
Are your customers happy? It depends who you ask

New Ricoh-commissioned global study by independent consulting firm finds disparity between managers' and employees' views of customer service capabilities

TOKYO, Feb. 13, 2014 – Every business strives to deliver a great customer experience, but how much room exists for improvement?

Surprisingly, employees see more room for improvement in customer service capabilities than managers do, suggests a new Forrester Consulting Thought Leadership Paper¹ commissioned by [Ricoh Company, Ltd.](http://www.ricoh.com) titled, “*The New Workplace Reality: Enterprises Must Capture the Soul and Spirit of the Emerging Worker.*”

By a factor of nearly three to one (43 percent to 17 percent), managers surveyed thought their organizations communicated well with customers through old and new channels such as text and email, whereas customer-facing employees, those on the front line dealing with customers first-hand, felt this was far from the case. At the same time, more than double the number of employees compared to their managers agreed that the businesses have older systems that require the customer to communicate in ways that they don't always want to. Both groups however do agree in one core area – they have a strong internal program to address multichannel communications – but aren't fully there yet.

“As Ricoh continues to investigate the business impact of document processes at the point of service, now is the perfect opportunity for every company to objectively re-evaluate the customer experience it's delivering and the possibility of improving it,” said Yoshi Sasaki, General Manager, Business Services Center, Business Solutions Group, Ricoh Company, Ltd. “Good customer service people can either be empowered with more timely information or held back, which can negatively impact customer relations. This depends largely on how workers are supported in terms of systems and underlying information management processes. Customer-facing employees deserve information solutions that enable swift problem-solving on any communications channel – in person or via mobile, landline or Web.”

¹ A Forrester Consulting Thought Leadership Paper Commissioned By Ricoh, “The New Workplace Reality: Enterprises Must Capture the Soul and Spirit of the Emerging Worker,” December 2013.

According to the study, customer-facing workers stated they need “smarter solutions” that improve information capture, analytics, process management and information access. This assumes companies support these investments with the underlying document processes and systems. Customer-facing workers need “agile processes” that will give them the ability to handle exceptions in more flexible ways by having expert guidance, quick communication with experts and the ability to start new case processes.

Digging deeper

Why do customer-facing employees see more service shortcomings than their managers do? And how did this perception gap arise in the first place? “The answer may be that these communication issues fall through the cracks,” the study states. “They do not result in exceptions, lost customers, or delayed orders – things that managers track – but they will degrade the customer experience over time. Not closing these gaps through improved document and process support may result in inefficient workers, high employee turnover, declining competitiveness, and lost revenue.”

The disparity in the way employees and managers see customer-satisfaction capabilities builds on findings Ricoh [announced last month](#) from the same study. Nearly nine in 10 customer-facing employees (89 percent) – e.g. bank clerks, call center operators, nurses, bank managers and shop supervisors – said there’s a gap between the experience they can deliver and the experience the customer expects.

According to the study, customer-facing workers are obligated to use systems that require too much time on low-value tasks – time and energy that could be invested more directly in providing a richer customer experience. Still, there’s hope for improvement.

“The quality of the customer experience can directly affect the performance of a business, and a positive customer experience requires empowering the people involved in it,” said Sasaki. “We do this for Ricoh clients by mobilizing valuable business information from capture through transformation and management so that customer-facing employees can quickly and completely address their customers’ needs.”

The [study](#) is based on an online survey by Forrester of 250 global customer service strategy and operations decision-makers, as well as customer-facing individual contributors, between March 2013 and May 2013.

To download the study, visit mds.ricoh.com/thoughtleadership.

About the Process Imperative

This research is part of Ricoh's Process Imperative, an ongoing initiative to promote understanding of new document and information processing paradigms that help enterprises leverage the collective wisdom embodied in their organizations. The Process Imperative initiative will fund research and provide resources, like those found on [this site](#), which combine Ricoh's document and information process expertise with that of industry visionaries, its partners and customers. The insights gained through this work help businesses transform their business processes to improve productivity and drive out cost by delivering the right information, at the right time, in the right form.

Ricoh is uniquely equipped to assist its customers execute a comprehensive strategy for document process improvement that helps reduce costs and potentially increase revenue through its Managed Document Services approach. To learn more about Ricoh's approach to Managed Document Services and for free information and guidance – including case studies, white papers and videos – visit Ricoh Global MDS (www.ricoh.com/mds).

| About Ricoh |

Ricoh is a global technology company specializing in office imaging equipment, production print solutions, document management systems and IT services. Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh Group operates in about 200 countries and regions. In the financial year ending March 2013, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 1,924 billion yen (approx. 20 billion USD).

The majority of the company's revenue comes from products, solutions and services that improve the interaction between people and information. Ricoh also produces award-winning digital cameras and specialized industrial products. It is known for the quality of its technology, the exceptional standard of its customer service and sustainability initiatives.

Under its corporate tagline, *imagine. change.* Ricoh helps companies transform the way they work and harness the collective imagination of their employees.

For further information, please visit www.ricoh.com/about/

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