

Workers Who Feel Trusted Will Boost Sales and Provide Better Customer Service: Study

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Companies that communicate their trust to employees will see superior sales and customer service performance, says a psychology researcher from Sauder School of Business at the University of British Columbia.

In findings that will appear in the May 9, 2008 issue of The Journal of Applied Psychology, UBC Prof. Sandra Robinson and Sabrina Deutsch-Salamon of York University explored how workers' perceptions of being trusted affected their work performance.

"Much has been written about how management needs to win the trust of its employees," says Robinson, "but this study is quite different in that it suggests that management showing trust in their employees -- regardless whether employees trust them -- may make the biggest difference."

Robinson's study shows that the feeling of being trusted encourages employees to accept more responsibility at their jobs and to work harder in pleasing customers.

The researchers carried out a study at 88 stores of a major retailing company, collecting data from two sources: the retail chain's archival records measuring sales and customer service performance for each store location, as well as employee annual surveys.

The surveys -- conducted anonymously -- asked employees about how trusted they felt by their managers.

“Our findings lend support to the contention that when employees feel trusted by the organization, they are more likely to cooperate with it,” says Robinson, who teaches organizational behaviour and human resources management at the Sauder School of Business.

The researchers’ next study will look at the specific things managers can do to change employees’ perceptions of whether they are trusted or not. Robinson speculates that it may include doing things like seeking input on decisions from employees, or in some cases, not doing things such as closely monitoring employee behaviour and their hours worked.

Source: University of British Columbia

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