

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT WISCONSIN'S ONE-STOP JOB CENTERS:
DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
INSTRUMENT

By

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ABSTRACT

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Customer Satisfaction at Wisconsin One-Stop Job Centers:

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The purpose of this research was to develop and implement a customer satisfaction instrument that examined the satisfaction of walk-in clients using the programs, services, and technical assistance provided by Wisconsin One-Stop Job Centers in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties. Under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, One-Stop Job Centers are designed to meet the needs of the nation's employers, job seekers, and those who want to further their careers. Services provided by the Job Centers include information on education and training opportunities, skill assessment, career planning, and labor market information. Other services consist of job search programs, job listings,

and tools for resumes and cover letter preparation. The instrument developed and implemented specifically focused on these services and staff assistance available at the One-Stop Job Centers. Results of the study show that the majority of individuals used the Job Centers for job searching purposes. Overall customers tended to be highly satisfied with the Job Center's programs, services, and staff. The professionalism and approachability of the Job Center's staff was rated the highest in satisfaction. Rated lowest in satisfaction was the accuracy of the Job Center's website and available materials meeting the needs of the customers. This research also suggested that to increase overall satisfaction, it is reasonable to focus improvement efforts on the performance attributes relating to the confidence customers feel towards Job Center staff when receiving assistance and fulfilling the needs of the customers. In addition, it was found that the performance dimensions used in the survey showed high reliability and validity overall and is consistent when used across different industries.

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CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this research is to develop and implement a customer satisfaction instrument that will examine the satisfaction of walk-in clients using the programs, services, and technical assistance provided by Wisconsin Job Centers in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties. Under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, Job Centers are designed to meet the needs of the nation's employers, job seekers, and those who want to advance their careers. These needs are met with services and programs that include the assessment of skills, abilities, and needs; access to labor market information, career counseling; job search and job placement assistance; and information on training and education. Related supported services such as day care and transportation are also available. Wisconsin Job Centers must focus on customer satisfaction, which is measured by a continuous feedback model from the customer. Consistent with the WIA, measures of customer satisfaction must:

- Address participants and employers
- Be able to track process toward improvements
- Be comparable across states
- Be examined at the conclusion of participation

Designing a customer satisfaction questionnaire requires the identifying of customer requirements or quality dimensions. Customer requirements define the quality of your products and services.

Defining quality dimensions provides a better understanding on the way customers describe the quality of Job Center services and tools. The quality dimensions used in this study were based on the SERVQUAL Approach developed in 1985 by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (Donnelly, Hull, & Will, 2000). The five dimensions of the SERVQUAL Approach are:

- Tangibles: the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials related to the service.
- Reliability: the ability of the service to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- Responsiveness: the willingness of the service to help customers and provide prompt service.
- Assurance: the competence of the service and its security, credibility and courtesy.
- Empathy: the ease of access, approachability and effort taken to understand customers' requirements.

This study was done to determine what the local job centers quality dimensions would be and use these dimensions to develop a customer satisfaction questionnaire that was in compliance with the continuous improvement approach of the Workforce Investment Act. This approach will foster development in performance levels desired by the Job Centers in the workforce investment system. The customer satisfaction measure developed will provide a structured process for listening to and learning from customers.

The research will provide insight to Job Center staff on the effectiveness and relevance of services and tools used by customers. With this information, the Job Centers included in this study will recognize areas that are utilized the most, need improvement, and do not fulfill the needs of its customers. Results will also determine the strengths and weaknesses of staff, indicate correct placement and design of hand out materials and instructions, and inform staff on types of customers using the Job Centers. Statistical analysis will also be done to determine the reliability and validity of the five service quality dimensions identified through the SERVQUAL Approach. Analysis will help determine if the dimensions are consistent when used in different industries.

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION

One-Stop Job Centers are at the heart of the new workforce investment system emerging under the Workforce Investment Act (U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, DOLETA, 2001). As part of America's Workforce Network these centers provide an integrated array of high-quality services so that workers, job seekers and businesses can find the services they need under one roof in easy-to-reach locations (DOLETA). Wisconsin Job Centers house comprehensive resource rooms with books, newspapers, paper listings of job openings and resumes, in addition to the electronic resources (South, 2000). To meet the needs of customers, Job Centers must focus on customer satisfaction, which can be measured by a continuous feedback model (South). Using the information obtained, services can be fine-tuned to meet the customers needs and expectations. Workforce Development leaders in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties expressed a need for the design and implementation of a customer satisfaction instrument that accurately gauges customer's attitudes and incorporates these attitudes into the quality improvement efforts of the Wisconsin Job Centers and the Workforce Investment Act.

Workforce Investment System

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 was developed to provide the framework for a reformed national workforce investment system designed to meet the needs of the nation's employers, job seekers and people who want to further their

careers (America's Workforce Network, 2001). Clearly stated, the Act's purpose is to provide workforce investment activities that increase participants' employment, retention, earnings, and skill attainment, which in turn results in the improvement of quality in the workforce, reduction in welfare dependency and the enhancement of the productivity and competitiveness of the nation (America's Workforce Network). A key reform contained within the act is the establishment of a comprehensive accountability system to assess the effectiveness of state and local areas in providing employment and training services (America's Workforce Network). The Act requires Job Centers to:

- Focus on results defined by core indicators.
- Measure customer satisfaction of programs and services.
- Put a strong emphasis on continuous improvement.
- Keep annual performance levels developed as a result of negotiations among Federal, State, and local partners.
- Report performance results of programs and services.

A comprehensive performance accountability system focuses on achieving continuous improvement of workforce investment activities (America's Workforce Network, 2001). The WIA uses the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence as a proposed framework for enabling organizations within the workforce investment system to advance toward high performance (America's Workforce Network). According to Malcolm Baldrige literature, continuous improvement is the systematic and ongoing improvements of products, programs, services and processes by

small increments and major breakthroughs (America's Workforce Network). The process of continuous improvement is building dynamic, high achieving systems within every organization, and becomes embedded in the way the organization conducts its daily activities (America's Workforce Network).

The Workforce Investment Act's Continuous Improvement strategy is aimed at improving outcomes for the customers of the workforce investment systems by enhancing system-wide performance (America's Workforce Network, 2001). A rigorous approach to continuous improvement must be applied at all levels of the workforce investment system in order for that system to achieve the high levels of performance envisioned in the WIA (America's Workforce Network). An integral part of a continuous improvement strategy is the determination of customer expectations and satisfaction. According to the WIA, customer satisfaction is both a process of identifying and listening to customers, as well as an outcome for measuring program success (America's Workforce Network). The Workforce Investment Act emphasizes the importance of a customer-driven workforce system by including customer satisfaction as a required measure, along with core indicators of performance (America's Workforce Network). Customer satisfaction measures provide feedback to supervisors and staff about how their actions affect customers, giving them critical information to motivate and guide continuous improvement. Customer satisfaction feedback also sends a clear message to

staff, management, and customers that customers do matter (America's Workforce Network). The WIA uses the following guiding principles for measurement of customer satisfaction:

- Customer satisfaction is the foundation of an organization's strategy for continuous improvement.
- Customer satisfaction should be measured after completion of service and should be quantifiable.
- Customer satisfaction surveys need to contain a set of required questions to form a customer satisfaction indicator.
- Comparability is an important element in negotiating customer satisfaction performance levels and in providing opportunities for benchmarking and sharing best practices.
- States and local organizations are encouraged to add customized questions to inform their efforts to align resources or redesign processes to achieve better results.

In requiring a customer satisfaction indicator for employers and participants, the Act presents a general framework for developing a national approach (America's Workforce Network, 2001). Customer satisfaction indicators are the specific part of the performance accountability system and are the foundation of an organization's strategy for continuous improvement (America's Workforce Network).

The indicators provide a guide to achieving the vision and goals of the Act, and provide a focused and structured process for Job Centers to listen and learn from their customers (America's Workforce Network). The WIA proposes the use of customer satisfaction surveys to meet customer satisfaction requirements. Surveying customers serves two purposes; first it produces an outcome measure for each state as part of the performance accountability system (America's Workforce Network). This is accomplished by a small set questions that will form the customer satisfaction index.

The second purpose is to gain customer feedback to assist in improving processes and services (America's Workforce Network). This is done through a set of recommended questions that address each service component offered and additional questions that state and local areas choose to ask, depending on their particular needs and services.

Under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act, One Stop Job Centers were assigned the responsibilities to ensure the creation and maintenance of a delivery system that enhances the range and quality of workforce development services (DOLETA, 2001). There are currently seventy-eight job centers in the state of Wisconsin (DOLETA). These centers provide an integrated array of high quality services for workers, job seekers, and businesses so that services can be found in one location (DOLETA). These services and programs include the assessment of skills, abilities, and needs; access to labor market information, career counseling; job search and job placement assistance; and information on training and education (DOLETA). Related supportive services such as day care and transportation are also available (DOLETA).

Job Center self-service approaches allow access for all population groups to a broad array of services and information (D'Amico, Fedrav, Kimball, Midling, & Soukamneuth, 1999). Customers are empowered to select those service offerings from which they think they can derive the most benefit and do so at the times that are most convenient for them (D'Amico et al, 1999).

According to the WIA, a thorough approach to continuous improvement must be applied to Job Centers in order for the workforce investment system to achieve high levels of performance pictured by the Act (DOLETA, 2001). This approach would provide a regimen for achieving the systematic and ongoing improvement of Job Center programs, services, and processes by small increments and major breakthroughs (DOLETA). This regimen will foster development in performance levels desired by Job Centers in the workforce investment system (DOLETA). The determination of customer's expectations and satisfaction is an integral part of a Job Center's continuous improvement strategy.

Emphasis on continuous improvement led the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) to enhance its performance measurement systems. The primary focus of the agency's performance measurement efforts has been to develop a system to measure services provided through the Connecticut Works Job Centers (Schack, 1999). This initial emphasis on continuous improvement led to efforts linking desired outcomes of services with key process measures in order to provide managers and staff with some primary routes of exploration when attempting to improve outcomes (Schack). As a

result of these continued performance efforts, CTDOL's customer satisfaction index has remained stable during an intense transition period, as Job Centers transformed into One-Stop Career Centers (Schack). The percentage of clients reporting they waited too long for service decreased from 13 percent to 8 percent, while the percentage of clients entering employment increased by over 50 percent to 15 percent over a two year span (Schack). Information obtained through the use of the agencies performance measurement system can be used to assist in future service and program planning and resource allocations.

Customer Satisfaction

In the 'new economy' knowledge is a resource as well as, increasingly, a product: with tangible goods becoming globally standardized and best practices travelling fast, companies gain competitive advantages through constant innovation, better targeting of customers and additional services (McColl-Kennedy & Schneider, 2000). In the face of current economic realities, U.S. business organizations are searching for ways to remain competitive (McColl-Kennedy & Schneider). One front on which these efforts have been made is that of product and service quality improvement. This has been the case particularly for organizations in the growing service sector (McColl-Kennedy & Schneider). Many of these organizations are searching for practical ways to improve customer satisfaction with both tangible and intangible products and services (Hayes, 1998).

The anticipated result of improved service quality is an improvement in the bottom line of the organization (Tompkins, 1992; Weaver, 1994). To increase the quality of products and services, there first needs to be a definition of quality. The definition presented by Montgomery (1996) states that quality is the extent to which products meet requirements of people who use them (Hayes, 1998). Aspects of quality can be measured. Such measures give businesses an accurate indication of the “well-being” of their business processes and determine the quality of products and services resulting from these processes (Hayes). Measures allow a business to (1) Know how well the business process is working, (2) Know where to make changes to create improvements, if changes are needed, and (3) Determine if the changes led to improvements (Hayes). Various techniques can index the quality of business processes, products, and services. Measures of quality often focus on objective or hard indices (Hayes). However there have been increased desires to utilize more subjective or soft measures as indicators of quality. These measures are considered soft, because of their focus on perceptions and attitudes rather than concrete, objective criteria (Hayes). Knowledge of customers’ perceptions and attitudes about an organization’s business will greatly enhance its opportunity to make better business decisions (Hayes). Organizations will know their customers’ requirements or expectations and will be able to determine if they are meeting those requirements (Hayes). With accurate information about customers’ perceptions about the quality of the services and products, organizations can make better decisions to better serve their customers.

A 1994 survey conducted by the Juran Institute found that 90 percent of the top managers of the more than 200 of America's largest companies agreed with the statement, "Maximizing customer satisfaction will maximize profitability and market share". And, about 90 percent of these companies evidenced their belief by funding some organized effort for systematically tracking and improving customer satisfaction scores (Vavra, 1997). Satisfaction extends customers' lifetimes and their lifetime values (Vavra). It has been found that more than 90 percent of dissatisfied customers will not exert their own effort to inform a company of complaints, they simply take their business to a competitor while voicing their dissatisfaction to other potential customers (Vavra). If organizations take the time and effort to assess their current customers' satisfactions, they take a major step towards having a business that is customer oriented, both for today's current customers and for future customers (Vavra).

Customer satisfaction represents one of several components used to examine the quality of organizational staff and programs. In the private sector, organizations employ both objective and subjective measures to assess the quality of their work (Weiler, Pigg, & Morgan, 2000). Especially in business and industry, organizations often use client satisfaction surveys to assess the quality of their programs, products, services, and employee performance (Weiler, Pigg, & Morgan). According to Hayes (1998), measures of customer satisfaction prove particularly useful when quality cannot be measured completely through objective means.

Customer satisfaction surveys provide an indication of how customers perceive a situation (Weiler, Pigg, & Morgan, 2000). Since perception often represents reality for the individual, measures of client satisfaction provide a potentially valuable source of information, both for administrators and evaluators (Weiler, Pigg, & Morgan). The measurement of customers' attitudes has been an important element in the quality movement of American organizations (Hayes, 1998).

SERVQUAL Approach

The combination of a competitive marketplace and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) has heightened the awareness of American companies of the need to focus their quality improvement efforts on customer-related issues (Hayes, 1998). There is both an intuitive belief and mounting empirical evidence that improved customer satisfaction will increase organizational profitability (Vavra, 1997). Accounting Professor David Larcker of the Wharton Business School has determined that companies in the top quartile of customer satisfaction (according to the American Customer Satisfaction Index model) experience a higher appreciation in stock values than did the overall S&P 500 (Vavra).

Customer satisfaction has been defined as the degree in which an organization or agency meets or exceeds the expectations of the individual customer with whom employees interact with (Bridge, Fischer, & Larisch, 1995). According to Reichfield and Sasser (1990), high-quality products and associated services designed to meet customer needs, will create high levels of customer satisfaction.

This high level of satisfaction will lead to greatly increased customer loyalty (Vavra, 1997). Customers describe a product or service in terms of several dimensions or characteristics. The purpose of determining customer requirements is to establish a comprehensive list of all the important quality dimensions that describe the service or product (Hayes, 1992). It is important to understand the quality dimensions so that organizations will know how customers define the quality of their service or product (Hayes, 1992). With evidence that service quality leads to customer satisfaction, considerable practitioner interest has focused on programs to improve service quality (Shepard, 1999). Researchers (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) have concluded that service quality can be described on the basis of 10 dimensions (Hayes, 1992). Attempts to measure these 10 dimensions, however, reveal that customers can only distinguish between five dimensions, suggesting that the original 10 dimensions overlap each other (Hayes, 1992). These attempts lead to the development of the SERVQUAL Approach (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) which uses the five dimensions that customers use to evaluate service quality. These dimensions are listed as:

- Tangibles: Appearance of the physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.
- Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

- Assurance: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
- Empathy: Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers.

The SERVQUAL model was designed to be a generic measure of service quality that has cross-industry applicability (Shepard, 1999). With evidence that service quality leads to satisfaction and customer loyalty, the SERVQUAL model can offer diagnostic insights useful in efforts to assess and improve customer satisfaction (Shepard).

Identifying and quantifying customer perceptions by service dimension will support better prioritization by an organization in developing future service improvements (Donnelly and Shiu, 1999). Successful applications of the SERVQUAL approach continue to be reported in professional and academic literature, indicating at least a practical usefulness in providing supporting evidence to underpin management intervention to improve service quality (Donnelly, Hull, and Will, 2000). The reliability and validity of this model have been evaluated from numerous perspectives, and the general conclusion is that the model and its five dimensions have sound psychometric properties (Tomkovick and Al-Khatib, 1996).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The purpose of this research was to develop and implement a customer satisfaction instrument that would examine the satisfaction of walk-in clients using the programs, services, and technical assistance provided by Wisconsin Job Centers in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties. Subjects from this study consisted of individuals from the Chippewa Valley and surrounding area who used the Job Center Resource Rooms in each county. There were 121 individuals who participated in the study during the final week of June and the first three weeks of July, 2001.

Instrument

Data was collected using a customer satisfaction survey, an instrument designed exclusively for this evaluation project. The customer satisfaction survey was developed and conducted to gain insight from customers regarding the Job Center's effectiveness in providing programs, services, and assistance. The instrument was a modification of the SERVQUAL customer satisfaction survey and was intended to correspond with the five dimensions of service quality formed from the SERVQUAL Approach. Customers responded to four items relating to demographics, twenty-four items concerning the five service quality dimensions, and three questions involving overall satisfaction with the resource rooms, staff, and Job Centers in general.

One open-ended question to elicit qualitative data was also included in the survey. A copy of the comments is attached (Appendix A). Customers responded to the twenty-seven items on a Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). A copy of the instrument is attached (Appendix B).

Procedure

The instrument was distributed by staff to customers who used the Job Center resource rooms in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties during the final week of June and the first three weeks in July, 2001. Job Center staff approached customers using the resource rooms explained the purpose of the survey and asked the customers to participate. Customers who agreed to participate were given instructions on completing the survey and where to return the surveys when completed. Completed surveys were placed in an enclosed container used specifically for this study. Customers with multiple visits to the Job Centers were instructed to complete the survey only once.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Tables 1 through 4 represent demographic data of all respondents who participated in the study. The demographic variables examined are gender, education level, services used, and age.

Table 1 reveals the number and percentage of representation for each gender. Nearly 63% of the respondents were male, with 37 % being female.

Table 1

Frequency and Percent of Respondents Gender

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Male	76	62.8
	Female	45	37.2
	Total	121	100.00
Missing	System		
Total		121	

Table 2 reports the education level of each respondent who participated. Of the respondents surveyed, 81 (67%) held at least a high school diploma or GED and 14 (11.7%) had an Associate Degree.

Table 2

Frequency and Percent of Respondents Education Level

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	High School/GED	81	67.5
	Associate Degree	14	11.7
	Bachelor Degree	8	6.7
	None of the Above	10	8.3
	Less than High School	7	5.8
	Master Degree	0	0.0
	Doctorate Degree	0	0.0
	Total	120	100.00
Missing	System	1	
Total		121	

Table 3 represents the age distribution of the respondents. There were 38 (31.7%) participants who fell into the age group 16 to 24. Between the ages 25 to 39 there were 39 (32.5%) participants, which represents the largest age group. Thirty-three (27.5%) participants were between the ages of 40 and 54.

Table 3
Frequency and Percent of Respondents Age

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Age 16-24	38	31.7
	Age 25-39	39	32.5
	Age 40-54	33	27.5
	Age 55-64	8	6.7
	Age 65 or older	2	1.7
	Total	120	100.00
Missing	System	1	
Total		121	

Table 4 reports the services used by participants during the time of the study. Approximately 74% of the respondents used services designated for job searching followed by services involving labor market information (7%) and skill/interest assessments (6%).

Table 4
Frequency and Percent of Job Center Services Used

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Skill/Interest Assessment	7	5.8
	Job Search	89	73.6
	Obtain Labor Market Information	8	6.6
	Participate in Workshop	2	1.7
	Learn Job Seeking Skills	4	3.3
	Training for Specific Job Skills	2	1.7
	Retraining to Change Career	2	1.7
	Public Aid	5	4.1
	Visit Case Manager	2	1.7
	Total	121	100.00
Missing	System		
Total		121	

Tables 5 through 8 report results regarding demographics and the average overall satisfaction of the three combined Job Centers. Demographic tables were divided into four areas; gender, education level, services used, and age. Overall satisfaction was rated on a five point Likert-style scale. The scale ranges from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

Table 5

Gender and Overall Satisfaction Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Male	4.44	.82	72
Female	4.67	.75	43

Table 6

Level of Education and Overall Satisfaction Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
High School/GED	4.48	.87	77
Associates Degree	4.79	.42	14
Bachelor Degree	4.75	.46	8
None of the Above	4.11	.92	9
Less than High School Degree	4.83	.41	6

Table 7

Services Used and Overall Satisfaction Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Skill/Interest Assessment	4.50	.84	6
Job Search	4.51	.83	84
Obtain Labor Market Information	4.75	.46	8
Participate in Workshop	5.00	.00	2
Learn Job Seeking Skills	4.75	.50	4
Training for Specific Job Skills	3.00	.00	2
Retraining to Change Career	4.00	1.41	2
Public Aid	4.80	.45	5
Visit Case Manager	5.00	.00	2

Table 8

Age and Overall Satisfaction Average

	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Ages 16-24	4.57	.81	35
Ages 25-39	4.49	.73	37
Ages 40-54	4.47	.95	32
Ages 55-64	4.63	.52	8
Ages 65 and older	5.00	.00	2

Tables 9 through 13 report the measured results of the customer service dimensions regarding overall satisfaction for the three Job Centers. Questions were broken down into 1 of 5 dimensions, 'Tangibles', 'Reliability', 'Responsiveness', 'Assurance', or 'Empathy'. Elements of each dimension consistently averaged between Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5) on a five point Likert-typed scale. The elements that customers rated the highest in satisfaction are, 'Staff was courteous and polite' ($\underline{M}=4.70$; $sd=.63$), 'Staff was easily approachable to answer questions' ($\underline{M}=4.56$; $sd=.72$), 'Staff was always willing to help' ($\underline{M}=4.54$; $sd=.74$), 'Staff was knowledgeable in answering questions' ($\underline{M}=4.54$; $sd=.74$), and 'Staff gave prompt services' ($\underline{M}=4.53$; $sd=.74$). The elements that customers rated the lowest in satisfaction are, 'The online website is an accurate source of information about services' ($\underline{M}=4.21$; $sd=.91$), 'Job Center materials met my needs' ($\underline{M}=4.22$; $sd=.95$), 'Job listings provided were current and accurate' ($\underline{M}=4.27$; $sd=.93$), and 'Staff understood my specific needs' ($\underline{M}=4.30$; $sd=.84$).

Table 9

Tangible Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Directional signs were clear and helpful	4.42	.75
Material was in the proper places when needed	4.42	.76
It was easy to find out when the Job Center hours were	4.40	.83
The online website is an accurate source of information about services	4.21	.91
Job Center had visually appealing promotional material	4.40	.82
Job Center facility was visually appealing	4.45	.80
Staff was dressed professionally	4.46	.82

Table 10

Reliability Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Computer printers in good working order were available when I needed them	4.45	.76
Handout materials were helpful	4.35	.81
Job Center materials met my needs	4.22	.95
Computers dedicated for online use in good working order were available when I needed them	4.40	.76
Job listings provided were current and accurate	4.27	.93

Table 11

Responsiveness Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff was always willing to help when I needed them	4.54	.74
Staff gave prompt services	4.53	.74
Staff knew where to find general information	4.48	.79

Table 12

Assurance Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff was courteous and polite	4.70	.63
Staff was knowledgeable in answering questions	4.54	.74
Staff instilled confidence when answering questions	4.48	.84

Table 13

Empathy Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff understood my specific needs	4.30	.84
Job Center has convenient operating hours	4.40	.77
Staff was willing to give individual attention	4.48	.77
Computer services were easy to use	4.46	.76
Staff was easily approachable to answer questions	4.56	.72
Staff made a strong effort to meet my requests	4.41	.86

Table 14 presents the means for satisfaction level of all participants regarding the resource room, staff, and overall satisfaction of the Job Centers. The mean score for overall satisfaction with the Job Centers was (M=4.53; sd=.79).

Table 14

Overall Satisfaction Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am satisfied with the Job Center staff	4.55	.77
I am satisfied with the Job Center Resource Room	4.57	.72
Overall I am satisfied with the Job Center	4.53	.79

Tables 15 through 17 present the means for level of satisfaction for each element at the three Job Centers.

Table 15 reports the means for level of satisfaction for each element at the Chippewa County Job Center. The elements that customers rated the highest in satisfaction are, 'Staff was courteous and polite' ($\underline{M}=4.38$; $sd=1.02$), 'Directional signs were clear and helpful' ($\underline{M}=4.36$; $sd=.95$), and 'Computer printers in good working order were available when I needed them' ($\underline{M}=4.36$; $sd=1.00$). The elements that customers rated the lowest in satisfaction are, 'Job listings provided were current and accurate' ($\underline{M}=3.91$; $sd=1.27$), 'Job Center materials met my needs' ($\underline{M}=4.05$; $sd=1.05$), and 'Job Center had visually appealing promotional material' ($\underline{M}=4.09$; $sd=1.11$).

Table 15

Chippewa County Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Directional signs were clear and helpful	4.36	.95
Material was in the proper places when needed	4.31	.99
It was easy to find out when the Job Center hours were	4.18	1.05
The online website is an accurate source of information about services	4.13	1.08
Job Center had visually appealing promotional material	4.09	1.11
Job Center facility was visually appealing	4.14	1.17
Staff was dressed professionally	4.18	1.01
Computer printers in good working order were available when I needed them	4.36	1.00
Handout materials were helpful	4.23	.92
Job Center materials met my needs	4.05	1.05
Computers dedicated for online use in good working order were available when I needed them	4.32	.89
Job Listings provided were current and accurate	3.91	1.27
Staff was always willing to help	4.23	1.09
Staff gave prompt services	4.24	1.04
Staff knew where to find general information	4.24	1.09

Staff was courteous and polite	4.38	1.02
Staff was knowledgeable in answering questions	4.19	1.08
Staff instilled confidence when answering questions	4.24	1.09
Staff understood my specific needs	4.10	.94
Job Center has convenient operating hours	4.10	1.04
Staff was willing to give individual attention	4.14	1.06
Computer services were easy to use	4.29	1.06
Staff was easily approachable to answer questions	4.24	1.04
Staff made a strong effort to meet my requests	4.14	1.06
I am satisfied with the Job Center staff	4.14	1.06
I am satisfied with the Job Center Resource Room	4.24	1.04
Overall I am satisfied with the Job Center	4.24	1.04

Table 16 presents the means for level of satisfaction for each element at the Dunn County Job Center. The elements that customers rated the highest in satisfaction are, ‘Staff was courteous and polite’ ($\underline{M}=4.82$; $sd=.39$), ‘Staff was easily approachable to answer questions’ ($\underline{M}=4.80$; $sd=.48$), and ‘Staff was always willing to help’ ($\underline{M}=4.76$; $sd=.50$). The attributes that customers rated the lowest in satisfaction are, ‘Handout materials were helpful’ ($\underline{M}=4.34$; $sd=.87$), ‘The online website is an accurate source of information about services’ ($\underline{M}=4.37$; $sd=.84$), and ‘Staff was dressed professionally’ ($\underline{M}=4.39$; $sd=.93$).

Table 16

Dunn County Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Directional signs were clear and helpful	4.44	.81
Material was in the proper places when needed	4.53	.77
It was easy to find out when the Job Center hours were	4.61	.80
The online website is an accurate source of information about services	4.37	.84
Job Center had visually appealing promotional material	4.39	.84
Job Center facility was visually appealing	4.61	.77
Staff was dressed professionally	4.39	.93
Computer printers in good working order were available when I needed them	4.47	.81

Handout materials were helpful	4.34	.87
Job Center materials met my needs	4.39	.93
Computers dedicated for online use in good working order were available when I needed them	4.53	.81
Job Listings provided were current and accurate	4.44	.84
Staff was always willing to help	4.76	.50
Staff gave prompt services	4.70	.68
Staff knew where to find general information	4.70	.53
Staff was courteous and polite	4.82	.39
Staff was knowledgeable in answering questions	4.70	.56
Staff instilled confidence when answering questions	4.70	.56
Staff understood my specific needs	4.52	.80
Job Center has convenient operating hours	4.64	.55
Staff was willing to give individual attention	4.58	.61
Computer services were easy to use	4.63	.61
Staff was easily approachable to answer questions	4.80	.48
Staff made a strong effort to meet my requests	4.70	.61
I am satisfied with the Job Center staff	4.80	.47
I am satisfied with the Job Center Resource Room	4.77	.50
Overall I am satisfied with the Job Center	4.79	.42

Table 17 reports the means for level of satisfaction for each element at the Eau Claire County Job Center. The elements that customers rated the highest in satisfaction are, 'Staff was courteous and polite' (M=4.73; sd=.52), 'Staff was dressed professionally' (M=4.60; sd=.64), and 'Staff was knowledgeable in answering questions' (M=4.58; sd=.72). The elements that customers rated the lowest in satisfaction are, 'The online website is an accurate source of information about services' (M=4.15; sd=.88), 'Job Center materials met my needs' (M=4.18; sd=.93), and 'Staff understood my specific needs' (M=4.27; sd=.82).

Table 17

Eau Claire County Averages

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Directional signs were clear and helpful	4.43	.64
Material was in the proper places when needed	4.40	.66
It was easy to find out when the Job Center hours were	4.37	.73
The online website is an accurate source of information about services	4.15	.88
Job Center had visually appealing promotional material	4.52	.67
Job Center facility was visually appealing	4.46	.62
Staff was dressed professionally	4.60	.64
Computer printers in good working order were available when I needed them	4.48	.62
Handout materials were helpful	4.39	.74
Job Center materials met my needs	4.18	.93
Computers dedicated for online use in good working order were available when I needed them	4.36	.68
Job Listings provided were current and accurate	4.31	.82
Staff was always willing to help	4.53	.68
Staff gave prompt services	4.53	.62
Staff knew where to find general information	4.45	.77

Staff was courteous and polite	4.73	.52
Staff was knowledgeable in answering questions	4.58	.72
Staff instilled confidence when answering questions	4.44	.84
Staff understood my specific needs	4.27	.82
Job Center has convenient operating hours	4.38	.74
Staff was willing to give individual attention	4.54	.70
Computer services were easy to use	4.43	.70
Staff was easily approachable to answer questions	4.55	.65
Staff made a strong effort to meet my requests	4.38	.87
I am satisfied with the Job Center staff	4.57	.72
I am satisfied with the Job Center Resource Room	4.58	.65
Overall I am satisfied with the Job Center	4.49	.83

A correlation analysis was used to identify linkages between the performance attributes and overall satisfaction. Results revealed that all correlations were significant and ranging from 0.64 to 0.86. The largest correlation found with overall satisfaction was 'Staff instilled confidence when answering questions' (0.86). Other attributes highly correlated with overall satisfaction were 'Satisfaction with Job Center staff' (0.84), 'Satisfaction with resource room' (0.84), and 'Staff was easily approachable to answer questions' (0.81). Low correlation's with overall satisfaction were 'Computers dedicated for online use in good working order were available when I needed them' (0.64), 'It was easy to find out when the Job Center hours were' (0.65), and 'Job listings provided were current and accurate' (0.66). All five dimensions are well correlated with overall satisfaction with 'Assurance' having the highest correlation.

To further explore and describe the relative importance of each performance attribute's influence on overall satisfaction, the twenty-four performance variables were entered into the model regressed against overall satisfaction as the dependent variable. The results showed that 74% of the variations in overall satisfaction can be explained by the attribute, 'Staff instilled confidence when answering questions' (stepwise $R=.858$, $R^2=.736$, overall $F=284.12$ and significance of $F=0.00$). The attribute, 'Job center materials met my needs' contributed a 6.8% change in variation of overall satisfaction when regressed with the first variable.

The two predictors explain 80% of the variation in overall satisfaction (stepwise $R=.897$, $R^2=.804$, overall $F=207.28$ and significance of $F=0.00$). To increase overall satisfaction, it is reasonable to focus the Job Center's improvement efforts on these two attributes.

A forced five-factor solution (based on principal axis factoring with oblique rotations, $\delta = -0.5$) yielded the results shown in table 18. It can be seen from table 18 that the first factor accounted for almost 75 % of the variation in the data set, with little justification for extracting further factors.

Table 18
Factor Analysis of Survey Data

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	19.390	74.576	74.576
2	1.297	4.988	79.564
3	.866	3.331	82.895
4	.739	2.844	85.739
5	.650	2.499	88.238

The factor analysis indicates that the loadings of factor 1 are very high. It revealed (Table 19) that the 'Empathy' and 'Reliability' dimensions appear relatively unambiguous but that there is an overlap between two of the a priori factors. The 'Tangible' dimension appears to split into two separate factors.

Factor 1 includes all of the 'Responsiveness' items along with three items from the 'Assurance' dimension and three from the 'Empathy' dimension. These nine dimensions relate to staff responsiveness and insight into the customer's needs.

Factor 2 includes two of seven items from the 'Tangible' dimension, one from the 'Reliability' dimension, and a item from the 'Empathy' dimension. Items relate to ease of use and accessibility of resources and staff.

Factor 3 includes five of six items from the 'Empathy' dimension and an item from the 'Reliability' dimension.

Factor 4 includes four items from the 'Tangible' dimension and one item from the 'Reliability' dimension. Items relate to visual appearance of physical surroundings and staff, which strongly associate with the 'Tangible' dimension.

Factor 5 includes four of five items from the 'Reliability' item. The items are a fairly good replication of the 'Reliability' dimension.

Table 19

Items of High Correlations With Each of the Five Factors

Performance Attribute	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Directional signs were clear and helpful	.34	.71	.23	.27	.27
Material was in the proper places when needed	.28	.66	.26	.48	.19
It was easy to find out when the Job Center hours were	.34	.47	.46	.29	.22
The online website is an accurate source of information about services	.26	.47	.48	.38	.41
Job Center facility was visually appealing	.39	.30	.20	.75	.20
Staff was dressed professionally	.26	.32	.19	.81	.11
Computer printers in good working order were available when I needed them	.35	.62	.17	.28	.44
Handout materials met my needs	.47	.29	.35	.36	.52
Job Center materials met my needs	.37	.11	.18		.76
Job Listings provided were current and accurate	.46	.48	.53	.16	.25
Staff was always willing to help	.80	.29	.23	.24	.30

Staff gave prompt services	.82	.31	.26	.24	.20
Staff knew where to find general information	.82	.30	.30	.20	.24
Staff was courteous and polite	.63	.66		.22	.19
Staff was knowledgeable in answering questions	.83	.35	.18	.23	.18
Staff instilled confidence when answering questions	.82	.22	.28	.31	.28
Staff understood my specific needs	.53	.14	.71	.21	.26
Job Center has convenient operating hours	.36	.53	.66	.23	.12
Staff was willing to give individual attention	.72	.34	.44	.27	.16
Computer services were easy to use	.45	.63	.41	.28	.17
Staff was easily approachable to answer questions	.80	.32	.22	.32	.21
Staff made a strong effort to meet my requests	.71	.27	.48	.32	.17

These outcomes therefore suggest a slightly different orientation of the original SERVQUAL dimensions, perhaps into the groupings:

- Responsiveness and Insight;
- Accessibility and Ease of Use;
- Reliability;
- Tangibles;
- Empathy

Results concerning 'Empathy' and 'Tangibles' dimensions are consistent with a previously reported study involving SERVQUAL in the business and marketing sector (e.g. Donnelly, Hull, & Will, 2000).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This paper examined the satisfaction of walk-in clients using the programs, services, and technical assistance provided by One-Stop Job Centers in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties. The reliability and validity of the five quality dimensions identified through the SERVQUAL Approach and used for this paper was also examined. Through this research we have identified the areas that customers rated high in satisfaction and what variables essentially contribute to overall satisfaction. In addition, based on demographic data taken, the investigator was able to report the characteristics of the customers using the Job Centers and what services are being used.

Data was analyzed on each of the twenty-seven items used to initially determine a customer's satisfaction level. The purpose of this analysis was to establish what programs, services, and assistance customers were satisfied and not satisfied with. Consistent with past customer satisfaction research, satisfaction was rated fairly high across all variables. Individuals rated staff responsiveness and effort of staff to assist customers when needed highest in satisfaction. Individuals rated the accuracy of website materials, such as employment listings lowest in satisfaction. In addition, meeting the needs of the customers was rated lower in satisfaction. Overall customers were very satisfied with Job Center staff, the resource rooms and the three Job Centers in general.

A regression analysis was employed on twenty-four performance variables used to determine satisfaction. This was carried out to determine the relative weight each

performance attribute's ratings have on overall satisfaction. Data suggested that to increase satisfaction, it is reasonable to focus improvement efforts on the confidence customer's feel when helped by Job Center staff. This attribute has the strongest affect on overall satisfaction. In addition, meeting the needs of the customers had a relatively strong effect on overall satisfaction and should be noted when focusing on service improvement.

To determine if the attributes based on performance ratings assigned to those attributes are grouped into the correct dimensions a Factor Analysis was used. The Factor Analysis can simplify the customer satisfaction instrument used, by identifying the performance attributes that best represent the evaluative dimensions and eliminating attributes that overlap. Results revealed that the 'Empathy' and 'Reliability' dimensions emerge relatively accurate. The 'Tangible' dimension appears to split into two separate factors and there seems to be overlap between the remaining two factors. The results therefore recommend a slightly different orientation of the original SERVQUAL dimensions, perhaps separated into dimensions: 'Responsiveness and Insight', 'Accessibility and Ease of Use', 'Reliability', 'Tangibles' and 'Empathy'.

The modified SERVQUAL instrument shows high reliability in each dimension as well as overall. However, data reveals an overlapping of the 'Responsiveness', 'Accessibility', and 'Tangibles' dimensions suggesting that further research is needed to identify additional elements important to customer satisfaction.

There were 121 subjects who participated in this study, extending the data collection period would be valuable in gathering a larger subject size and as a result discover more variation among the ratings. The months of June and July are traditionally used for vacations, conducting the study during a different time of the year may also increase the number of individuals who could take part.

Additional research may include examining the remaining Job Centers that are part of the Workforce Development Area in Northwestern Wisconsin. Further research may involve looking into services such as Green Thumb, youth groups, job coaching, and individualized training more thoroughly. Improving the working relationships with local employers and educational institutions could involve investigating organizational recruitment success and training effectiveness when supported by the Job Centers.

Using the information obtained from this research, Job Center services can be fine-tuned to meet the customers needs and expectations. The outcomes will provide insight to Job Center staff on the effectiveness and relevance of services and tools used by customers. With this information the Job Centers will be able to recognize areas that are utilized the most, need improvement, and have not fulfilled the needs of its customers.

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Appendix A

Additional Comments

Chippewa County Job Center

“It was easy to get on the computer”

“It helps people find a really good job”

“I wish there was more general labor for less experienced”

Dunn County Job Center

“I think this is a good idea.” “I am from Indiana and we have nothing like this”

“Everyone is awesome”

“Very understanding and helpful, always have been there for me”

“Quite impressed with the operation”

“Front desk staff was very professional and always ready to help with my needs”

Eau Claire County Job Center

“I really am glad there are places I can go and look for work” “I just moved here from Racine, WI and I really like it here.” “Thank you for making this place my home”

“This is a great resource-equipment, staff, and information-Thank you”

“It’s a friendly place to search for work”

“Thank you for the resource room.” “It’s organized and precise and staff is professional and proficient”

“Why can’t you leave things like they were.” “Put the city back on where the job is”

“I appreciate having a childcare facility that is free”

“Very friendly place and also quiet so one can think.” “Thanks”

“Keep up the good work, it helps all of us”

“I was able to find information here that is not available at other places”

“Was very fast & resourceful!” “Thank you”

“Wonderful workers/staff.” “They always do a great job”

“Good job!”

“I was not aware that there were this many services in this place”

Customer Satisfaction 60

	SD	D	N	A	SA
The online website is an accurate source of information about services provided by the Job Center.	1	2	3	4	5
Job Center had visually appealing promotional material.	1	2	3	4	5
Job Center facility was visually appealing.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff was dressed professionally.	1	2	3	4	5
Computer printers in good working order were available when I needed them.	1	2	3	4	5
Handout materials were helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
Job Center materials met my needs.	1	2	3	4	5
Computers dedicated for online use in good working order were available when I needed them.	1	2	3	4	5
Job listings provided were current and accurate.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff was always willing to help.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff gave prompt services.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff knew where to find general information.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff was courteous and polite.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff was knowledgeable in answering questions.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff instilled confidence when answering questions.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff understood my specific needs.	1	2	3	4	5
Job Center has convenient operating hours.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff was willing to give individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5
Computer services were easy to use.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff was easily approachable to answer questions.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff made a strong effort to meet my requests.	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the Job Center staff.	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the Job Center Resource Room.	1	2	3	4	5

Customer Satisfaction 61

	SD	D	N	A	SA
Overall I am satisfied with the Job Center.	1	2	3	4	5

Additional Comments:

Thank you for your participation in this study.