

Mondial Case Study: Retail Sector



Customer Relationships Are Key

Client Challenge

The old adage says that 'the client is always right'. Although various teams, individuals and prominent authors in the retail sector may or may not agree with this statement, what is true is that client and overall stakeholder management is a key risk factor to anyone in the retail sector, and indeed as our experience has shown to many in a number of other sectors as well.

One of our clients, a major local retailer, became worried about various rumours and circumstantial 'evidence' that customers were increasingly unhappy with the company's service levels whilst a number of negative comments were increasingly featuring on various social media platforms as well. Mondial Consultants was approached to assist the client to better understand its overall stakeholder management risk profile whilst also offering a number of risk improvement plans that had been subjected to a cost benefit analysis to ensure a demonstrable return on risk improvement project investments (ROI).

Mondial Consultants' Solution

As part of a multi-pronged approach, we conducted a risk culture survey, to better understand 'front office' employees' understanding of the stakeholder management/ customer service ethos and views. Secondly, a selected number of 'bowtie risk assessments', [that is a fun way of understanding causal and consequential factors of a risk] were conducted. These were aimed at creating a solid understanding of what causes customer dissatisfaction and also assisted in opening the eyes of many participants as to the range of consequences that could result from the activities of an unhappy customer.

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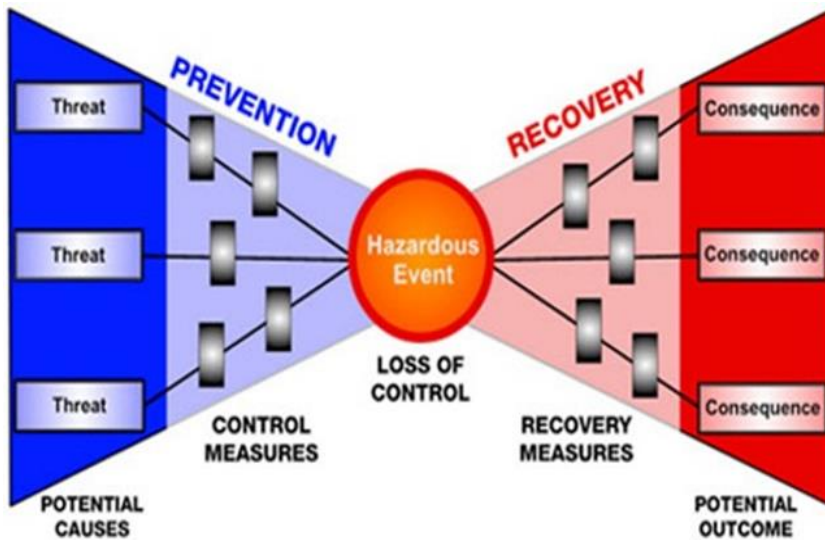
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Figure one: a basic risk bow-tie:



The results highlighted both a lack of understanding of the implications of a disgruntled customer but also worryingly identified some root causes of the problem:

- A disengaged or low energy workforce;
- A lack of training and understanding of what good customer service looks like; and
- A high risk of customer dissatisfaction.

This, in turn could impact on the company's revenue/ bottom line, its reputation and therefore its ongoing sustainability and ability to achieve strategic targets.

The next phase of our work included the identification and analysis of a whole range of possible solutions to the problem, or what we call risk treatment options. Many organisations often embark on implementing the solutions without a robust understanding of their costs and potential benefits or associated risks. We subjected the full range of available solutions to a risk-based cost benefit analysis to select the 20 % of solutions that would deliver 80 % of the desired risk reduction level (Pareto principle). Some of the solutions that were ultimately selected included:

- An energy journey, delivered jointly by Mondial and Learning to Lead (a leading energy company) aimed at guiding every team member to recognise that low energy equates to low performance which in turn equates to low or negative relationships. An understanding of what constitutes good energy and bad energy was also created and the teams were empowered to recognise, manage and sustain their own energy levels, at every level. This is based on the premise that energy cannot be managed, supervised or created - every individual must take ownership of their own energy levels.

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- Learners can complete training in their own time and at their own pace
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- The delivery of an e-learning computer based training programme to highlight what 'good customer management looks like' delivered to many of the team members via either a tablet or their smartphones, thereby limiting the amount of time people had to be away from their customers. The six module SuperStar Customer Service and the Neighbourhood Marketing Tips online eLearning course was deployed and certain individuals had to successfully complete the assessments before they could interact with the company's stakeholders.
- The implementation of a 'learning organisation' where the risk bowtie methodology was inculcated in the customer service division, at every shop and outlet and used to learn and disseminate the learning from current and future events.
- Implementation of a set of reporting parameters that included key lag and leading indicators to help manage and monitor overall stakeholder management at the corporate level.

Impact on Client's Business

Happy customers equals a happy business. The client has continued to improve its customer satisfaction levels, sales have increased in a difficult and economically challenging environment and energy levels are raised. There are numerous instances of teams now contributing ideas for innovative products, services and ways to attract and retain customers.

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