

Ken Harris

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What was broken at Communicate?

Oh, everything was broken. There was nothing there that worked ... it was just insane.

What happened once you arrived at Communicate?

Jacquard had already been working in the operations area. I transitioned into operations and Jacquard went to work in the sales area. We worked together for about 1 year, although it seemed like dog years – like seven regular long years, but we were able to do everything we needed to do all in only 11 months.

What processes did Jacquard put in place?

The Geneen Formula, the Jacquard Cash Circle and Production Scheduling.

Can you describe the value Jacquard provided?

Jacquard provided to a great extent a different perspective on the standards of how a company should be run. One of the things they bring in, which most people don't understand is that businesses are fundamentally similar. There are few business types, and if you are in that business type, your business is fundamentally the same as other businesses in that type. If you can decide what type of business you are, you can apply other things from companies and make them work. Most people think their businesses are totally unique; absolutely different and very little applies to them. They think that outsiders don't understand their problems or opportunities because they are different. Jacquard can convince people differently.

Jacquard's standards are very high; their perspective is very broad. They are very imaginative in applying what they believe is the proper way to measure business. Jacquard is very deeply involved in process-oriented management; very deeply involved in performance-oriented management and very deeply involved in measurement in a way most people don't measure. Most people measure things using internal criteria. Jacquard is very focused on measuring things using external criteria. It doesn't matter what your internal measurement is, it matters what the customer is measuring. The customer is ultimately deciding whether your measurement is rational.

Jacquard is very good at focusing on what is meaningful to the customer. They are absolutely religious about really paying attention to the 80/20 rule. The 80% group of customers exists to be exploited and the 20% group of customers represents the people to be served. Jacquard is very good about focusing on the right people without prejudice toward preconceived notions on how to serve; the ultimate service can be achieved.

What was the stone in Communicate's shoes?

When we arrived at Communicate, there were 3,500 customers. As customers called for service to fix their phone it would take an average of 30 days for us to respond. Within 6 months we dramatically changed the performance to where half of our open service calls were closed within 4 hours. The other half was closed within 3 days.

The traditional service organization of a phone company has a dispatcher answer the phone and then that person just passes the information on to a service technician. Then the service technician gets out to the customer at some point and looks at your phone and if you need parts, they order them and schedule a time to return with the parts. This is not a customer-oriented process.

Jacquard created a new process for us and at the time it was really bizarre. We took the very best technicians, the ones who had the most experience and we took their vans away and placed them inside the service center. They were not allowed to go see the customers. Their role was to answer the phones directly to help the customers. We put the less trained technicians in groups around these experts for assistance. *The Rule was: all calls were to be answered by someone who could absolutely help the customer.* We set up a process whereby when a customer called, the call was answered by a computer that gathered information and informed the customer we would call them back. Once the information was distributed to the correct team, the customer was called back. In most instances the problem was fixed over the phone. At the very least, if the technician had to make a house call, they had the correct parts with them on the first visit.

We created a Service Index. We needed to measure how long people were waiting for their service/product. At the end of each day, everyone took a service ticket and recorded how many days it was open and added it up. If it was open 1 day that equaled one point, open 3 days, it equaled 3 points. Then you added them all together and divided it by the number of customers you had. Theoretically, the number should never go up. Everyday we charted the Service Index. We were measuring what was important to people outside our company.