



# Employee Development and Customer Service in the Workplace

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## Abstract

Employees are the most valuable asset of every organization as they can make or break organization's reputation and adversely affect the profitability. Therefore, organization must invest wisely in employees' development for customers' satisfaction, quality products and events. This paper therefore, examines the relationships between employees' development and improved customers service. Also discussed is the relationship between employees' development and factors that enhance development strategies. Using the staff of the three oil service companies as case study, the researcher discovers that there is significant positive relationship between employees' development and improved customers service.

**Keywords:** Employee Development, Customer Service, Workplace, Organization, management.

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## INTRODUCTION

The place of work; be it in an office or a factory, a business or any other organization, is not a setup where people get paid for their presence and attendance of a few hours. The salary is in return for the work done and the amount of work completed reflects the worker's productivity; which in turn is determined by a series of factors besides qualifications and experience. The level of the employee's productivity in any organization is largely responsible for the profit making ability of the organization and its survival in the long run. That is why Executives owe it to the organization and to their fellow workers not to tolerate non performing individuals in important jobs (Martins, n.d). However, companies want to improve employee productivity, but how often do they examine their own management practices as a means of attaining it? (Lipman, 2013).

Customer service is the service provided to customers before, during and after purchasing goods. According to Turban (2002), customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction - that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation. In the opinion of Solomon (2010), customer service refers to the culture of the organization – the priority the organization assigns to customer service relative to other components, such as product, innovation or low price. In this sense, an organization that values good customer service may spend more money in training employees than average organization, or proactively interview customers for feedback.

Talking about the importance of customer service, this according to Buchanan (2011) may vary by product or service, industry and customer. The perception of success of such interactions will be dependent on employees who can adjust themselves to the personality of the guest. One of the most important functions of Human Resource Management is employee development. Employee development is to develop the abilities of an individual employee.

Employee Development is important not only for professional but also personal growth of employees. By this, employees enhance their skills and upgrade their existing knowledge in order to perform better. According to Obisi (2011, p. 82), employee development is a process through which the skills, talents and knowledge of an employee is enhanced and increased

Oxford Dictionary puts it that employee development is the process of causing somebody or something to grow or making something to become larger gradually. Arnoff in Obisi (2011) observed that employees development foster the initiative and creativity of employees and help to prevent manpower obsolescence, which may be due to age, attitude or inability of a person to adapt himself or herself to technological changes.

In the opinion of Mamoria in Obisi (2011) employee development enable employees to develop and rise within the organization and increase their market value, earning power and job security.

In the words of Gordon in Irene (2009), employee development is planned and systematic modification of behaviour through learning events, activities, and programmes which result in participant achieving the levels of knowledge, skills, competences and abilities to carry out their work effectively.

Therefore, employee development refers to activities leading to the acquisition of new knowledge or skill for the purposes of growing. This implies that there is a direct relationship between employee development and employee performance/productivity. Employee development is assuming an increasing critical and strategic imperative for organizations in the current business environment (Sheri-lyne & Parbudyal in Hameed, 2011). Thus, coaching, training and development, empowerment, participation and delegation which are variables of employee development will affect on employee's performance Abdul (2011). Therefore, organizations need to invest in continuous employee development in order to maintain employees as well as the organization success (Jehanzeb & Bashir, 2013; Zaccarelli, 1997). To this end, the purpose and objective of the paper is to investigate the relationship between employees' development and improved customer service, and to determine the relationship between employees' development and the factors that enhance development strategies in three oil services companies in Port Harcourt.

## **Hypothesis**

To guide the direction of this study, two hypotheses were formulated because the acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis shows the significance of the study:

- **H0<sub>1</sub>**: There is no significant positive relationship between employee development and improved customer service in the three at service companies; and
- **H0<sub>2</sub>**: There is no significant positive relationship between employee development and factors that enhance development strategies in the three oil service companies.

## METHODS OF EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES

Development activities prepare an individual for new skills and learning while at work. These improve their skills and upgrade their existing knowledge in order to perform better. Employee development activities create learning culture in organization and it goes a long way in strengthening the relationship among employees, and it creates room for self analysis of oneself. According to Elena (2000), when development activities are performed, it indicates that organization cares about their employees and wants them to grow. The under listed are some of the ways employees can be developed:

- **Job rotation:** This enables all workers to move from one schedule to another within same organization to allow for competence on all sphere of work;
- **Self Development:** Personal desire to improve through an individual's attempt to embark on study and practical explosive that are independent of an organization's role and contribution;
- **Self-assessment:** Personal identification of strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and challenges and an attempt to improve, then build on current efforts for a more fulfilling corporate movement;
- **Job enrichment:** This increases the employees authority or responsibility within their current position when he/she explore new areas of specialization;
- **On the job training/Coaching:** An employees become experience on the job overtime due to modification of job behaviour's at the point of training or acquisition of skills;
- **Formal training:** A practical and theoretical teaching process which could be done within or outside an organization;
- **Vestibule:** This is accomplished through industrial attachment for the purpose of skills and technology transfer;
- **Developmental Appraisal:** According to Kirk (2006), developmental appraisal is an ongoing process for the employee development during the whole year. This is a must part of the performance management. And this appraisal will determine the weak area of employee where employee development is required in order to improve the performance;
- **Perceived Investment in employee Development:** Investment in employee development is equipping employees with new knowledge and competence through organized learning experiences provided by the organization. Perceived investment in employee development refers to employees' assessment of their organizations' commitment to help employees learn to identify and obtain new skills and competences that will allow them to move to new positions, either within or outside these organizations (Chay et al, 2003);
- **Strategies for Promoting Employee Capabilities:** Mohan & Gomathi (2014), developed two model to be implemented by organization to improve employee capabilities terms of their commitment in the workplace. The models are professional development worksheet and learning activity worksheet. In their words, the models are defined as follows:
  - **Professional Development Worksheet (PDW):** Professional development worksheet helps an organization to identify the employee development need and creates the association into an action plan;
  - **Learning Activity Worksheet (LAW):** The learning worksheet is used by the organization after providing various training events to the employees. Thereby employees are given suggestions on their training program and the gaps are filled by developing the strategies framed by the organization.

## CHALLENGES IN EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

According to Elena (2000) and Antonacopoulou (1996), employee development depends upon the Organization culture, attitude of top management, and limited opportunities of promotion:

- **Limited Opportunities of Promotion:** If opportunities of promotion are limited then employees will not participate in the employee development activities;
- **Organization Culture:** If organization culture supports employees, it will encourage employees to participate in decision making, then employees will be more develop and performance will increase;
- **Attitude of top Management:** Top management attitude is an important factor that influences on employee developmental activities. This depends on the sincerity and commitment of the top management.

Employee development also depends upon the individual employee, that is whether employee is willing to participate or not.

## IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

According to Management Study Guide (2014), employee development activities help in the growth and development of employees, who are the true assets of an organization. You need to respect your employees for them to feel motivated and develop a sense of loyalty and attachment towards the organization. Organizations should not forget that their employees strive really hard for almost the entire day to accomplish organizations goals and objectives (Naylor, 1999). Employees need to be appreciated, and management ought to acknowledge their hard work. Employees who give their heart and soul to the organization also expect something in return (Nda & Fard, 2013; Khan, Khan, & Khan; 2011). Money could be one motivating factor but nothing like it if you prepare your employee not only for his/her current job but also for future assignments as well. Employees need to grow with time. One cannot apply similar skills and techniques everywhere (Management Study Guide, 2014). However, organizations should not forget that technology also becomes obsolete with time. Employees need to keep themselves abreast with the latest developments to survive fierce competition. Management Study Guide (2014) asserts that employee development is important for employees to enhance their skills and upgrade their existing knowledge in order to perform better. Employee development activities and trainings make employees' aware of the latest developments and what is happening around them?

From the forgoing, one can deduce that employee development helps organizational development in the following ways:

- Increased productivity;
- Improved quality of services and products;
- Job knowledge and skills of employee;
- Addressing employees weaknesses;
- Bring about a sense of security at work place which reduces labour turnover and absenteeism;
- Employee development ensures employee satisfaction; and
- Eliminate wastage of resources and reduces accident.

## METHODOLOGY:

The study was conducted among employees of three oil service companies in Port Harcourt namely Code Oil and Gas Nig Ltd, Sapiem contracting Nig Ltd and Aosorwell Ltd. They have five categories under which

their employee's fall. They are company's Manger/HR Manager/MD, Engineers/Supervisors, Medical Staff, Accountant/Auditors, Other workers.

The data was collected by means of a structured questionnaire with the help of human resources manager. Copies of the questionnaire were given to the respondents by hand. A convenient sampling technique was used. The population of the study is 150, while the sample size is 109. Majority of the respondent are male 75.2% and female 24.8%. Age of the respondents is below 45, while all the respondents are graduate and post graduate degrees holders.

## RESULTS

Table 1: Analysis of Relationship between Employee Development and Improved Customer Service in the three oil service companies

PD	ICS
8	5
16	16
22	24
30	26
33	40

### SUMMARY OUTPUT

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.954972
R Square	0.911972
Adjusted R Square	0.88263
Standard Error	4.42993
Observations	5

### ANOVA

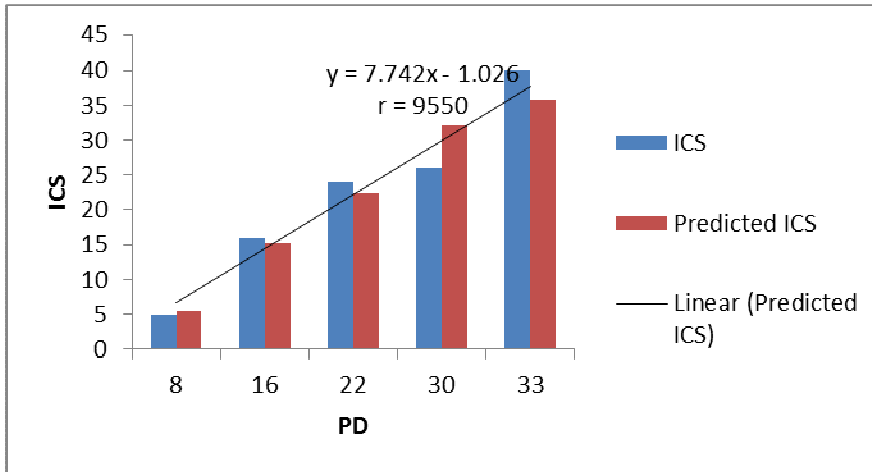
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	609.9272	609.9272	31.08023	0.011392
Residual	3	58.87284	19.62428		
Total	4	668.8			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	-4.17131	5.128419	-0.81337	0.475562	-20.4922	12.14961	-20.4922	12.14961
PD	1.209693	0.216987	5.574965	0.011392	0.519145	1.900241	0.519145	1.900241

The regression equation  $b = 7.742$ ,  $a = -1.026$ , Regression of Y on X is highly significant ( $P < 0.05$ )

### RESIDUAL OUTPUT

<i>Observation</i>	<i>Predicted ICS</i>	<i>Residuals</i>
1	5.506238	-0.50624
2	15.18378	0.816219
3	22.44194	1.558061
4	32.11948	-6.11948
5	35.74856	4.25144



Graph Showing the Relationship Between Employee Development and Improved Customer Service

Table 2: Statistical relationship between employee development and improved customer service

Regression Equation A	Regression Equation B	R	Df	F Cal	F Critical
7.742	-1.026	0.955	3	31.08	0.011

From the table above, the calculated F value (31.08) is greater than the critical F .05,1,3 (0.011), a highly significant regression of Y on X is declared. The  $H_0$  Hypothesis which states that there is no positive significant relationship between employee development and improved customer services in the studied companies is rejected. While the alternative hypothesis which states that there is positive significant relationship between employee development and improved customer services in the studied companies is accepted. This implies that the staff of the studied companies have been educated on the need to be patient with customers, always attentive and have clear communication skills.

It is also an indication that the staff of the studied companies have good knowledge of their products, they have ability to use positive language, ability to read customers, they are goal oriented (focus) and they are good time managers. The study proves also that the staff are willing to learn, they could handle surprises, their persuasion skills in not in doubt as well as their calming presence. All these enhance customers service needs.

Table 3: Analysis of Relationship between Employee Development and Factors that Enhance Development Strategies in the three oil service companies

PD	FDS
8	9
16	12
22	18
30	23
33	47

SUMMARY OUTPUT

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.851762
R Square	0.725499

Adjusted R Square	0.633999
Standard Error	9.12899
Observations	5

ANOVA

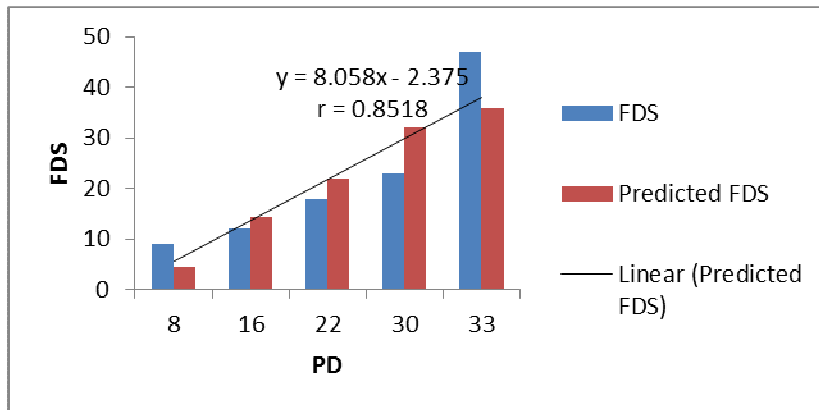
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	660.7846	660.7846	7.928929	0.066969
Residual	3	250.0154	83.33845		
Total	4	910.8			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	-5.64875	10.5684	-0.53449	0.630074	-39.2821	27.98462	-39.2821	27.98462
PD	1.259117	0.447156	2.815835	0.066969	-0.16393	2.682166	-0.16393	2.682166

The regression equation  $b = 8.058$ ,  $a = -2.375$ , Regression of Y on X is highly significant ( $P < 0.05$ )

RESIDUAL OUTPUT

Observation	Predicted FDS	Residuals
1	4.424184	4.575816
2	14.49712	-2.49712
3	22.05182	-4.05182
4	32.12476	-9.12476
5	35.90211	11.09789



Graph Showing the Relationship between Employee Development and Factors that Enhance Development Strategies in the three oil service companies.

Table 4 Statistical relationship between employees' development and factors that enhance development strategies in the three oil service companies

Regression Equation B	Regression Equation A	R	Df	F Cal	F Critical
8.058	-2.375	0.852	3	7.929	0.067

From the table above, the calculated F value 7.929 is greater than the F critical .05,1.3(0.067), a highly significant.

Regression of Y on X is declared. The  $H_0$  hypothesis which states that there is no positive significant relationship between employee development and the factors that enhance development strategies is rejected. While the alternative hypothesis which states that there is positive significant relationship between employee development and the factors that enhance development strategies is accepted. This implies that the studied oil service companies have the following in place in the organization:

- Trained and knowledgeable management;
- Good and effective training programmes for employee development;
- Motivated/committed workforce;
- Effective communication arrangement;
- Prudent use of resources;
- Good organization structure that provides for clear lines of communication authority, responsibility and accountability;
- Good salary package; and
- Provision of adequate machinery equipment

## CONCLUSION

In this paper we have attempted to analyze the relationship between employee development and customer service. It is discovered that in any organization, employee development and customer service is a continuous process. Employee development upgrades the productivity of employees as well as that of the organization. The development of an employee cannot be made overnight. Rather it is a systematic process of planning and formulation of strategies that sharpens employee's capabilities. Therefore, by this study there is significant positive relationship between employee development and improved customer service in the three oil service companies. Also there is significant positive relationship between employee development and factors that enhance development strategies in the studied three oil service companies.

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