



MARKETING RESEARCH IN ACTION

The Role of Employees in Developing a Customer Satisfaction Program

The plant manager of QualKote Manufacturing is interested in the impact his year-long effort to implement a quality improvement program is having on the satisfaction of his customers. The plant foreman, assembly-line workers, and engineering staff have closely examined their operations to determine which activities have the most impact on product quality and reliability. Together, the managers and employees have worked to better understand how each particular job affects the final delivered quality of the product as the customer perceives it.

To answer his questions about customer satisfaction, the plant manager conducted an internal survey of plant workers and managers using a 7-point scale (endpoints are 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree). His plans are to get opinions from within the company first and then do a customer survey on similar topics. He has collected completed surveys from 57 employees. The following are examples of the topics that were covered in the questionnaire:

- Data from a variety of external sources such as customers, competitors, and suppliers is used in the strategic planning process. Independent variable A10.
- Customers are involved in the product quality planning process. Independent variable A12.
- Customer requirements and expectations of the company's products are used in developing strategic plans and goals. Independent variable A17.
- There is a systematic process to translate customer requirements into new/improved products. Independent variable A23.
- There is a systematic process to accurately determine customers' requirements and expectations. Independent variable A31.
- The company's product quality program has improved the level of customer satisfaction. Dependent variable A36.
- The company's product quality program has improved the likelihood that customers will recommend us. Dependent variable A37.
- Gender of the employee responding: Male = 1; Female = 0. Classification variable A40.

A multiple regression was run using SPSS with responses of the 57 employees as input to the model. The dependent variable was A36 and the independent variables were A10, A12, A17, A23, and A31. The output is shown in Exhibits 12.16 and 12.17. There is a database of QualKote employee responses to these questions available in SPSS format at www.mhhe.com/hairessentials3e. The database is labeled QualKote MR1A_Essn 3e.sav.

Results indicate a statistically significant relationship between the metric dependent variable (A36—Satisfaction) and at least some of the five metric independent variables. The R^2 for the relationship is 67.0 and it is statistically significant at the .000 level. This suggests that when employees have more favorable perceptions about some aspects of the implementation of the quality improvement program they also believe the program has improved customer satisfaction.