

How to deliver what justice users want and need : a charter for users ?

Mr Mark CAMLEY, Director Supreme Court Circuit, United Kingdom

I am passionate about Customer Service. To the extent that my first week in charge of the Royal Courts of Justice I sat on the reception desk for a day to understand what customers were needing.

In my presentation this afternoon I want to cover a lot of areas based on the experience of the Courts in England and Wales. In the time available I will not cover the topics in depth but I hope to give at least a flavour for –

- Understanding users' wants and needs;
- Managing expectations;
- Measuring and improving customer satisfaction;
- Using complaints as a positive tool;
- Sharing best practice;
- And some practical examples of where we have got it wrong and where I believe we have got it right.

Understanding Customer wants and needs

The first thing to recognise is that the customer might not always know what they need and is more likely to focus on what they want. In the UK we have a radio programme called Desert Island Disks. The premise of the programme is that you are marooned on a desert island and you have to choose your favourite “disks”, pieces of music or songs, that you'd like marooned with you. Although this works on the basis of what you want, it assumes that you already have a number of needs being met – fresh water, shelter, food supplies and something to play your disks on.

Similarly, in the first national satisfaction survey undertaken by the Court Service – court users told us that they wanted - car parks, better restaurant facilities and TVs to watch while they were waiting. We had asked the wrong question, but this exercise did highlight a real need – to inform users about what facilities are available at court before they arrived. As a consequence, courts now all have leaflets that set out not only the facilities at the court – but also how to get there.

The key is to determine the difference between what is wanted and what is needed. This takes us into the sphere of managing customer expectations. Our survey results (which I'll come to later) show that professional users (lawyers) are more satisfied with the service they receive than members of the public who use the Court.

This may be because lawyers have lower expectations – but I don't think so! It may be because lawyers get a better service – but I doubt that. It may be because lawyers have less at stake in any given case – but this is how lawyers make their money so I'm skeptical about lawyers not caring passionately about making money. All of these may be factors – but one that I know has an impact is that lawyers know that court staff don't give legal advice. It's that message that we have not got over to lay users. Only 56% of lay respondents knew that court staff could not give legal advice. This suggests that we need to do some expectation management. So we are looking at this for our leaflets and the forms we produce.

Customer Surveys

During 2001/2 we surveyed users at all the courts, and I'd like to share some of the key results with you today.

▪ Overall satisfaction with service	77%
▪ Satisfaction of counter users	79%
▪ Satisfaction of telephone users	76%
▪ Satisfaction of written replies	71%
▪ Satisfaction with time taken on complaints	34%

(6,325 users responded covering 13 different "user" groups) A satisfaction level of 77% overall is below the public sector benchmark. But it is better than some Judges predicted. They suggested that since 50% of users lose then the maximum score would be 50. Also it is not too bad given the range of our customers, and that we can't choose who uses the courts.

We have got to understand the key drivers of satisfaction, based on measuring not only the levels of satisfaction – but, what they thought the most important aspects were.

The most important issue for users was the speed of handling complaints - that meant dealing with as many as possible on the day. In fact, the figures showed a curious paradox – if people complained and it was dealt with quickly they had higher satisfaction levels than those who hadn't complained at all. We haven't suggested making a mistake and correcting it quickly to raise satisfaction levels! But we have put greater emphasis on customer service and dealing with customer complaints at the counter and on the telephone. As a result, the most recent survey – covering half the courts in England and Wales suggest that –

- Overall satisfaction had risen to 83% from 77%;
- Knowledge of the counter has risen to 88% from 79%;
- Knowledge on the telephone has risen to 84% from 76%;
- Satisfaction with written replies has risen to 82% from 71%; but,
- Satisfaction with time taken on complaints has fallen from 34% to 32%.

So while we have improved satisfaction by 6 percentage points – bringing us in line with public sector benchmarks – we still have an issue on complaints.

The figures also hide a more worrying issue from view – and that is related to black and minority ethnic users.

In overall satisfaction terms – black and minority ethnic users satisfaction levels were 13 percentage points below white users. This is an issue that we are now turning to as a matter of urgency. (John Stacey – mentioned our focus on leaflets: - including clear language. And we are now producing them in 6 languages other than English, including Hindi, Urdu and Welsh but, not French or Italian.)

I'd now like to move from surveys to complaints analysis.

Complaints Analysis

In the Court Service we have a complaints analysis package which allows us to monitor trends in complaints. In particular,

- Which parts of the country get the most complaints? (It is London);
- What issues are people complaining about? (Everything from the conduct of their case by the Judge, to delays, either in listing or on the day, to administrative mistakes);
- Who is complaining? (Mainly litigants in person).

We also monitor how much compensation we pay out. All this provides a useful benchmark on where we need to improve staff knowledge and training.

Sometimes though it seems that you just cannot satisfy the customer. Even so, I believe that there is real value in monitoring your complaints – and taking the time to deal with them properly and understand the customers' concerns.

I now want to move from formal measures to less formal approaches.

As well as surveys, complaints analysis and user groups, which Jillian will cover, there are 3 other areas that I would like to mention in terms of knowing your customers.

1. Open days – most courts now hold regular open days with up to 2,500 people turning up for tours of the building and to find out more about the courts.
2. Reaching out - Judges and staff have gone to local schools and Mosques and shopping centres to make contact with users and potential customers.
3. Comment Cards - All courts have comment cards on the counter or suggestion schemes and welcomes the views of users.

Turning to what we find works in the Court Service I'd like to look at –

Targeting & testing

What we target gets prioritized, so if there is no customer service message this sends the wrong message to staff. In the Court Service, we now have a PSA – top priority indicator on Customer Service. This sends the message to Court Managers and staff about the need for quality Customer Service.

We have also used mystery shopper exercises to learn what it feels like to be a customer and to test certain standards. This captures information on the following:

- Answer telephone – how many rings, give name;
- Ask questions at counter – polite, knowledgeable;
- Appearance of court – notice boards, staff wearing badges.

European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)

I mentioned this morning that we have also used the European Foundation for Quality Management Model to benchmark the progress of the Court Service. The model has a much wider focus than customer service – including leadership of the organisation, the impact on society, how the organisation looks after its people, and how technology is managed.

An organisation can score up to 1,000 points and world class organisation score 600-700. In 1998 the Court Service scored 215 points. In 2000 this had risen to 338 and in August 2003 it was 416 points.

Over this period, customer service (the most heavily weighted part of the model) has consistently been the highest contributor – rising from 55 points in 1998 to 78 points in 2003.

Another of the improvement tools and standards we have used is Charter Mark. Charter Mark was launched in 1998, following on from the Citizens Charter which the then Prime Minister – John Major - introduced. It was aimed at improving the service provided by public bodies. There were 10 criteria – although next year this is to be reduced to six.

1. Setting standards that are clear and measurable, and performing well.
2. Actively engaging with your customers, partners and staff.
3. Being fair and accessible to everyone and promoting choice.
4. Continuously developing and improving – including involving customers in planning improvements.
5. Using your resources effectively and imaginatively.
6. Contributing to improving opportunities and quality of life in the communities you serve – including being positively involved with the community.

Court Service got its first Charter Mark in 1998, when Southwark Crown Court successfully applied. Since then the figures have grown exponentially - by 1998 there were 34 successful applicants, in 2000 there were 6 more, with a further 40 in 2001, and 36 more in 2002. This year we have had 103 successful applicants. This makes the Court Service (with 199 successful applicants) the most successful organisation in the UK in terms of the number of Charter Marks awarded.

The remaining Courts will all be applying in early 2004. As well as the obvious focus on customer service, achieving the standards has helped improve staff morale, including team working, and has produced better performance results.

However, as Richard Woolfson said earlier you need to know what customers want otherwise it is all too easy to get it wrong.

We have also emphasised the need to spread best practice. Three examples of this are -

- National Customer Service Exhibition – every 2 years where Courts show case best ideas.
- Group customer service officers network – conference every six months.
- Customer service officers and customer service section in courts, which leads us to putting our best staff on telephone and counter, getting it right first time, and reducing complaints.

If I can give two examples of providing services people want and need.

1. To introduce Electronic Presentation of Evidence in the Courts we worked with prosecutors to determine -
 - which courts – agreed 10
 - what hardware – show 2 pages of A4 on screen at the same time
 - which software – compatibility

The benefits of this approach were -

- (i) speeds up cases – saves 25% of in-court time
 - (ii) easier to explain complex matters (e.g. Fraud case)
 - (iii) less photocopying and storage required
 - (iv) Judges can “cut and paste” for judgment and summing up.
2. John Stacey this morning provided an explanation of Money Claims On Line, which has been a major success. However, customer service is not just about IT. For example, at the beginning there was a small technical hitch that resulted in one person being charged 7 times to issue a single summons. The next day, the centre manager went round to the individual

with a cheque to make up the difference. That is a real focus on focusing on users.

Finally if you can't get views by other means I have also tried bribery. I have had pens produced with the phrase 'Supreme Court Group - how can we make it better?'

All my staff have one and we have a stock of these available on our reception desk. One very modest idea from either a customer or a member of staff will more than pay for the costs of the pens. I'm afraid that I don't have enough for all the delegates here today but I do have some if you would like one.

In conclusion – I believe that we have made a positive start in recognising the needs of customers of the courts in England and Wales but I believe that we still have a long way to go. We can also learn not only from our colleagues but also from our customers.