

Executive Insights



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Research Design

- A total of 316 exit interviews were completed at the Hutt City Council Customer Service Centre between 17 and 21 September 2001.
- Interviewers from ACNielsen approached customers as they left one of the four customer service desks within the Customer Service Centre. The interviewers introduced themselves, explained the purpose of the survey and how to fill in the questionnaire and then asked respondents to complete the questionnaire themselves and drop it into a box before they left the Customer Service Centre.*
- When a respondent did not have enough time to complete the survey, they were encouraged to take the survey away and return it to ACNielsen in a reply paid envelope provided.
- Two interviewers were present during each of the 5 days that interviewing took place. One interviewer worked between 8am and 2pm and the other between 11am and 5pm. This ensured that all times of the day as well as the busier lunchtime period were adequately covered.

* When time permitted, interviewers administered the questionnaire themselves, rather than using the self-completion approach, to ensure greater consistency in the way the questionnaire was completed.

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How well is Hutt City Council performing in terms of its overall standard of customer service?

- Nine out of ten visitors to the Hutt City Council's Customer Service Centre rated Hutt City Council's overall standard of customer service as very good or good.
- One in two rated Hutt City Council as very good, whilst only 3% rated Hutt City Council's overall standard of customer service as poor.

How well is Hutt City Council performing on specific aspects of service and to what extent have perceptions of service improved since last year's measure?

- Hutt City Council's customers are most likely to agree that the Council has staff who:
 - Act in a professional way (92% agree)
 - Are always courteous with customers (92% agree)
 - Are always easy to approach for assistance (90% agree)
- Hutt City Council customers are least likely to agree that:
 - Hutt City Council will perform services right the first time (71% agree)
 - They can feel confident that when instructing Hutt City Council to make any changes to their records the correct changes will be made the first time (66% agree)
 - When Hutt City Council promises to do something by a certain time, it will do it by that time" (61% agree)

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How well is Hutt City Council performing on specific aspects of service and to what extent have perceptions of service improved since last year's measure?

- There has been an improvement since last year's measure in **all** statements relating to the standard of customer service at Hutt City Council, in particular:
 - ➔ Shows a sincere interest in solving customers' problems (increased from 76% to 83% agree)
 - ➔ Performs the service right the first time (increased from 61% to 71% agree)
 - ➔ The overall score for statements relating to "assurance" (increased from 80% to 87% agree)
- There has also been a slight improvement in perceptions of the **overall standard** of customer service at Hutt City Council since last year (from 87% to 89% very good/good).
- Whilst visitors to the "approvals" desk remain slightly less likely (than visitors to the other customer service desks) to rate the overall standard of customer service at Hutt City Council as very good or good, this has improved since last year's measure and the gap is now closing.

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Which aspects of customer service are most important in driving overall customer satisfaction?

- The most important drivers of customer satisfaction are:
 - Having staff who show a sincere interest in solving customers' problems
 - Having staff who are always easy to approach for assistance
 - Performing services right the first time
 - Having staff who are courteous with customers
 - Telling customers when they can expect services to be performed and then delivering in the time promised

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What are the priorities for Hutt City Council to help improve the standard of customer service it delivers?

- By comparing the importance of individual aspects of customer service with how well Hutt City Council performs on those aspects of service, the research has identified one key areas to focus on for improvement (high importance, lower performance). This is:
 - When it promises to do something by a certain time will do it by that time
- At last year's measure, "performs the service right the first time" was also identified as a high priority for improvement. However, with the improvement in performance for this aspect of customer service this measure, this is now a **service strength** rather than a priority for improvement.
- The research has also identified one further aspect of customer service for improvement. This is less important to customers and hence a lower priority for improvement:
 - Customers can feel confident that when instructing Hutt City Council to make changes to their records (e.g. change of name, address) the correct changes will be made first time
- At last year's measure there were a further two areas identified as lower priorities for improvement, namely "staff prepared to go the extra mile for customers" and "staff keep customers informed when necessary". Both these aspects of service have show sufficient improvement this measure to no longer be considered priorities for improvement.

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Recommended Actions

- The main focus for priority over the next 12 months is to improve perceptions amongst customers that requests for service will be resolved within the timeframe promised by staff.
- Attention should also be given to those aspects of service that were previously a priority for improvement but have improved sufficiently to no longer be a high priority. These higher standards of service need to be maintained to ensure that they continue to be perceived positively.

