SERVICE QUALITY DEPLOYMENT: QUALITY SERVICE BY DESIGN

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If we designed cars the way we seem to design services, they'd probably come with one axle and five wheels.

ABSTRACT

The service-dominated and product-dominated sectors are just awakening from a service slumber to find a new generation of quality activities that call for systematic approaches to design and improvement. This paper proposes a methodological framework called Service Quality Deployment, to enable the creation of quality services by cross-functional efforts geared to incorporating the customer's views. The approach is a synthesis of the Japanese Quality Function Deployment design system and the SERVQUAL instrument for measuring service quality. It is customer-driven in that perceived quality is directly coupled to the factors that affect the corresponding service quality attributes. The approach lends itself to the redesign of existing services for continuous improvement in quality, and to designing-in quality in new services.
INTRODUCTION

The widespread interest in manufactured product quality has resulted in a variety of frameworks and tools to build in quality at the design stage. Of particular interest to virtually all manufacturers is creating methodologies which incorporate the voice of the customer in product specifications and identify organizational actions to execute these specifications. Service organizations, as well, have been actively engaged in developing quality programs, and have often sought to build in customer preferences at the design stage. However, services, unlike manufacturers, need tools that enable them to simultaneously consider data on customer treatment, server requirements, and back office support which underlie effective service encounters. In this paper, we present an approach which addresses these requirements by combining a standard tool for measuring customer satisfaction with service provision (SERVQUAL) with a standard tool of product design (Quality Function Deployment) to develop a "house of service quality."

QUALITY FUNCTION DEPLOYMENT

Quality Function Deployment (QFD) is defined as "a system for translating customer requirements into appropriate company requirements at every stage, from research through production design and development, to manufacture, distribution, installation and marketing, sales and services" (ASI, 1987). QFD arises from the need to specify the product/service and the process at the design stage. It is implemented by the use of a sequence of matrices and charts resulting in a House of Quality, that links customer requirements and characteristics of the product or service, along with competitive benchmarking, to assign quality related tasks to appropriate departments (Kogure and Yoji, 1983). QFD is most widely used in manufacturing, where its full scale application drives the voice of the customer into each phase of the production-distribution cycle. In particular, it is seen in product planning, process planning, production planning, and parts deployment.

Observed benefits of QFD include improvements in both the product and the process. Product improvements include increased reliability, improved designed-in quality, reduced warranty claims, and lower design and production costs. Process improvements include greater functional integration, improved marketing opportunities and decision making, and a more customer-oriented work force (Burns, 1990). In addition, a study of some U.S. QFD projects in