.
Library hours of operation meet user needs (physical access and availability of electronic services).	Library operating hours are inadequate.
User friendly loans policies and procedures.	Restrictive and difficult loan policies and practices.

Table 1. Consolidated Values and Irritations

Irritations and the Hierarchy of Irritation – Gaps are presented in Figures 3 and 4. Figure 3 shows that the lowest rated irritation for students was poor staff service, and the highest rated irritation resulted from materials not being where they were supposed to be. The Gaps charts show the differences between how customers voted and how the staff assumed the customers would vote.

Figure 4 illustrates that the views of the librarian observers differed from the views of the students in a majority of areas. For example, library staff believed that poor staff service and difficulties with printing, photocopying, and electronic access would be more irritating than students actually perceived them to be. In contrast, students were most irritated by materials not being where they were supposed to be.

Changing Acquisitions and Related Processes
With regard to the changing acquisition and cataloguing processes from the two university libraries, Table 1 contains the *consolidated* list of relevant Values and Irritations

Values and irritations related to loan policies and physical library opening hours are related to acquisitions and cataloguing issues. This is because restrictive loans of short loan and reserve collection items and decisions about whether to acquire multiple copies of in-demand books, or whether to provide digital access to resources are determined by acquisitions and cataloguing policies and practices.

Basic Transactions
The responses to this customer feedback are also a combination of actions undertaken (or

planned) as a result of the research. Not every action mentioned can be attributed to both libraries.

Referring to the diagram of Hierarchy of Value (Figure 1), staff identified the need to provide a consistent level of service for all customers on all campuses. It was evident that some inconsistency in service was due to the availability of staff on a particular campus. Irritations were tied to problems of maintaining workflows at busy times, and failure to do so resulted in backlogs (e.g. orders not processed; reading lists not checked) or failure to deliver services (e.g. alerts for new books in a given discipline). It was decided to automate certain basic

transactions that would provide valuable staff time to undertake planning and delivery of value-added services. Automating certain transactions also helped to reduce identified irritations.

Automation of Basic Transactions
Table 2 summarizes the automated services implemented following the CVD process. It was estimated at one of the libraries that the new services replaced 70%-80% of the work in a traditional library 'technical services' department.

By changing the way these transactions and services were delivered, the library service was able to deliver a consistent level of

Initiative	Outcome
Online selection basket for collection development	This enabled academic staff to use online selection services and to easily identify items for purchase consideration. The request lists were automatically sent to Acquisitions, saving time and providing accurate machine-readable records for creation of orders.
Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) for ordering, invoicing, and payments	The introduction of EDI enabled significant efficiency gains. The elimination of: paper records, postage and handling costs, time delays, and manual payments of orders benefited the library, the finance department, and the vendor. It also sped up the acquisitions process, reducing the time from order to shelf.
Copy Cataloguing	Accepting copy cataloguing records with book items reduced time in the cataloguing department, sped up delivery of new items to the shelves, and freed cataloguers' time for other work. Cataloguers were able to use the extra time to focus on cataloguing grey literature, thus making more items accessible to customers.
Shelf-Ready Books	Transferring this end-processing activity to the supplier eliminated a basic, but non-value added activity from the technical services operations.
Exception claiming rather than manually checking everything	With a highly automated acquisitions system, it is possible to let the system do the order checking. This

	required a modicum of cultural change, as the past practices of checking were entrenched, and staff had to learn to 'let go.' However, the standard of service did not slip.
System reporting and statistics	Cessation of maintaining manual spreadsheets freed up time. System generated reports and graphs were regarded as trusted.
Vendor records used as order slips	Academic staff did not have to complete order forms; the order slips had the needed information; and acquisitions staff no longer had to decipher difficult handwriting.
System alerts for new publications	Academic staff and liaison librarians were pushed information on new items, thus removing their need to schedule dedicated time for checking.
Filters used to create individual staff profiles	Academic staff and liaison librarians were pushed information on new items, thus removing their need to schedule dedicated time for checking.
Approval Plans; Blanket Orders; Standing Orders	These provide quick ways to ensure ordering of important new works. They eliminate the chance of missing a 'must have' publication that matches the library's profile, and they save significant selection time when the library collects 'everything' in a specific discipline/genre/category.
Ability to track orders online	Academic staff and liaison librarians can check the status of their orders without requiring acquisitions staff intervention.
New order lists/books just received lists	Academic staff and liaison librarians can be advised of new receipts without requiring acquisitions staff intervention.

Table 2. Initiatives implemented following the CVD process

service, with reduced timeframes, without requiring additional staffing resources. Many of the irritations that had been identified were eliminated, thus improving customer satisfaction. Some innovations, such as Electronic Data Interchange (used for processing digital orders, invoices, and payments), revolutionised the handling of what had previously been manual and time-consuming transactions. However, a number of changes had to be negotiated with other parts of the organisation (e.g., in the case of EDI, the library had to work with the University Finance Department and the Internal Auditor, to ensure appropriate checks and balances and an audit trail

would be maintained) and with library staff. Cataloguers, in particular, were involved in decision-making regarding copy cataloguing, and liaison and acquisition librarians were involved with changes to blanket orders and approval plans.

Value Adding 'Wow' Services
Implementing many automated backroom processes freed professional time both for technical services staff and for academic liaison. As a result, value added services were implemented without requiring additional resources.

New value added services resulted in the implementation of a more proactive collection development programme. Vendor lists were utilized to aid recommendations for new orders, and vendor alert messages helped staff learn about new publications. This reduced an irritant of 'not having time to search for new items' and also made collection development more efficient. Filters that delivered advice on new publications in identified disciplines, combined with greater use of approval plans and blanket orders, meant that the collection was enhanced with little additional effort for the academic staff or liaison librarians.

A major thrust in both libraries concerned changes in handling short-term loan items and recommended reading lists. Resulting innovations focused on digitising short loan items (while conforming to relevant copyright laws), thus making these items available 24/7 to students and removing their need to visit the library in person. The students were delighted with the improved service, with links imbedded from the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) as well as from the library catalogue and reading list module. The changes also provided liaison librarians with more time in their working days, and enabled them to conceive and implement projects relating to

improving access to reading list material. In addition, the physical space of the short loan collection was significantly reduced, freeing space for other purposes. The labour requirement for managing the reserve items was significantly reduced, freeing staff resources for other value added endeavours.

Students, in particular, were demanding more digital resources in response to making information resources available 'when and from wherever I need them.' Undergraduate students identified the need for more full-text journal articles, rather than additional digital bibliographic citation services. They also wanted to make the searching of the libraries' myriad e-journal collections more user-friendly. The result was not only more full-text e-journals, but also the implementation of federated searching solutions that enabled the majority of digital resources to be cross-searched with a single search strategy. Further, linking the full-text search results with licensed resources provided by the library significantly increased access to valued information, thus adding value for customers (and reducing irritation). Adding links to full-text resources also maximized asset utilization, in accounting terms, by increasing the use of resources already available to library customers.

The implementation of e-book platforms and services has also resulted in a value added service, in that books, as well as journal articles, can be available 24/7. NTU is participating in a trial (UK National e-books observatory project) that provides a number of online textbooks to the UK higher education community and provides significantly improved access to the chosen textbook resources in four nominated disciplines for the duration of the trial (JISC).

Another value added service introduced several years ago was the introduction of enhanced cataloguing records with table of

contents information and thumbnail images of book dust jackets. This innovation resulted in contents of books and conference proceedings, in particular, being more accessible to customers, because catalogue access had been expanded to include chapter headings and chapter authors.

Copy cataloguing originally reduced work for librarians, but additional value added services have since been identified that use librarians' new-found time. Instead of focusing expertise on AACRII cataloguing rules, librarians' skills were broadened to incorporate the application of metadata standards for digital object repositories, a new value added service that fulfills an unmet demand of academic staff customers, in particular. In addition, as mentioned in the table of basic services, leveraging original cataloguing expertise to make special collection resources and grey literature accessible provided a value added service that previously could not be readily afforded. Not only did customers gain access to valuable resources via institutional digital repositories and special collections, the institution increased its reputation through its scholarly, unique, and research-based collections.

A final value added service related to the impact of actions resulting from the customer value discovery research, has been in the area of knowledge and information management. From the experience of listening to customers' desires and needs, and providing space for, and encouraging, strategic thinking, the role of the librarian in facilitating debate and action on institutional practices regarding knowledge and information management was an added bonus. In many ways, identifying the need to provide digital object repositories for a variety of content types fuelled thinking about overall knowledge management. Information links were easily identified: Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

needs of the institution *and* the relationship with virtual library reference services; help desk services, CRMs and library inquiry services *and* virtual reference services; protecting institutional intellectual property *and* the link to library managed copyright compliance systems. All these are examples of the inter-connectedness of library services and expertise with wider institutional issues and contexts.

Longer term impact and follow-up

All these changes did not happen immediately, but there were several quick successes. However, the sustained cultural change that resulted from listening to customers meant that innovation flourished and customer satisfaction improved.

Table 3 uses results from Nottingham Trent University's student satisfaction survey, conducted in 2007 to demonstrate that the library's satisfaction rating shows a marked increase in satisfaction levels. This can be attributed to the initiatives undertaken as a result of the detailed 2005 research.

Discussion

Value/Uniqueness of the CVD Process

There are four major aspects to the Customer Value Discovery research that set it apart from other quality and customer satisfaction surveys. First, library staff participate in the workshops as silent observers, but they vote as they assume the customers will vote regarding irritations, frequency of irritations, values, and current performance.

Hearing customers' comments directly and listening to their interactions with the facilitator, can be a powerful experience for library staff. This is an intensely personal, and at times emotional, experience, especially when staff members are confronted by adverse comments on

Library Services/Resources	2005 % actively satisfied	2007 % actively satisfied	Change
Library website	73%	81%	+8%
Opening hours	70%	76%	+6%
Helpful and accessible staff	67%	74%	+7%
Access to printers/ photocopiers	55%	73%	+18%
Availability of study places	64%	73%	+9%
Availability of e-journals and databases	66%	70%	+4%
Range of e-journals and databases	61%	69%	+8%
Range of books	61%	65%	+4%
Range of printed journals	61%	64%	+3%
Availability of PCs in libraries	48%	63%	+15%
Noise levels	52%	62%	+10%
Training and support for students in using library facilities	57%	61%	+4%
Range of audio and visual materials	61%	59%	-2%
Availability of books and materials from reading lists	47%	53%	+6%
Loan periods	52%	57%	+5%

Table 3. 2005-2007 Nottingham Trent University Library Student Satisfaction Survey Comparison

services for which they are responsible. Compare this to receiving results from the university-wide student satisfaction surveys. Although such surveys provide feedback on specific library services, the data is devoid of any immediate, personal impact upon library staff. It is far removed from their experience of actually hearing what students were thinking when they commented in the Customer Value Discovery workshop.

A second unique aspect of the CVD process is that feedback is generated in terms used by customers, because the facilitator starts with a blank piece of paper. The process involves completing workbook exercises that use open-ended questions, visioning a future that is successful, and then prioritising the major values and irritants into thematic sets. This allows customers to decide which services, resources, values,

and irritants they want to consider; they are not influenced by librarians' assumptions about which library services they consider important.

Third, by using workbooks, every participant in the customer value discovery workshops has an equal voice. The participants work in silence in their workbooks and prioritize their own comments, which are then transferred to sticky notes and used to create thematic sets of issues. This way, no one individual is able to dominate the process and discussions, as sometimes happens in focus groups and other discussion forums.
The fourth significant aspect of CVD research is that the process of analyzing and consolidating feedback from all workshops provides another opportunity to engage staff in the change process. All librarian

observers and their managers participate in the analysis to ensure understanding about customer perceptions, and to gain buy-in to follow-up actions. It becomes a change process that is influenced by customers and led by staff responsible for delivering services and resources. It is not a management-directed approach to change, but a staff initiated change. As such, it has a greater chance of success because of the personal and local commitment to changes being suggested.

It is the combination of these factors that constitute the building blocks for delivering customer value. Change management is more easily facilitated because staff are given the opportunity to understand the needs of their customers, and to realize that their assumptions about what customers require or how customers rate the performance of the library is not always accurate. Also, library staff can influence how the library responds to the customer value discovery research through active engagement and project work. As a result of the process, staff members are more likely to be committed to making changes in their own work practices to reduce or eliminate irritants and to implement value added services and resources.

Cultural and Organisational Change
By automating many basic transactions and introducing services now possible due to the power of technology (such as new title alerts), many irritations were eliminated and, in some cases, the resultant service was initially considered novel or 'wow'. The problem, if it can be called that, of consistently delivering value added services, is that these, over time, are no longer considered new or exciting and become expected, basic services. So the bar is always being lifted on delivering value added and unexpected service delivery delights.

The process of engaging staff as observers in the customer discovery workshops, and involving an even larger number of staff in deciding what actions might reduce irritation and add value as a result of customer feedback, has the impact of encouraging 'change seeking' (Wilson; Pieters and Young) behaviour. This effort at continuous quality improvement requires staff to be constantly on the lookout for new or better ways of delivering value to the customer. This is important because customer expectations are always changing in response to the wider environment, and their expectations of service delivery increases as they experience other, but related services. What is value adding today will be basic and expected service in the near future.

Had implementation of changes and efficiencies meant an immediate reduction in staffing levels, the process would likely have failed, as there would be too much fear and distrust to engage in the process of customer consultation. Therefore, it was important from the outset to advise staff about the parameters of the exercise. In both cases, staff members were reassured that no redundancies would result, but that, over time, it was anticipated that staffing levels would either reduce or that the focus of staffing would change. When vacancies arose, these were to be assessed in regard to the implementation of the overall plan of action that had been developed in light of the customer value research. For instance, efficiencies in technical services meant savings could be realigned to providing more value added services in areas dealing directly with library customers. The implementation of self-service technology enabled the staffing budget to move from circulation attendants to liaison librarians.

The need to let go of some long-undertaken practices, as identified before, was challenging. However, before decisions

were finalized, site visits to other libraries that had changed similar practices reassured staff that dire outcomes were unlikely, for instance, if manual checks for outstanding orders were not undertaken. It was found that most items were received from the supplier within a reasonable time and automatic alerts at, say 60 days overdue, were sufficient to identify a problem item.

Similarly, different work, and often more professionally stimulating work, materialised to fill newly created gaps in the working day. For example, cataloguers were professionally challenged with metadata as well as traditional cataloguing rules.

Some people are adverse to change and staff development training was needed, especially in regard to the psychology of change management (coping with change), customer service (ensuring the needs of the customer are foremost), and team work (participating fully in project work, often across organisational boundaries to identify ways to add value and reduce irritation). Most staff welcomed the opportunities provided to gain additional skills.

Breaking down organisational silos was another outcome of the customer value discovery research. The staff and students involved in the customer value discovery workshops are not aware of the discrete services of the various providers involved in the service chain. They do not see academic staff requesting a book, a liaison librarian approving the order, an acquisitions assistant creating the order, the clerk who receives items delivered by the supplier, the cataloguer, end-processors or shelvers in the value added chain of events needed to place a new book on the shelves. They simply see 'the library' or more likely 'the university.' Therefore, the importance of teamwork in facilitating services that do not irritate and that add value is a key to the library's

success. Proactive partnerships developed across the library's different departments, and within the academic community, as sharing of knowledge, expertise and understanding increased as a result of project work that resulted from customer value discovery research exercises.

An unanticipated result of these exercises has been the identification of new ways of working that have meant more organisational change, as isolated workflows, when taken as a combined process map of service delivery, identified better ways of working. For instance, separate teams of staff working on books and journal orders were merged into a multi-skilled team in one library.

Conclusions

The examples given in this paper represent evidence based practice at work. The CVD process was conducted between 1996 and 2003 at Deakin University with different customer segments, and in 2005 at NTU with undergraduate on-campus students and academic staff. The paper illustrates how information was obtained from customers and how it was used to implement change in cataloguing and acquisitions. Other customer service changes that resulted from the same research will be the subject of a future paper.

Would these changes have happened without Customer Value Discovery research? In some instances, the answer would have to be 'Yes.' However, at what pace would these changes have been achieved? The contention in this paper is that the process of engaging customers and library staff in focused activities aimed at delivering customer value considerably speeds the process of change.

In other instances, the answer is perhaps a 'Maybe' or more likely a 'No.' The pain of listening to customers describe a less than

optimal service, and customers who describe situations that, when explained from a customer perspective, make no sense at all but fall into the category of 'we have always done it this way' are profound experiences that challenge every practice, not just the ones critically described. 'Sacred cows' can be challenged.

Success breeds success. In the United Kingdom National Student (Satisfaction) Survey, NTU improved its overall ranking in the library-related section of the survey from 47th overall in 2006 to 34th in 2007, with a score of 83% satisfaction, against the 2007 sector average of 78%. Receiving significantly improved customer satisfaction ratings are very powerful tools to encourage more innovation in service delivery. Staff who receive tangible and positive feedback on the impact of their change strategies are more likely to continue to strive for service improvement.

The process of measuring customer satisfaction and gauging customer perceptions of value and irritation is an ongoing process. As already stated, what once were 'wow' services become basic services, so the bar continues to rise as time goes on. Further research to define the values and irritations for specific customer segments (e.g., off-campus students, part-time students, research staff) as opposed to broad customer groups (e.g., undergraduate on-campus students, academic staff) has led to more detailed information on which to base decisions regarding future service improvements.

The techniques of Customer Value Discovery described are unusual in the library and service environments, as the process was initially envisaged for commercial, profit-generating organizations (Austin). The great majority of organisations using this technique are large financial institutions and the retail sector. Therefore,

the use of this in a not-for-profit and service organisation has been groundbreaking.

The optimal situation for any library director, any director in fact, is to have staff members who actively seek change, not for the sake of change, but to add value to customers and to reduce irritations. There will always be irritations, and as the environment changes, services have to respond to changing needs, expectations, and possibilities. Customer Value Discovery research can be used as a tool for transformational leaders, as it enables a vision of excellence to be articulated, and engages staff to respond to feedback and work towards creating the future vision of excellence.

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