

Service quality in the digital age – Time as strategic resource

Juergen Muehlbacher*

*Vienna University of Economics and Business, Institute for Change Management and Management Development, Welthandelsplatz 1,
Building D2/B, 1020 Wien, Austria*

Abstract

Purpose of the article One-way communication, due to its broad use, is an inexpensive way to distribute information, although its effectiveness is considered to be only average. E-mail communications, for instance, are not particularly effective, yet are used frequently, as they are easily and quickly sent, as well as up-to-date. Two-way communication is based on the interaction of relationships, the immediate exchange of information, reactions, opinions or feelings is the most obvious difference. Although two-way communication tools require more time and are costlier, they can show much more effective results. So this study will show the influence of B2C communication on strategic customer relations.

Methodology/methods Using a kind of digital mystery shopping we tested online response times of a standard procedure communications concerning a typical b2c relation.

Scientific aim After years of cost pressure, companies have totally overseen time as strategic factor. In a digital world, response time becomes one of the most important competitive advantages. In this presentation we will report on our experience, testing the response time of the 20 market leading automotive trade marks in Austria.

Findings The data show, that only 25 % of the companies will meet the needs of digital natives in a proper way. The last 25 % were not able to respond even within 4 weeks. We will also present findings concerning strategies and organizational structures influencing these results. One special focus will be set on the interrelation between (de)centralized organization, knowledge management and response time.

Conclusions Best and worst practice will question organizational theories stated in every course book. A discursive process should be initiated to critically scrutinize the prejudice that decentralization leads to market and consumer orientation.

Keywords: Competitive Advantage, Service Quality, Strategic Resource, Time

JEL Classification: M14, M31

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: juergen.muehlbacher@wu.ac.at.