

PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT

We are working with a few small vendors for some services like IT maintenance and software. Swami, the proprietor, was struggling to make a go of the business. We kept having problems with his “on time delivery” and variances from “agreed specs” on various deliveries. We advised Swami to do something and understand how to delight the customer, namely us!

He took up the idea with enthusiasm and said he would be attending a workshop on customer delight. He was back in our office a few months later, a changed man, well groomed and wearing a tie, he came to discuss work. We said to ourselves, “not bad for Swami”. However, OTD was not any different and rework was rampant. We were very angry. Our expectations were up because he looked more “professional” but on the ground he was the same.

We called him in for a discussion and explained to him that he can come in slippers and bush shirts for all we care but if OTD and errors were not reduced he was out. “What did you learn in that workshop?” I asked him as we were finishing the discussion. “They taught us how to talk properly, and be professional in all that we do”, he said. “Did you learn the basics of good delivery like process mapping and root cause analysis”. “No Sir”, he said, it was a course on “customer delight” like you advised and not on “problem solving”!!! As we concluded, he extended his hands for a handshake (his new behaviour) and said “I had a lot of pleasure with you, I look forward to more such pleasurable times with you”!!!

We had a hearty laugh about this episode, but we were aghast when one of the executives we were coaching came up with a request “I need to know “perception management” can you help me?” One more person who wants to have a “lot of pleasure” with us, but not interested in learning and mastering the basics!