

CHARTERED MANAGEMENT INSTITUTION  
DIPLOMA IN MANAGEMENT

UNIT 5008  
MARKETING PLANNING



Name: Helen Griffiths

Company: Serco at the Defence Academy

Membership No: 4158686

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Tutor: Val Brown

## **History of the Defence Academy**

The Defence Academy is the UK Defence's Higher Educational Institution - and a key component of operational capability. The Academy is comprised of the Royal College of Defence Studies, the Joint Services Command and Staff College, the Defence College of Management and Technology, the Advanced Research and Assessment Group, and the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre. The Academy has three strategic partners – King's College London, Serco Defence and Aerospace, and Cranfield University – who provide our academic and facilities support. The Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC) trains the future commanders and staff officers of all three UK Armed Services and those from many countries around the world.

Serco are a facilities management company contracted by the MOD to run various aspects of the JSCSC. They provide support through training services, logistics, estates, finance, travel and Sports and fitness.

I am employed by Serco to run the JSCSC fitness suite and sports fields. My role at the college is Head of Sports and Fitness. I am a lone worker, I have no staff and report to my line manager only.

## Contents

<b>Part A – Me and Serco</b>	<b>4 - 12</b>
<b>Part B – Putting customers first</b>	<b>12 - 14</b>
<b>Part C – The marketing planning process</b>	<b>14 - 17</b>
<b>Part D – Keeping customers happy</b>	<b>18-20</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>21</b>

## Part A – Me and Serco

### What is an organisation?

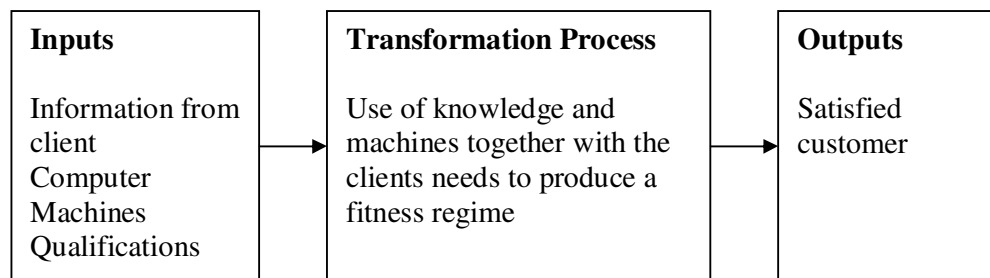
According to my self study guide an organisation is a collection of people or things, systems and processes which all have to work to the same end. Organisations contain common resources in the form of time, people, buildings, equipment, finance and some forms of services. Organisations can either be formal or informal by nature. A formal organisation is the planned co-ordination of activities of a number of people to achieve a common goal. An informal organisation exists within a formal organisation and arises from people forming a group to meet their own personal needs. Serco is a formal organisation.

### Understanding Serco as an open business

Serco is a private sector business organisation. Private sector is the part of the country's economy that consists of privately owned enterprises. Although Serco is a private sector organisation they are in place to facilitate public sector organisations like the armed forces. Serco is a public limited company which means that it is treated separate from the people within it and capable of owning property, employing people and making contracts. A public limited company must have shares available for purchase by the public and the company title must have Public limited company at the end.

### Organisation operations

Organisations can be seen as open systems that interact with their environment. This basically means that they take something from the environment and convert them into outputs that are passed back out to the environment. This idea can be shown in a simple **input output model**. I am going to use the example of someone wanting a fitness programme from me as an example of this at work:



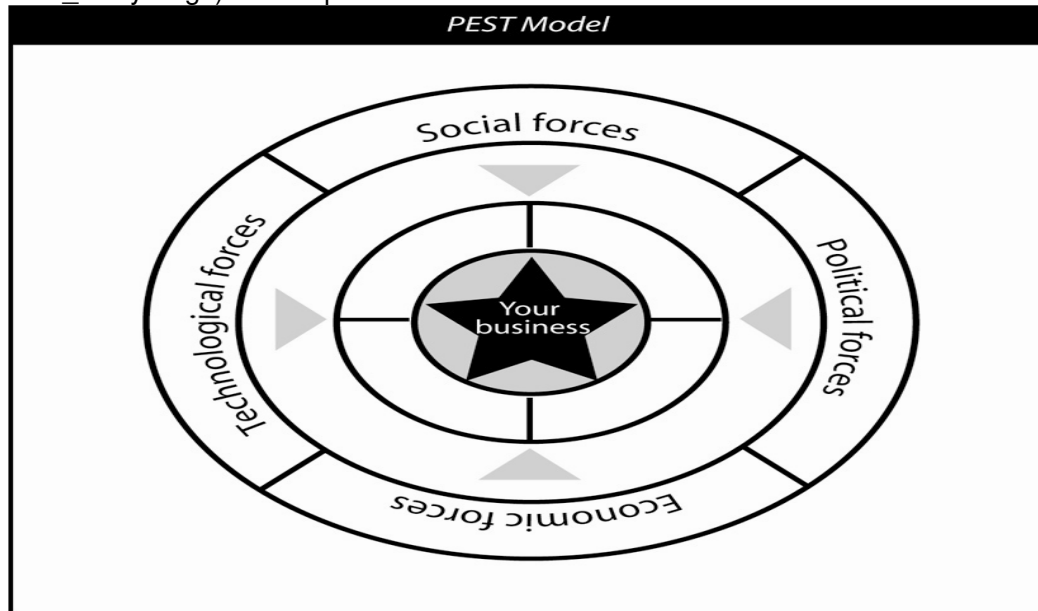
The diagram above explains what I need to have to be able to organise a fitness programme. I need the information from the client I need the machines in the gym I need the knowledge through qualifications and a computer to write it up. All these things together in the transformation process allow me to write the programme up and the output is the fitness programme.

Organisations never remain static. For many reasons the organisation has to change and this is often in response to some major outside driving force such as current market, money and dramatic changes in productivity. Change often occurs due to internal and external forces.

**Internal Force** – these can be changes in strategies, plans and ethical difficulties arising from employee behaviour, changes in organisational culture and changes in leadership.

**External Force** – these can be environmental issues, government regulations, new laws, and changes in interest and market rates.

The PEST model considers the organisations general external environment and provides it with the opportunities and threats that exist outside its boundaries. The PEST analysis is a useful tool for understanding market growth or decline, and as such the position, potential and direction for a business. The diagram below ([http://www.provenmodels.com/files/1e75ea74c642995ddc8cc85a9c41bbd7/large\\_PEST\\_analysis.gif](http://www.provenmodels.com/files/1e75ea74c642995ddc8cc85a9c41bbd7/large_PEST_analysis.gif)) is a simple PEST model.



A PEST analysis is a business measurement tool. PEST is an acronym for Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors, which are used to assess the market for a business or organizational unit. The PEST analysis headings are a framework for reviewing a situation, and can be used to review a strategy or position, direction of a company, a marketing proposition, or idea. The table below takes into account some issues using PEST for Serco:

Political	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological/environmental issues</li> <li>• Future legislation</li> <li>• European/international legislation</li> <li>• Regulatory bodies and processes</li> <li>• Government policies</li> <li>• Government term and change</li> <li>• Funding, grants and initiatives</li> <li>• Wars and conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• economy trends</li> <li>• General taxation issues</li> <li>• Taxation specific to product/services</li> <li>• Specific industry factors</li> <li>• Customer/end-user drivers</li> <li>• Interest and exchange rates</li> <li>• International trade/monetary issues</li> </ul>

Social	Technological
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lifestyle trends</li> <li>• Demographics</li> <li>• Consumer attitudes and opinions</li> <li>• Media views</li> <li>• Law changes affecting social factors</li> <li>• Major events and influences</li> <li>• Buying access and trends</li> <li>• Ethnic/religious factors</li> <li>• Ethical issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• competing technology development</li> <li>• research funding</li> <li>• Associated/dependent technologies</li> <li>• Replacement technology/solutions</li> <li>• Maturity of technology</li> <li>• Information and communications</li> <li>• Technology legislation</li> <li>• Global communications</li> </ul>

### Serco mission and values

According to the online dictionary, a mission statement is a summary describing the aims, values, and overall plan of an organization or individual.

The self study guide suggests that research had found that the best performing companies have statements with 9 common components.

As Serco is a facilities management company working in many contract all over the world there is one mission statement that sums up the way in which we work. Serco's mission statement is, 'Brining service to life'. Around the world people are experiencing a quality of service that makes a difference to their lives. Expectations are met and often surpassed because Serco enables those delivering the service to give their best.

This section of the site highlights just some of the ways our thousands of employees, operating hundreds of services in dozens of countries, are bringing service to life:

- Customer Focus
- Doing things Better and Smarter
- Adapting to People's Needs
- Drawing out the Best in People
- Doing things Reliably and Efficiently
- Adding Value

### Five Foundation Stones

The Five Foundation Stones define the way we will run and grow Serco. They set out the services we wish to provide, our behaviors and the way we manage. They ensure we are all working from a commonly understood base that can be consistently applied across our organisation.

1. Our Governing Principles: the behaviors we expect to see

- We foster an entrepreneurial culture
- we enable our people to excel
- we deliver our promises
- we build trust and respect

2. Our Business Model: the way we wish to build the business

- Long term relationships in which there is an opportunity for continuous improvement, organic growth and value creation

3. Our Business Offering: the services we wish to provide

- Assured delivery of services, innovation and organisational change to help our clients in achieving their ambitions.

4. Our Organisational Model: how Group, Divisions and Business Services interact

- Group focuses on the external stakeholder relationships, setting the strategic direction for the Group and maintaining the appropriate controls on the underlying business
- Divisions focus on delivering the value and growth
- Business Services focus on helping the divisions achieve the right returns at the most cost effective rate.

5. Our Operating Principles: the principles by which we will manage the company

- We have a simple efficient organisation
- We operate an effective governance framework
- We encourage strong and capable leaders

I will now compare the mission statement against the 9 principles.

Customers	The mission statement does not say who the customers are but that a service will occur
Product or service	Yes there is a service
Location	On all contract sites
Technology	We do not state the level of technology
Concern for survival	Yes we want to be the best service provider
Philosophy	Yes we should deliver a good service
Self concept	Yes we need to compete with other service providers
Concern for public image	Yes we do our best to support the local community also
Concern for employees	The mission statement says nothing of employees

The mission statement is rather broad and doesn't make aware the concern for employees or who the customers are just that a service will be provided to a high standard.

**Sercos values**

Hill et al (1998) in my self study guide describes values as what managers are trying to achieve through work and how they think they should behave. An organisations values must be in love with its purpose or mission and the vision that it is trying to achieve. Values should not just be a list of words that are not lived. There are several ways in which organisations values can be lived:

Communicate the values constantly – Sercos strive to do this by ensuring all our external communication has the statement on it. This is on letter heads and compliment slips etc

Enrol new folk – all new staff go through an intense induction package on their first week of work. The business assurance manager spends a lot of time during this week with the new starters talking through with them the way in which Serco operates and the way forward.

Visit and refresh the values – values are refreshed on an ad hoc basis really. whenever the director feels the need to push them or on training days

Confront contradictory behaviour – ensuring that feedback is given to those that do not live out the values of the organisation. People are very supportive within Serco and will help each other out where needed.

Periodically check out with feedback – people are asked all the time what they think the values are within Serco. This is a good way of highlighting whether people are getting the message or whether new training or information is made available.

### **The importance of stakeholder management**

According to the business dictionary online, Person, group, or organization that has direct or indirect stake in an organization because it can affect or be affected by the organization's actions, objectives, and policies. Key stakeholders in a business organization include creditors, customers, directors, employees, government, owners, suppliers, unions, and the community from which the business draws its resources. Although stake-holding is usually self-legitimizing, all stakeholders are not equal and different stakeholders are too different.

According to Daft in my self study guide, a stakeholder is any group within or outside the organisation that has a stake in the organisations performance.

Many people believe that whilst organisations have a right to make money, they also have a responsibility that is wider than the organisational boundaries. Many shareholders in business believe the impact their decisions make on employees, local communities and the country should be considered along side making profits.

### **Why?**

Each stakeholder has a different interest in the organisation and without these stakeholders, an organisation could not survive, especially if a primary stakeholder becomes dissatisfied for some reason.

### **Stakeholder Groups**

Stakeholders can be divided up into 2 very broad groups

**Primary** – those who are ultimately affected positively or negatively

**Secondary** – those with some intermediary role such as Government, banks and unions.

### **Element 2 – Stakeholder analysis**

My self study guide suggests a simple way to analyse stakeholders:

- Identify who my stakeholders are
- Work out their power, interest and influence so I know who I should focus on
- Develop a good understanding of the most important stakeholder

**Identifying stakeholders** – the first step in my stakeholder analysis is to brainstorm who my stakeholders are. I need to think about the people who are affected by my work and who has an influence or power over it or an interest in its successful or unsuccessful conclusion.

- My line manager
- The business assurance manager
- Serco directors
- Staff
- My family
- Serco employees
- Suppliers – Lyreco, life fitness, star trac etc
- Military (customer)
- Dependants
- Incoming students
- Service providers
- ESS
- MOD
- Government

### **Prioritising my stakeholders**

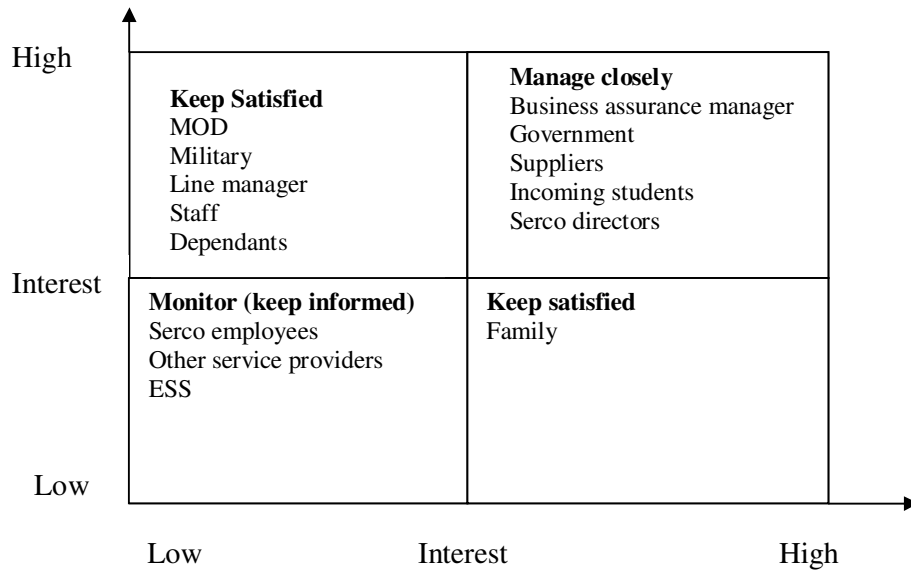
As there are many people and organisations that are affected by the work it is important to prioritise them. Some of these may have more power either to block or help me in what I am doing. Some will be interested in what I am doing and others may not care. I will now try and prioritise the stakeholders taking into consideration the following:

**High power, interested people** – these are people that I must engage with fully to keep them satisfied.

**High power, less interested people** – I put in enough effort to keep them satisfied but not so much

**Low power, interested people** – these people are kept adequately informed and I talk to them frequently.

**Low power, less interested people** – I just monitor these people but do not have excessive communication

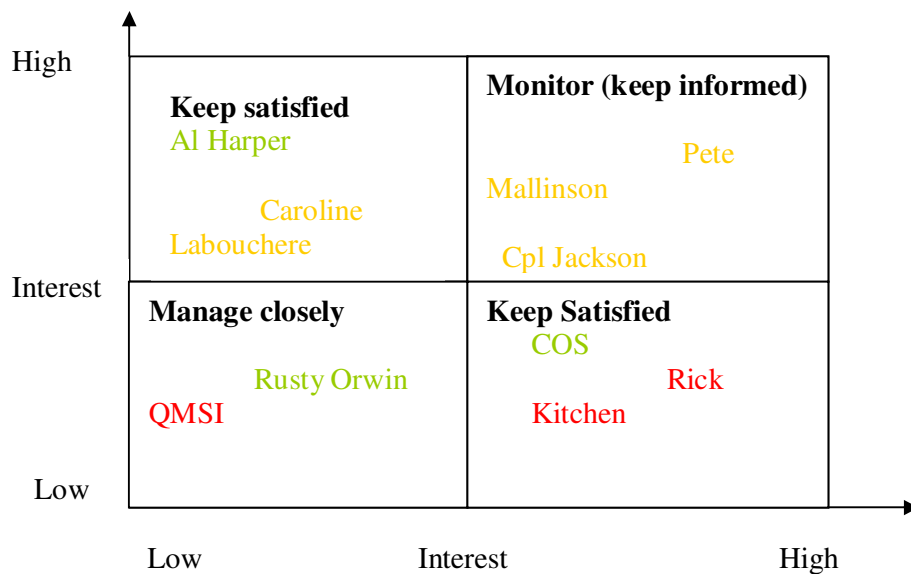


**Understanding key stakeholders**

Now I have identified the most key stakeholders, I need to know a little more about them. To do this I must speak with my stakeholders and ask them a few questions to get a better understanding of them. The questions will consist of financial, motivational, emotional, communication, current opinion, influence, support content. Once I have spoken with my stakeholders I will be able to create a stakeholder map.

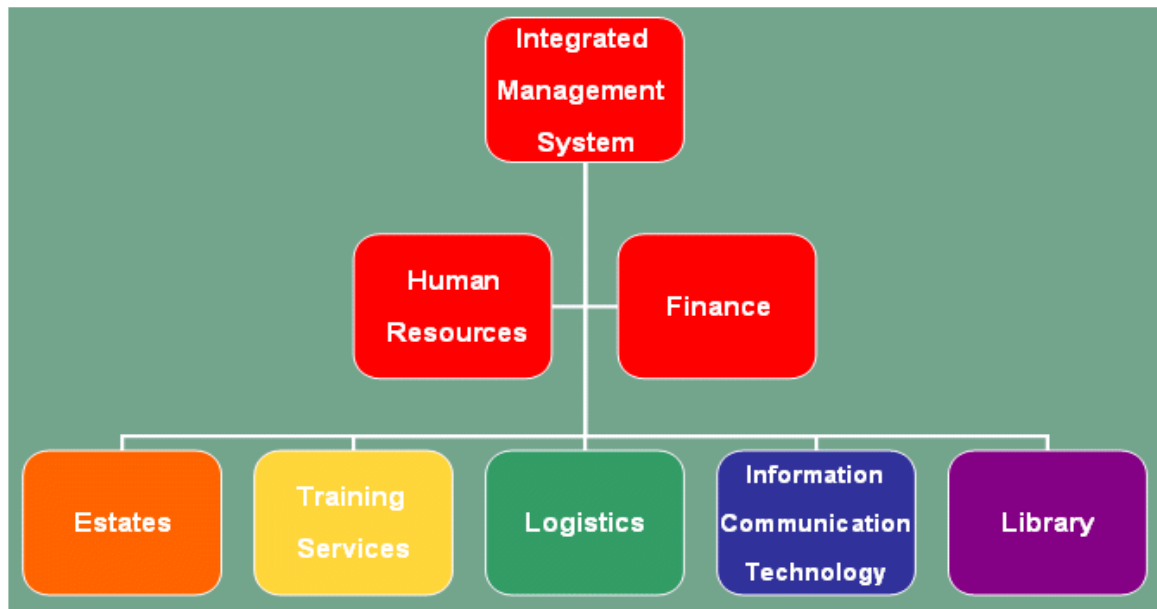
**Stakeholder mapping**

Having spoken to my stakeholders and using the model from earlier, I will now produce a stakeholder map. A good way of doing this is by colour coding showing supporters in green, critics in red and others in orange.



### How Serco is structured

Serco is a flat organisation. A flat organisation with few layers of authority. There is the senior management team and then departmental heads. This type of structure is ore popular in businesses today. The reason being it means the decision making is closer to the customer and staff have more responsibilities. The diagram below is the business hierarchy for Serco at the Defence Academy.



### Understanding the culture of Serco

According to Jones et al (1998) in my self study guide, Organisational culture is another control system that regulates and governs employee attitude and behaviour and is the set of values, norms and standards of behaviour and common expectations that control the ways in which individuals and groups in an organisation interact with each other and work to achieve organisational goals.

Organisational culture is simply the way we do things around here. The self study guide suggests that organisational culture is influenced by common factors. I have applies these to Serco culture.

Our products and processes differentiate us from our competitors. But this goes deeper. The fundamental difference at Serco comes from the unique culture and values that underpin the way we run the company and the way we behave.

We value working with our customers in a collaborative, flexible and imaginative way. We understand the principles and passions that motivate public sector managers and we share their ethos and standards of conduct. We encourage social responsibility and try to treat people in the way we would wish to be treated. Our most powerful tool in improving performance is to instil a more stimulating culture where people feel they can personally make a difference. We have honed this tool into four Governing Principles that shape our individual behaviours and hence the way the company behaves.

**Foster an entrepreneurial culture** We are passionate about building innovative and successful Serco Businesses. We succeed by encouraging and generating new

ideas. We trust our people to deliver. We embrace change and, by taking measured risks, encourage creative thinking.

### **Enable our people to excel**

Our success comes from our commitment and energy to go the extra mile. We are responsible to each other and can expect support when we need it most. We expect our people to achieve more by recognising and harnessing the power of individuals. We value people for their knowledge, and ideas and potential to contribute.

### **Deliver our promises**

We do what we say we will do to meet expectations. We only promise what we can deliver. If we make mistakes we put them right. We are clear about what we need to achieve and we expect to make a fair profit.

### **Build trust and respect**

We build respect by operating in a safe, socially responsible, consistent and honest manner. We never compromise on safety and we always operate in an ethical and responsible manner. We listen. In doing so, we treat others as we would wish to be treated ourselves and challenge when we see something is wrong. We integrate with our communities.

The governing principles form one of the five Foundation Stones of the Company. Along with our business model, business offering, organisational model, and operating principles they define the way we run and grow Serco. They set out the services we wish to provide, our behaviours and the way we manage. They ensure we are all working from a commonly understood base that can be constantly applied across our organisation.

## **Part B – putting the customer first**

### **What is marketing?**

Bridging the gap between the organisation and customers who use the service is called marketing. According to my self study guide, marketing can be defined as the achievement of corporate goals through meeting and exceeding customer needs better than competition. Marketing is about meeting the wants and needs of the customer and it should be a business wide function and not something that operates alone from other business activities. It is about understanding the customer and finding ways to provide services to them.

### **Role of marketing**

Marketing needs to develop and nurture relationships with customers that benefit both the customer and organisation. Therefore marketing plays an important role with organisations. Marketing is the organisational business area that interacts most frequently with the public. We must analyse our products and services according to the wants of the customers we are employed to satisfy.

### **Customers**

A customer is someone who makes use of or receives the products or services of an individual or organisation. Customers are often classified as being external to an organisation or internal within it.

External customers – Serco

- Army
- Navy

- Royal Air force
- Defence Management
- Cranfield University
- Civil servants
- Kings College London
- ESS

External customer's expectations tend to be split into two different groups; functional or personal. Functional is connected with the quality of the product or service. Personal is connected to the quality experience they have when purchasing the product or service. For people using the college, this is how they might find Serco:

Functional	Personal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff fully qualified to deal with everything they need</li> <li>• Clean and safe atmosphere</li> <li>• Added value activities</li> <li>• Tools required to educate and train</li> <li>• Passing the course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polite and friendly staff</li> <li>• Feeling they are being looked after in every way</li> <li>• Bonus by having added value activities</li> <li>• Enjoyable experience</li> </ul>

### Internal customers

Within every organisation, people supply other with something. this means they have internal customers. An example for me would be Serco staff using the fitness facilities. Although the majority of my customers are Forces, some Serco staff do use the gym and attend the fitness classes.

### What do customers expect?

The self study guide suggests 5 key issues to consider. I have applied this to my own area within Serco.

Explicit service promise	This refers to the services provided in promotional literature. All fitness suite users are engaged with through the induction process as a welcome to the fitness suite. They are briefed on what they can expect and get from it all.
Implicit service promise	Based on assumptions. There is a minimum to which we have to provide but there are also a lot of added value activities
Word of mouth	People that have come to the gym, a fitness class or a massage will pass on their experience to others
Past experience	Some females do not like using the gym based on previous experiences at other venues so it is important to reeducate them and make them feel comfortable so they can turn their experiences into positive ones
Personal need	The gym provides the tools to conduct physical training and social space to let off steam and talk to others.

The fitness facilities within Serco as seen above are giving customers what they expect and more. The minimum contract requirements are being met and more is being provided keeping the customer happy.

### What creates the customer gap?

It is important to look at why some of the expectations are not met in order to move forward. There is usually someone that is unsatisfied with something. the self study guide suggest 4 reasons why service could lead to an unhappy customer.

1. **Not knowing what the customer expectation is** – this is usually caused by organisations who make assumptions of what the customer want rather than finding out. The contract is already laid out based on MOD requirements but as mentioned this is a minimum. The wants and needs will always change. It is important to keep talking to the customer so that they get the service they want and we keep the contract.
2. **Not selecting the right people or services** – sometimes an organisation might know what the customer wants but they are unable to provide it. For example, I run a series of fitness classes. Although they are for everyone, not everyone can make the timings.
3. **Staff do not deliver the product or service properly** – if staff are not properly trained it then the product or service no matter how good will be effect expectations. This is not something that has occurred in my area as all staff must be qualified.
4. **misleading problems** – sometimes promotional material can be misleading. This has happened to me before. I sent out flyers advertising sports massage without costings on and some people think that they are free as it doesn't state a price. I have since changed the material.

### Part C The marketing planning process

According to Randall G, most people misunderstand what marketing is all about and tend to think it is about persuading people to buy what they do not want. Marketing does of course influence buying decisions particularly when it comes to selecting between brands. Peter Ducker also claims that marketing starts out with the customer, their demographics related to needs and values.

#### Carrying out market research

Before starting the planning process I need to be aware of two key steps involved. Collecting internal information and collecting external information. Collecting internal information has already been carried out in part A. the external research comes from the areas that Serco has little control over and has 6 main headings.

<p>Consumer research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• market trends</li> <li>• braking down the gap to areas or groups</li> <li>• developing a profile of potential customers</li> </ul>	<p>Trends of hourly fitness suite usage and equipment usage is kept and reported on</p> <p>Looking into who is using the fitness suite at what times. Dependants in the morning and students in the afternoon.</p> <p>Look at who isn't using the fitness suite but would want to. how to fill the quiet times.</p>
<p>Product research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• testing consumer reaction</li> <li>• coming up with new product ides</li> <li>• assessing market opinion</li> </ul>	<p>Everyone that uses the fitness suite signs in on entry and indicates what equipment they have used.</p> <p>If a piece of equipment is not being used a lot I can look into replacing it with something that might be in need</p> <p>Asking people that are regular users of the fitness suite what they think we need. What they might like.</p>

<p>Pricing research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• asking consumer reaction to products</li> <li>• finding out information competition pricing</li> <li>• Looking at the effects of discounts</li> </ul>	<p>We wouldn't ask the customer about the price of product only the value of service.</p> <p>Looking into various fitness companies to get the best price for the equipment</p> <p>If we purchased a really cheap piece of equipment, would it have the same durability as one that is slightly more expensive.</p>
<p>Promotion research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking consumers how they feel about the way things are advertised</li> <li>• Asking consumers about product packaging</li> <li>• Promotional packaging</li> </ul>	<p>For Serco as a whole this could be the branding and visibility of the Serco logo on uniform, paper and general information.</p> <p>We do not actually sell anything so there is no sort of material packaging. This could be the package each department offers.</p>
<p>Distribution research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying outlets</li> <li>• Looking at transit and storage issues</li> </ul>	<p>This is looking at where and when Serco will deliver the services. The fitness suite and pitches are already laid out so this is fine</p> <p>The logistics department are employed to store and move things.</p>
<p>Business environmental research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current political influences and pressures</li> <li>• Local and national economy</li> <li>• Changes in society</li> <li>• New technology</li> <li>• New legislation</li> <li>• Environmental issues</li> </ul>	<p>This is a rather big area to cover. Most of this sort of thing is looked after by the Business Assurance Manager. He will come around to each department and look at these issues from Serco as a whole but also on the ground to.</p>

### Types of market research

Primary and secondary data are two types of market research. Primary data is normally done to provide data on specific key areas and involve the collection of data from a prime source. Secondary data is about existing data in the form of organisational reports. The data that can be collected can be either quantitative or qualitative.

### Analysing information from internal and external sources

Having completed this research, I now need to analyse it further and one way of doing this is to complete a SWOT analysis.

Internal environment	<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse staff with multiple skills</li> <li>• Strong knowledge base</li> <li>• Manageable workforce</li> <li>• Good image and reputation</li> <li>• Responsive to change</li> <li>• enthusiastic</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financial planning</li> <li>• space limited</li> <li>• staff shortages</li> </ul>
External environment	<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• new opportunities to try out new equipments</li> <li>• to enhance the facility</li> <li>• to provide top of the range service</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• warranty</li> <li>• serviceability</li> <li>• time to train</li> <li>• poor usage of new kit</li> </ul>

The SWOT analysis should not be viewed without also considering the desired outcomes for the service users as you can have a fantastic organisation that ticks all the boxes but does not really do what the customer wants.

### Developing a market plan

A marketing plan will give me detail and actions necessary to achieve specified marketing objective. The structure of the marketing plan can vary but normally consists of developing a strategy, setting objectives and identifying the marketing mix. Once the information from the internal and external environments has been analysed, a strategy can be put together. The most commonly used tool for helping is the Ansoff matrix which contains 4 basic strategies.

	Existing products	New products
	Market penetration	Product developments
Existing markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 247 gym access</li> <li>• One on one induction</li> <li>• Use of facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of equipment to provide better service</li> </ul>
	Market development	Diversification
New markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain 247 access with more hours covered by staff</li> <li>• Change 2 items of equipment</li> <li>• Monitor usage</li> </ul>	

### **Marketing objectives**

The objective to change some fitness suite equipment is consistent with the continuous improvement policy we follow at Serco. The objective should always be SMART. Changing over some of the equipment in the fitness suite because it isn't highly used is important to ensuring the customer have the right pieces of equipment to stay fit and pass their fitness tests.

### **Influencing demand for our products and service**

The self study guide recommends a tool called the marketing mix to work out how to influence demand; this consists of looking for the 4 p's and I have applied these to my objective.

#### **Product**

- New equipment
- More man covered hours
- Higher spec in trianing
- Reliable guarantee

#### **Price**

- Free access to students as part of their mess bills
- Cost of the equipment

#### **Promotion**

- Door to door leaflet drop
- College intranet
- Posters
- Inductions

#### **Place**

- Always in the fitness suite

### **Service marketing**

The self study guide also suggests another 3 p's and these are:

People – the staff involved with the delivery of the service. This would be everyone from the estates team carrying out electrical work, the fitness company along with the gym staff.

Physical evidence – this is the buildings and environments we use to meet our customers. So the fitness suite and all sports pitches.

Processes – include how the service is provided and how the organisation delivers it to the customer.

All three p's are very important to our ability to deliver the service.

### **The structure of a marketing plan**

There are structured marketing templates easily available on the internet. The main heading to consider from my self study guide are:

1. executive summary
2. situation analysis
3. marketing strategies
4. financial budgets and forecasting
5. controls

## **Part D – Planning to keep customers happy**

In order to improve customer satisfaction, I need to be proactive in ensuring the activities undertaken by myself and my team meet both internal and external customer expectations.

### **Collecting information**

As customers need change regularly, this means I must gather information on a regular basis to make sure I am in tune with these changes in needs. For information to be of real value it needs to be gathered from formal and informal sources. The study guide suggests a tool I could use. The Pareto effect or the 80/20 rule analyses information to develop plans. A problem on my work area that can be analysed using the 80/20 rule could be gym staffing:

The gym is used 80% of it opening hours and 20% not

80% of users come to the gym when there is 20% chance of staff being there

80% of people want staff around more 20% are not fussed

805 people want more classes, 20% are not

### **Formal information**

For information to be of real value, it needs to be gathered from formal and informal sources. I have applied this to what users want in the gym:

- Signing in sheets – everyone that uses the fitness suite must sign in. records on usage numbers, timings and equipment usage are kept on a monthly basis.
- Sports pitch bookings – the sports pitch bookings are analysed on a monthly basis for statistics and reports
- Audits – to make sure we are doing what we are meant to be doing
- Questionnaires – finding out what people want instead of just guessing
- Going to Mess committee meetings - to discuss funding and ideas

### **Informal Information**

Informal information is normally gathered all of the time. The way in which I gather informal information is by talking to people on the ground. I also attend social committee and athletics union meetings where any issues are raised. The best way of finding out what people want is by simply talking to them.

### **The planning process**

Planning according to Jones et al from my self stud guide is a process that managers use to identify and select appropriate goals and courses of action for an organisation. Planning is ascertaining where you are at the moment and where you want to be.

Using the formal and informal information I have gathered, I will now put together a plan of what I want to achieve.

### **SMART goals**

My objective must be SMART. In this case it would be to have more staff to cover loner periods in the gym and provide more classes starting in September.

Who will help me achieve my plan?

It is important that I select the right people to achieve this. I will need to hire at least 2 more staff to achieve my goal and then put the rest to action. One I have the right people I will need to work closely with them.

Allocating time to my plan

I have to have the plan up and running by September. Ensuring I have the right staff before then will allow me to achieve my goal. This must be done fairly quickly whilst also making sure the decision about the right people is made.

Measuring how I am getting on

The plan's success will be measured only really when it is up and running. Without the users in college, not much can be done.

Making changes as necessary

On measuring and reviewing the plan I will know whether or not I will need to make changes over the Christmas break. Making changes before then will confuse people causing a bit of upset.

Dealing with customer complaints

If a customer is happy with the service they get then they will come back for more and they will also pass on the word and encourage more people to come in. Unfortunately on the flip side of that, if they have had a poor experience they are more than likely to tell far more people that. We do have a complaints system within Serco. The Help Desk log all the complaints which are then logged and published in the performance review on a monthly basis.

Handling complaints

A complaint is just an expression of lack of satisfaction with any product or service whether it be orally, in person or in writing. If either internal or external customers complain, there will need to be a formal complaints process. My self study guide suggests a guideline for handling complaints. I have used the guidance as a check sheet to confirm that the Serco procedure is good.

- Establish a common approach – this happens no matter what who takes the complaint in whatever form
- Draw up a standard form – we have a standard form that should be filled out in this case. It also follows best practice as it gives the name of the customer, date the complaint was made, details of the complaint and agreed action.
- Ensure complaints are assessed properly – all complaints are passed to each department head who takes action
- Ensure staff take ownership and responsibility – all complaints are discussed by the management team and they are documented in the performance review.
- Decide if a system or process needs changing – this hasn't really happened in Serco. If a complaint was severe about the day to day running then the department would be audited and then corrective action and a procedural change would occur.

- Build in customer checks – this is done by a letter to the customer confirming what has happened since the complaint was made
- Analyse complaints – thankfully we do not get too many complaints so it is hard to analyse them. Should a patten of complaints come up in any given area then this would be investigated.

There are also some Do's and Don'ts that we should check ourselves against

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make customer service part of the team culture</li> <li>• Empower staff to deal with complaints</li> <li>• Keep in contact with the customer to ensure their complaints are being dealt with</li> <li>• Analyse complaints regularly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blame the computer system</li> <li>• Say its not your department</li> <li>• Take the complaint personally</li> <li>• Allocate blame</li> <li>• Use paperwork to block a fast response</li> </ul>

These suggestions are sometimes easier said than done. Sometimes it is another department or a case of wires crossed. Complaints are hard not to take personally.

## **Bibliography**

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