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Subject: Proposal for the Feasibility of an Appointment System and other Approaches to Improve Customer Waiting Experience at the Fido Retail Store

Introduction

The Fido store at Coquitlam Centre has always seen a high volume of customers as it is the only corporate retail location within Coquitlam and the nearby municipalities in the Eastern Lower Mainland (i.e., Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge, Mission, Abbotsford). As the Tri-Cities and the neighbouring suburban areas continue to expand, we will be expecting an even greater amount of store traffic.

Despite increases store traffic, Fido Coquitlam Centre does not currently have a procedure in place to reduce customer wait times or to organize the customer queue. On a busy day, customers are waiting in line for up to 45 minutes to speak with a store representative. Being preoccupied with serving customers, the store representatives are unable to acknowledge and to provide incoming customers with an estimated wait time. In addition, the store lacks directive signs and line up ropes to help customers form a queue. Without clear instructions on lining up, customers and store representatives are often in confusion about who is next in line.

Statement of Problem

As the customer volume continues to grow, our store faces two problems. First, the already excessive wait time will worsen, and will negatively impact our customers' satisfaction and loyalty to our brand (Bielen & Demoulin, 2007). As a result, we will see poorer customer survey scores and reviews, which is detrimental to our store reputation. Dissatisfied customers are less willing to purchase our service and products, leading to a decline in sales.

Second, our store representatives are increasingly faced with frustrated customers who had experienced a long wait. The store representatives' job performance can deteriorate while they are under the pressure of handling dissatisfied customers. Also, in order to shorten the customers' wait time, the store representatives may rush through their transactions with each customer in order to get through the line.

Proposed Solution

One possible solution to the line-up problem is to implement an appointment system. Having an appointment system will allow customers to book an appointment ahead of time, so they can simply visit the store at the scheduled time and skip the line. An appointment system will involve assigning a host representative to greet customers and to check-in those who booked an appointment. The host can also assess other customers' reasons for visit, provide these customers with an estimated wait time, guide them to a waiting area and keep them occupied by showing them our products. By reducing the wait time and keeping them informed with the estimated wait time, customers will feel more valued (Bielen & Demoulin, 2007; Kumar, Kalwani, & Dada, 1997). A customer that feels appreciated are more likely to show brand loyalty and trust towards store representatives, bringing more sales and profit to our company.

Scope

To research the feasibility of implementing an appointment system in the Fido Coquitlam Centre store, I will investigate the following inquiries:

1. What is the impact of long customer wait time on the customers, the store representatives, and the business?
2. What is an example of a successful implementation of the appointment system, and how does it work?
3. What are some challenges of implementing an appointment system at the Fido store?
4. What are other methods to reduce our customers' wait time or improve our customers' experience in the store despite a long line-up?

Methods

My primary sources of data will include a visit to the Apple Store in Coquitlam Centre. Because Apple's Genius Bar (the customer service and technical support desk) is known for their appointment system, I will be studying how their system works. Next, I will conduct a survey on the Fido store representatives to assess how store traffic affects their job performance. Lastly, I will conduct one-on-one interviews with a few Fido store representatives to gather their opinions on the appointment system and on other possible solutions to address the increasing store traffic.

My secondary sources will include existing publications on the effects of customers' waiting time, and ways to improve customer satisfaction despite waiting.

My Qualifications

I have been a Fido Sales Representative at the Fido Coquitlam Centre store for over four years. During my time at Fido, I have helped with launching several Fido systems, such as Jarvis (the new point-of-sale software), in our store by implementing the software and assisting staffs in using it. Therefore, I understand the successful aspects and limitations in implementing a new system at the store level. My personal experience with working in a high store traffic and my knowledge of the store operations will be important in designing a feasible solution for the line-up problem.

Conclusion

The store traffic is growing as we speak, so we need to take immediate action to reduce our customers' wait time. Through researching the inquiries mentioned above, I will work to develop a feasible appointment system to maintain customer satisfaction despite the traffic growth. With your approval, I will begin my research at once.

References

- Bielen, F., & Demoulin, N. (2007). Waiting time influence on the satisfaction-loyalty relationship in services. *Managing Service Quality*, 17(2), 174-193.
- Kumar, P., Kalwani, M. U., & Dada, M. (1998). The impact of waiting time guarantees on Customers' waiting experiences. *Marketing Science*, 16(4), 295-314.