

Customer Service Update**Critical Success Factors (CSFs) Important Tool
in Improving Customer Service**

If you're still in business, chances are you understand how important customer service is to your company's success. In the plumbing supplies business, it's often cited as the single best determinant of success or failure. But how do companies continue to improve their service and stay a step ahead of the competition?

One significant tool that has emerged in recent years is the concept of the Critical Success Factor. By identifying the critical functions and objectives of each department in the organization, managers can set out to measure those functions and develop a new set of goals for the coming year. Activities that are measured have been shown to be performed more efficiently than those that are not.

A good CSF program for your company's customer service function will provide a mission statement, involve the development of 5-6 high level goals, establish clear instructions on how to reach those goals, and develop a system for measuring specific behaviors that contribute to meeting those goals.



For instance, your goals might be: 1) Reduce time to provide a quote, 2) Improve upselling opportunities, 3) Improve ability of service representative to remember customer names, 4) Reduce time to fill an order, 5) Reduce fulfillment errors.

The next step is to establish a series of steps to accomplish each goal, and develop a system to measure specific behaviors that lead to each goal.

CSF programs can be very simple and practical, or very complex and multidepartmental. The point is to set down goals and develop measurable means to reach them.

So, what does it take to develop a CSF Program for your company? A good place to start is www.RapidBi.com/created/criticalsuccessfactors.html. This site details the many facets of a CSF program, many of which won't apply to your company, but some probably will. Then think what parts of the sample CSFs apply to your organization, set down your goals and the steps needed to reach them, and you're off to the races. The winner is the competitor who, all else being equal, provides the best service. Make it be you.

**Confirm Compliance With All
Standards BEFORE You Buy!****Oops! Typo in November Items
leads to confusion**

We know, we know. The lead story in last month's newsletter was about the price increase coming January 1. The problem is, the headline said January 1, 2010, but the body copy said January 1, 2020. While we like to pride ourselves on being able to plan ahead for things like price increases, and we like to give the market as much advance notice as possible, even we can't look ahead 10 years. No folks, the price increase will take effect January 1, 2010 (next month).

Sorry for the confusion.

