



Tuesday 3 June 2014 – Morning

AS GCE APPLIED BUSINESS

F243/01/CS The Impact of Customer Service

CASE STUDY

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes



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The Rustic Theatre

Tamina had always enjoyed going to the theatre so, in September 2012 when she retired early from a career in teaching, she took over the ownership and management of a local theatre, *The Rustic Theatre (TRT)*.

Background

TRT is a small theatre with a capacity of 150 people, which is quite small in comparison to most theatres. *TRT* is used by local amateur dramatic societies to stage their productions. Occasionally a professional actor is hired by an amateur dramatic society to take part in a production. Tamina has noticed that when this happens, the audience numbers increase by around 25%. 5

Tamina employs two full-time and two part-time members of staff who look after the shop, café, ticket sales and general housekeeping duties. 10

Problems

Tamina used to teach business studies and knows a great deal about running a business. She is aware that a lot of businesses have a customer service policy, which *TRT* does not. Tamina is worried that whilst the number of ticket sales remains constant, not many people other than the families of the performers visit *TRT* more than once. Tamina thinks that this might be due to poor levels of customer service. Tamina would like to invest more in training her staff, as well as better stage and auditorium lighting and replacing torn seats in order to improve the theatre experience. 15

Poor lighting and torn seats are just two of the comments which Tamina has received from theatregoers over the past year or so. The majority of the complaints which she has received however, relate to the empty cups that are not cleared away from the tables in the café. This could be due to the café being busy, but Tamina thinks it is a basic lack of training of her staff; which could also explain why the shop is often untidy. These failings are important to Tamina as the café and shop are both losing money. 20

In addition, some theatregoers have suggested to Tamina that *TRT* should offer organic products in the café and shop. Other theatregoers have suggested that *TRT* should recycle all of its waste. 25

During a conversation with Andrea, one of Tamina's part-time employees, Tamina was asked if she was going to make it easier for people to access the theatre as Andrea's elderly mother would like to watch an upcoming play but would find access difficult as she uses a wheelchair. 30

Tamina is also concerned that, as she and her team do not have any involvement in the production of the shows, they lack the detailed knowledge to be able to advise potential theatregoers what the shows or plays are about. 30

Looking ahead

Another of Tamina's staff, Marcus, has been working full-time at *TRT* for ten years and manages the theatre in her absence. Marcus has regular weekly meetings with Tamina in which they consider all aspects of the business, except for the production of the shows. They usually focus on routine matters such as advertising, income and expenditure. However, Tamina now thinks that they ought to look more to the future if *TRT* is to start earning a decent profit. Also in Tamina's thoughts is the recent news that a new cinema is to open only half a mile away from *TRT* in about 12 months' time. 35

Tamina desperately wants to improve the reputation which *TRT* has as this would retain existing theatregoers as well as attracting new ones. In addition, this could also attract better professional actors which would help to improve the theatregoers' experience. In their last meeting Tamina asked Marcus to get the other members of staff to talk to theatregoers as they left *TRT* in order to find out how they felt about their experience and the level of customer service which they received. 40 45

Initial ideas

At their meeting Marcus explained to Tamina that he had some initial ideas for the theatre's improvement. He explained that he was aware that theatregoers have a number of needs which should be met and that Tamina should use a mystery shopper in order to find out whether these needs are being met. He also suggested that *TRT*'s staff should be trained to understand, at the very least, what aspects of customer service are important. Marcus said that *TRT* should have a customer-service policy. 50

Tamina thanked Marcus for his initial thoughts and asked him to prepare a brief report (see **Appendix A**) with some more thoughts and ideas about how customer service levels at *TRT* could be improved. She also asked him to think about ways of gathering information so that, as a team, they could all start to work together to make *TRT* a success. 55

Appendix A

The future for *TRT*

Immediate action

- Provide basic hygiene, health and safety training for all staff
- Meet with amateur dramatic societies to find out about the productions
- Deal more effectively with complaints
- Use a mystery shopper

Medium term priorities

- Introduce a discount pricing strategy to encourage early bookings and to attract groups
- Set up a website for online bookings, information and discussion forums
- Gather more feedback from theatregoers

Long term goals

- Employ a customer service manager as the new cinema is advertising for one
- Set up a loyalty card scheme
- Renovate the theatre because the new cinema will be state of the art

Marcus



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