Improving Your Service Business

With SAP Business One

Content

Improving Your Service

A business's success is largely driven by customer perception, especially for service-oriented companies. While manufacturing companies are typically evaluated by the quality and performance of the product sold, service-oriented industries rely on customer satisfaction making it difficult to measure and allowing for greater area for subjectivity.

Discovering key elements to improve customer satisfaction while enhancing the business's bottomline can be troublesome. However, a well-thought-out business system and effective soft-ware makes business management and expansion effortless and stragihtforward.

Customers base their perception of a company on the quality of service given. Enhancing business efficiency is the most direct path to building and maintaining positive customer experiences.

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Key Areas that Prompt Calls for Help

Scheduling and tracking service calls are often key elements that prompt a re-examination of how a business is being conducted. Centralized systems that are easily accessible company-wide are vital, especially for sales and customer service.

Getting the right technician to the right plave to do the right service is crucial to positive customer service. Managing time and company materials to make sure that both are being used correctly is important to ensure a company's success.

Many companies have inefficient practices of maintaining their records; using spreadsheets, paper records, emails, and employee memory works temporarily but inhibits room for long-term growth.

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Problems that Impact the Ability to Grow

Flexibility is important in business. Providing customers with easy solutions in a timely manner prevents the need for expensive service calls in the future. Human ability is required when properly routing a service call and assessing the nature of the customer's problem. The larger the organization, the more challenging it is to set up a system with a connection strong enough to function throughout the entire company.

For example, service technicians work with pieces of equipment that have multiple serial-numbered components, each with different warranties. A successful software system needs to be able to track teh equipment and teh parts of that equipment. At larger companies, it is usually necessary to track the location of the equipment and have the ability to cope when it has been discovered that the equipment has changed locations.

Except when dealing with the proprietary equipment that services themselves, most service providers run in a highly competitive environment where factors, such as on-time performance, quality team members, impressive problem-solving, attentiveness to customer needs, and effective preventative maintenance programs, make all the difference.

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A comprehensive system allows the user to track repair calls and schedule/track preventative maintenance activites. Effective preventative benefits the customer by reducing the occurance of inconvenient failures during operations while benefiting the service provider through the opportunit for a recurring and predictable revenue source.

More powerful tools provided by a good software system are the ability to name and track trends, perform analysis of the trends, explore "what ifs" related to the given information and suggest ways to capitalize on presented opportunities. This includes tracking usage patterns and customer locations.

Bettering the Bottom Line

While increasing revenues through the growth of a satisfied base of customers is the best way to improve profitability, a good software system can also boost profitability by pointing out ways to be more efficient.

Analyses can give answers to questions, such as which pieces of equipment and which customers are most profitable. Which ones are more trouble than they are worth? Which service technicians are the most profitable and effective? Are repeated calls being made to solve the same problem or deal with the same piece of equipment?

With legacy systems or manual systems, the answers to these sorts of questions may only come at the end of the year or quarte, when the final numbers are in; in some cases, the answers are not readily available at all. Newer systems can provide real-time answers to those questions and immediate feedback adjustments are made.

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Typical Software and Hardware Tools to Help

A number of tools are available to help improve the service end of your business.

A customer relationship management module allows the company to keep track of the customer data and intergrate it with the rest of its business.

A service module, which is typically seperate from the CRM module, tracks equipment location and information, service calls for that equipment, materials used, warranties in effect, and preventative maintenance schedules.

Mobile tablets and smartphone apps make working on-site easier and allow service technicians to stay connected to the company's system while out of office.

Depending on the company's needs, other modules, such as inventory control, sales orders, purchasing, material planning, accounting, and financials are other items on the menu of modules that can enhance a company's operations.

It is beneficial for some companies to include mapping software integrated into the system to determine the correct technician for the job. Rather than relying on luck, the system can help identify the best team for the job.

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How LBSi Can Help

LBSi matches its customers with accomplished and successful partners to enable companies to reach their goals. Melink Corporation of Milford, Ohio is an excellent example of LBSi's success.

Melink Corporation provides green energy solutions for commercial buildings throughout North America. When the time came to replace their legacy software with integrated business software, they connected with LBSi to implement SAP Business One. Melink selected SAP Business One due to its superior project management and manufacturing planning functionality and quickly found the partner solution affordable with a rapid return on investment and streamlined integration, which worked to Melink's advantage.

LBSi and its partners faced the challenge of helping Melink meet a number of key challenges. Melink needed a solution that would support rapid growth with a single, reliable system and cut dupliacte data entry points for enhanced efficiency while streamlining tax compliance and enable real-time financial analyses. Integrating job costing and scheduling with the rest of corporate business systems was on the list of Melink's requirements to increase overall visibility into operations throughout the company.

With LBSi's help, Melink implemented the transition following the best practices to guarantee success. Thorough training and consistent focus on the successful migration of the data from the legacy systems to ther new system were organized to customize Melink's specific needs.

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How LBSi Can Help

This implementation resulted in measurable improvements in Melink's operations. Melink saw a 10% increase in the efficiency of transactional data entry with a savings of 4,500 hours of data entry work in the first year. There was a 15% decline in inventory on-hand and past-due accounts receivable. The company saw a 2% increase in product gross profit, thanks to price corrections that were identifies by the new system. Procedural and management improvements, such as increased visibility into operations, real-time financial analysis, better quality data, faster decisions, and improved customer service were made apparent after implementing SAP Business One. Melink was able to establish web-based access to over 250 customers and employees within the first year.

"With SAP Business One software, we can report on issues that we could never before quantify, which is a tremendous improvement," said Melink's vice president of accounting and finance. The new system improved analysis and decision-making abilities that led to a doubling of business in one year and the ability to plan and manage larger projects."

Is it your turn now?

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