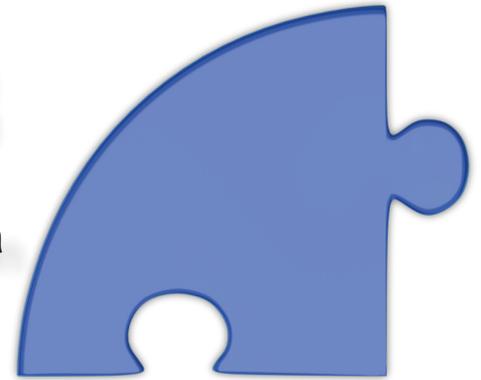# Creating Success

Motivating Your Workforce to Achieve Higher Customer Satisfaction

By: Paul Fayad, CEO HHA Services

Laundries are run with the intent of providing their customers with clean linen. The definition of clean is based on very specific criteria such as germ free, color correctness, and of course free of stains and holes. The processes we use to ensure the cleanliness of each item is very scientific. We must have the correct equipment with chemicals mixed at exact titrations and the water must be soft enough to produce the correct results. Of course we will need a team of associates who are trained to follow the exact cleaning and folding process each and every time. Finally, we will need supervisors and/or managers who ensure that the processes are followed and efficiencies are accomplished at each step of the cleaning process through delivery. This is the easy part since it involves best practices which have been established over the course of many years. It also helps that technology has advanced to provide excellent equipment, and chemicals to ensure success of the cleaning and delivery process. Our managers are also armed with the latest electronics, computers and software to monitor each movement of the linen and the associates. With all of this available what exactly creates a successful laundry plant or a successful linen distribution department in the eyes of the customer? How does one location or service score higher then others in customer satisfaction if we all use the same equipment, chemicals, and follow the same best practices? Finally, is there a direct correlation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction?

Let's begin by answering the question; is there a direct correlation between associate satisfaction and customer service satisfaction? Then we will examine how and provide specific processes to achieve this answer.

The good news is the answer is a resounding yes. Studies by the Gallup Organization of over 105,000 associates at over 2500 businesses, (Buckingham and Clifton, 2001), (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999) have provided answers. The results have shown that highly motivated associates who work in positive work environments not only out produce other associates but provide higher customer satisfaction in all areas of services. This survey demonstrated on a large scale documented proof that there is a direct correlation between associate opinion and performance that leads to customer satisfaction. The abundance approach is also a central part of the research agenda in the Positive Organization Scholarship movement (Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn, 2003). This organization has conducted research of highly successful organizations that focus on positive work environments through positive leadership to produce extraordinary customer service. Within his research on Positive Leadership Skills and Establishing a Positive Work Environment Professor Kim Cameron, has documented proof that associates who work in positive work environments out produce, out perform and provide greater customer satisfaction results than conventional organizations. These results can be found in his books, Positive Work Environments, and Making The Impossible Possible. At HHA Services we monitor our associate and customer satisfaction at all of our locations. For example at a large facility in Detroit, Michigan we have also correlated associate satisfation with customer satisfaction. In a study over three years from 2007 to 2010 we monitored associate satisfaction through a six question survey as well as patient satisfaction for services provided through a third party survey process. During this period of time associate satisfaction in all six questions raised a minimum of 6% to

12%. During that period of time third party patient satisfaction scores rose from 5% and 4%, for the two questions pertaining to patient satisfaction, to 93.8% and 90% percent respectively. What research has proven and what organizations are starting to realize is that happy associates working in positive environments produce more, and provide higher levels of customer satisfaction. Which leads to our next question: How do we create this environment?

The next part of this article will introduce you to the processes that organizations that have been successful at producing extraordinary results have in place. Please understand that the implementation of all of these processes takes time and cooperation at many levels of your organization. However, the benefits of correctly implementing them are priceless.

Hire based on Talent
Talent is inherent based on personality characteristics. In the service industry we want associates who have a strong desire to serve and have a postive disposition. These can be measured through personality testing at the time of the hiring process. Buckingham and Coffman in their book, First Break all the Rules, define talent into three categories. The first is called striving or the why of a person. The second is called thinking or the how of a person. And the third is called relating or the who of a person. Organizations that hire based on skills and knowledge criteria and not on talent will have challenges in keeping their associates and will struggle to establish a culture of serving within the department.

Focus on results
In other words allow your supervisors and the staff to achieve desired outcomes through their creativity. Allow flexibility and trust them to achieve the desired outcomes. Buckingham and Coffman in the book *First Break all the Rules*, explain that standardizing the ends prevents managers and supervisors from having to standardize the means. It focuses on them managing and less as them policing. They also point out that it encourages employees to take responsibility and assume ownership for their work. Adjust and measure the whole way though the time period. Don't wait for the end to tell them they failed.

Establish a Positive Work Environment
Focus on positive results and mirror the success in all areas. Recognition and reward based on the positive results. Avoid punishment based on negative results being identified. Stop looking for people who are failing and start looking for associates who are succeeding. Cameron in his book, *Making the Impossible Possible*, calls it the abundance approach. He states, "It refers to an emphasis on achieving the best of the human condition, striving for positive deviance, and working to fulfill the highest potential of organizations and individuals. It focuses on thriving outcomes and on virtuousness, and stands in contrast to a problem-solving or deficit approach to change."

Gallup defines this as follows
A. Identifying associate's strengths (and what they do right) and building on them creates more benefit than identifying weaknesses (or what they do wrong) and trying to correct them.
B. Managers who spend more time with their strongest performers (rather than the weakest performers) achieved double the productivity.
C. In organizations where associates have a chance to "do what they do best everyday," productivity is one and a half times greater than in normal organizations.
D. Associates who are given feedback on their strengths are significantly more likely to feel highly engaged and to be more productive than associates who are given feedback on their weaknesses.

Hire the Best and most talented supervisor/manager
They are the key to success. Associates determine their on the job happiness not with the organization they work for but from their relationship with their direct report. In the Gallup research this stood out definitively "It is better to work for a great manager in an old fashioned company then for a terrible manager in a company offering an enlightened, employee focused culture."

In summary, it is clear with the research conducted from 2000 through to 2009 that has been published; there is a direct correlation between associate happiness and customer satisfaction. However, processes that needs to be put into place to establish associate satisfaction involves tremendous work and cooperation within an organization. The results are worth the time and effort and can provide not only higher customer satisfaction but a strong culture that can help associate achieve true meaning in their work.

About the Author...
Paul Fayad has extensive experience in Support Services management. Paul began his career in Healthcare in the 1970's in both Facilities management and Environmental Services at multiple hospitals in the Detroit Metropolitan Area. In 1981, Paul joined HHA Services as Facility Manager for highly unionized accounts. In 1982 he was promoted to Director of Special Projects and in 1984 was promoted to General Manager. Two years later Paul became the Vice President of HHA Services and in the fall of 1990 assumed his current role as President. Since that time HHA services has become a national provider of Support Services Management in the U.S.

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