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**What Do Gulf Customers Expect?**

## What Do Gulf Customers Expect?

This paper is a summary of some of the findings we have seen over the years of servicing customers in the gulf region. It is intended to provide a snapshot for busy executives and to encourage further dialogue. We do not intend to present a single view of customer expectations in the region but aim to highlight that customer expectations in the region are often not aligned with how companies deliver their services in the region. We believe significant opportunities exist for companies to re-align their services to expectations to achieve significant and sustainable market share over their competition.

## What Profile of Customer Are You Catering For?

Each country in the region has its own unique demographics and social and economic profiles. Countries like Saudi Arabia have a large local Arabic population whereas countries like the U.A.E have a large expatriate community from a diverse range of countries. The first step in understanding your customer expectations is to understand the profile of customers you service. There are many approaches to profiling of customers but the ones we believe lead to the greatest insights involve direct interviews with a statistically sound section of various segments of your customers.

Once you undertake this research you should identify common themes for each segment that clearly identify the expectations of your customers.

## What Are Some of the Common Themes Identified With Gulf Customers?

The research we have undertaken with Gulf customers is based on our experiences and external market review of what Gulf customers expect. The themes we have identified that are common across the region are as follows:

- Customers in the region want honest and transparent business practices.
- Customers want companies and government to deliver their basic services exceptionally well
- Customers want to feel valued for their business

- Customers want personalised service
- Customers do not want to be transferred to multiple different departments to get their issues resolved
- Customers want their problems fixed within 24 hours without having to do their own follow-up
- Customers expect companies to keep their promises
- Customers want a choice in how they interact with companies. They don't want to go to a retail outlet and take a ticket for basic services
- The majority of customers are willing to wait around 1 minute to be answered if the service agent at the contact centre can resolve their issue the first time
- Value-added services are not considered appealing to customers if basic services are not delivered well and with honesty
- Complicated products and offerings are frowned upon by customers
- Customers want no hidden charges and simple costs that represent good value

## Where is the Misalignment in Business & Government in the GCC?

There are several areas we have identified in business and government in the GCC where there is misalignment between customer expectations and the servicing of their customers. The key areas of misalignment are as follows:

- Contact centre Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are measuring the wrong metrics in the contact centre leading to the wrong behaviours with their staff. For example, many centres in the region focus on how quick they can answer a call. Once the call is answered there is little focus on the actual outcome of the call itself. This is completely misaligned with customer expectations
- Little or no agent empowerment with front line staff dealing direct with customer issues. This leads to customer issues being escalated to multiple departments before an issue is resolved. First time resolution in the region is low compared to the industry best practices are around the world

- Poor technology and design of customer service systems leads to lack of transparency and insufficient information for the front-line staff member to effectively resolve issues efficiently and effectively
- There is a significant reliance on retail outlets for customers to get serviced. It is not uncommon for a customer to wait over 20 minutes in the GCC to get a basic transaction actioned from retail outlets
- There is an insufficient range of effective alternate channels to get service. Self-service solutions in the GCC are lagging the rest of the world. Effective social media management of customer queries is also considered inadequate compared to other more mature markets
- Front-line staff are often poorly trained to deliver world class service and incorrectly motivated to achieve better customer experiences on an ongoing basis



- Identify the gaps in the business that need to be realigned to achieve your goals
- Secure CEO and board sponsorship for your goals and the project to re-align the business
- Ensure you have the right resources, external partners and funds to achieve your goals
- Have realistic expectations of what can be achieved in the time frame given your current position and internal culture.

### What is the pay-back?

One of the key obstacles faced with re-alignment to customer expectations is the pay-back to the organisation. This is the question that will be asked in the board room and will ultimately determine whether the company decides to make changes or retain the status quo.

The pay-back is different for government and for private enterprise. Government can expect to reduce the cost of service delivery as well as raise how satisfied their citizens are with their government and the services they provide. For private organisations the research strongly indicates the pay-back is well worth the investment. A study undertaken by Harvard Business School in 2005 surveying over 2000 large and medium sized enterprises showed that those who had both fully engaged employees and full engaged relationships with their customers were on average 3.4 more successful in financial terms than those who failed in these capabilities.

### The Roadmap to Alignment

An opportunity exists for companies and government in the GCC to align their services and how they treat their customers with the expectations of their customers. This opportunity will enable companies and government to position themselves as world class making them aligned to international best practices. This will provide both the global recognition but also position these GCC organisations as globally competitive.

The roadmap to alignment requires companies and governments in the GCC to undertake the following:

- Undertake a thorough assessment of the current ways customers are currently being serviced
- Benchmark this assessment to world best practices and to actual customer expectations
- Identify your goals for where you want to be in the next 2-3 years as an customer service organisation

### Where to Next?

Kinetic BPO is committed to helping GCC companies and government provide world class customer services through our solutions. We would be happy to discuss with you how we may be able to assist.

**If you would like to know more about how we can help you improve your customer experiences then contact us at:**

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