

3rd Working Group Meeting

Cluster: Customer Relations and Marketing

17th – 18th April 2008

List of participants

Dimitrov, Petko	Institute of Transport and Communications Ltd.	Expert
Gusaroviene, Modesta	Vilnius Transport	Expert
Karsa, András	Budapest Transport Privately Held Corporation	Expert
Meskauskas Vaidotis	Vilnius Transport	Expert
Monkiewicz, Slavomir	Biuro Planowania Rozwoju Warszawy	Expert
Rybarczyk, Włodzimierz	City of Warsaw	Expert
Sarman, Viorica Aurelia	Uniunea Romana de Transport Public	Expert
Tonks, Phil	Bus users UK	Expert
Carles-Tolrà, Jorge	Transports Metropolitans Barcelona (TMB)	Cluster partner
Barta, Franz	Socialdata	Cluster leader
Erl, Erhard	Socialdata	Cluster leader

The objectives of the meeting were:

- Discussion of importance of customer's satisfaction and customer relationship management
- Presentation of good practice examples and identification of deficits in both areas
- Identification of problems of measuring customer satisfaction
- Analysis of the role of customer satisfaction as strategic management tool
- Identification of goals for improving customer satisfaction and customer relationship management
- Development and discussion of approaches to improve customer satisfaction and customer relationship management (including the discussion of transferability of existing solutions)

Experts confirmed that a high customer satisfaction is important to keep and recruit new customers. In some countries customer satisfaction is seen as a legal requirement or part of the service contract. It was pointed out that public transport operators should lead their companies like other private companies selling products by putting the customer and its satisfaction into the centre. Also emphasised was the need to find out more about their customers with the help of surveys and/or opinion polls.

The meeting allowed the identification of a number of deficits and problems related to customer satisfaction and customer relationship management:

- One topic are customer satisfaction and prejudices (e.g. prices). Knowing what the customer wants is not the only thing important, as this can be misleading. It is also necessary to identify which topics have the biggest impact. Price is a good example for this. While most customer satisfaction surveys identify high prices as a major criticism, looking closer at this argument shows that the price is rarely the main motivation factor for using / not using public transport. Other factors are more important and in a lot of cases customers would be willing to pay more if they would get better services. High prices are therefore only a problem if the relation between price and service is no longer adequate.
- The departments responsible for collecting information about customer satisfaction and customer complaints are rarely the ones that can provide the requested solutions. Handling

customer satisfaction and customer complaints mostly requires resulting actions of other actors and departments.

- Expectations towards service quality in different cities can differ significantly. This can be caused by local reasons or it can be a result of social changes (directly impacting of expectations) within a population.
- Expectations and experiences are playing a major role in the determination of customer satisfaction. In a lot of cities the actual experience of public transport services is not very good and if experiences are not fulfilling customer expectations the level of customer satisfaction will decrease.

One outcome of the discussions was the confirmation of the high importance of customer orientation for public transport operators and authorities:

- First of all there is a direct correlation between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Only satisfied customers are loyal customers and loyal customers will be much more willing to continue using public transport even if other modes of transport are available to them.
- Customer orientation and high levels of customer satisfaction are an important argument in the area of political discussions especially for a mode of transport that is viewed as “public” fulfils certain “social” needs and is depending of the support of public funds.
- Only public transport operators with customer oriented services can hope to improve their turnover and return.
- Customer orientation also plays an important role in the area of customer acquisition and the promotion of sustainable transport modes

Customer orientation is also important from the viewpoint of users and non-users:

- Customer orientation ensures the provision of the expected service levels and quality.
- Respect of and communication with customers
- Confirmation of social behaviour

One of the presenters at the meeting Modesta Gusaroviene provided a very good summary of the importance of customer satisfaction and customer orientation in the summary of her presentation:

- “For the customer, service quality is everything. In the transport sphere like any other, quality has to take account of service’s every dimension.”
- “In our view, quality begins with safety and reliability, continues with service provision corresponding to the expectations of passengers, and is only complete if the service relationship is improved from person to person - between our staff and our customers. These various aspects of quality do not compete with one another, but contribute together to quality as perceived by passengers.”
- A quality approach cannot be implemented without knowing the quality expected by the customers.
- We have to view the services through customer’s eyes.