

**Knowledge Wave International, inc**

*See your business like never before*

[www.knowledge-wave.com](http://www.knowledge-wave.com)  
[info@knowledge-wave.com](mailto:info@knowledge-wave.com)  
800.329.9159

# MAPPING AGENT ENGAGEMENT TO C-SAT PERFORMANCE



**Knowledge Wave Research January 2010**

© 2010 Knowledge Wave International, Inc

All Rights Reserved

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Yes, we all know that employee behavior and attitude influence customer satisfaction with our products and services. The problem has been how to quantify that impact. Once we know what key drivers best influence employee performance, we can prioritize them and execute plans to improve them based on valid and reliable data.

Knowledge Wave is uniquely positioned to help answer these questions. Our *ServiceWave* suite of products and services helps our clients around the globe measure, manage, and improve customer satisfaction with the service experience (email, chat, phone, and – increasingly – social media). We capture detailed data about the service interaction and deliver a personalized questionnaire to the customer, providing realtime metrics to the agents, supervisors, and executives. Our customers use this information both to monitor trends in the service they provide and to address individual issues with customers, provide robust coaching, and take advantage of customer wins as quickly as possible.

Another of our solutions is called *EmployeeWave*, a standardized tool for measuring employee satisfaction and engagement across five general dimensions of employee loyalty: Personal Reward, Culture, Communication, Strategic Direction, Execution. The specific questions are generally personalized for different job functions (sales vs service vs operations) and different organizations but the roll-up areas of measurement remain the same for better comparison between different employee profiles as well as year-to-year trending.

By mapping employee engagement feedback to the results of these C-SAT surveys, Knowledge Wave has helped our clients to identify not just the best performing agents but what it is about their job and their company that makes them superstars.

The results are not surprising.

Those customers who are the most satisfied with the transactional service or sales experience tend to be the ones who speak with agents who believe their role with the company fulfills the motivational needs of their psyche. Specifically, agents who:

- Feel they are part of a team that is moving the company forward
- Are able to meet customer needs
- Have a direct supervisor who is engaged, approachable, and helpful
- Do not feel isolated in their job
- Have influence on the company's r department's decisions

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Knowledge Wave performed this analysis for a dozen clients throughout 2009, using the customer service module of *EmployeeWave* as the starting point. Although we allowed the clients to add questions in order to support their own business needs, the core group of 41 key drivers remained the same throughout all studies. Although many of these support organizations have global operations, we restricted the mapping of agent data to C-SAT data to just U.S.-based agents. The other similarity between clients was that they all have a 7-point scale for their C-SAT surveys, so we used a 7-point scale for the agent survey.

The agent survey period lasted two weeks (to allow for vacations and schedule changes) and all agents received an invitation email (and up to two reminder emails) to an anonymous, secure questionnaire. No identifying information was shared about any agent with the client.

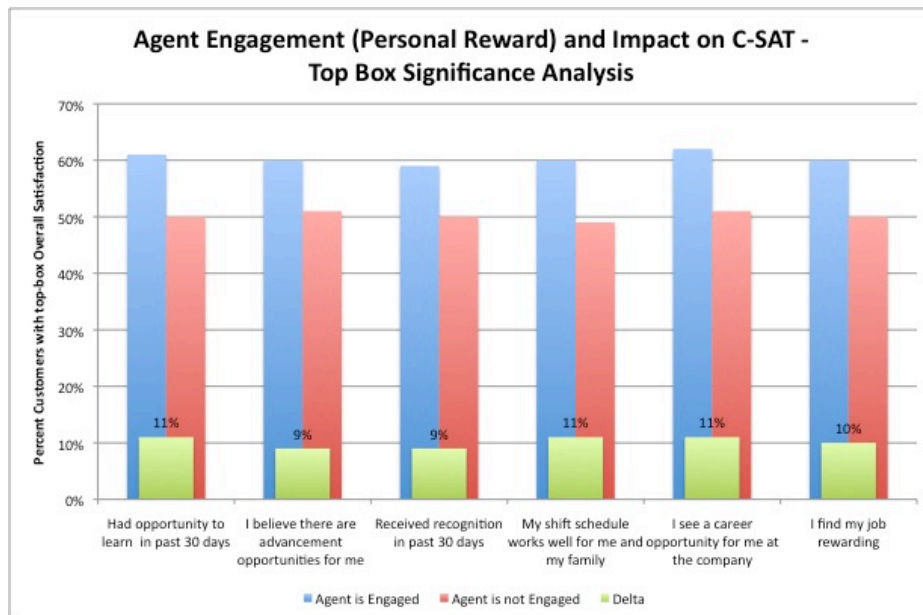
In order to secure a large enough sample size for the C-SAT component of each agent, we pulled customer feedback from a period of six weeks before the start of the agent survey through four weeks after the agent survey closed. Agents who had neither a large enough nor representative enough sample of C-SAT surveys were not included in the analysis.

For our significance analysis, we looked at just top-box (7-out-of-7) for both the agent and customer feedback, wanting to focus on those truly amazing agents and truly emotionally positive service experiences. For this report we compared agent engagement drivers to just the C-SAT “overall satisfaction” question.

## RESULTS OVERVIEW

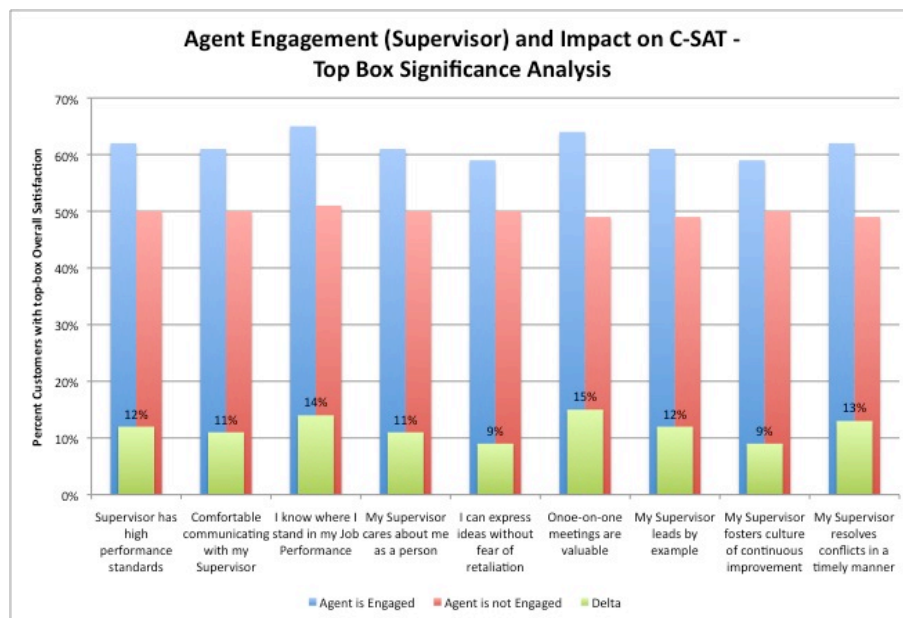
### PERSONAL REWARD

As any seasoned manager or HR professional would hypothesize, the drivers of agent engagement, which lead to higher performance in the service organization are the motivational drivers that contribute to psychological and emotional fulfillment, not basic human necessity. Things like the opportunity to learn and grow, being recognized for achievements, and supporting the balance between work and life all showed significant impact on the agent’s ability to deliver a superstar performance during the service experience. Drivers which did not show any differentiation were ones related to pay and benefits and other hygienic factors.



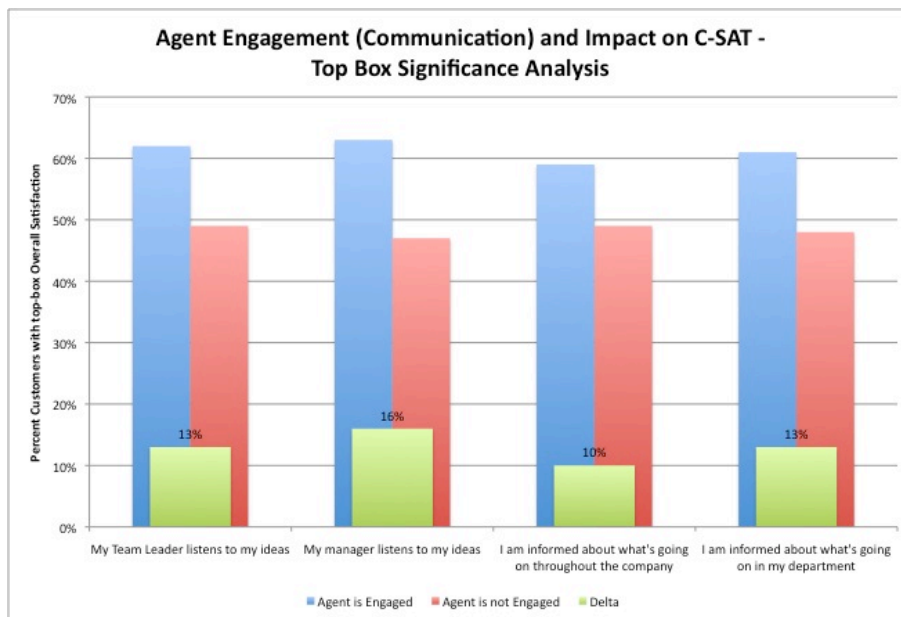
## SUPERVISOR

If your customer service agents are the face of your company to your customers, then your supervisors are the face of your company to your agents. All direct-supervisor drivers mapped directly to agent performance, ranging from soft-skills to practical implementation of policies and processes. It is important to note that going up just one level in the organization structure and asking similar questions about the agent’s manager does not produce any significant differences. In fact, the driver “My direct manager drives for results” seems to produce the opposite results – agents who strongly agreed with that statement tend to produce fewer extremely satisfied customers.



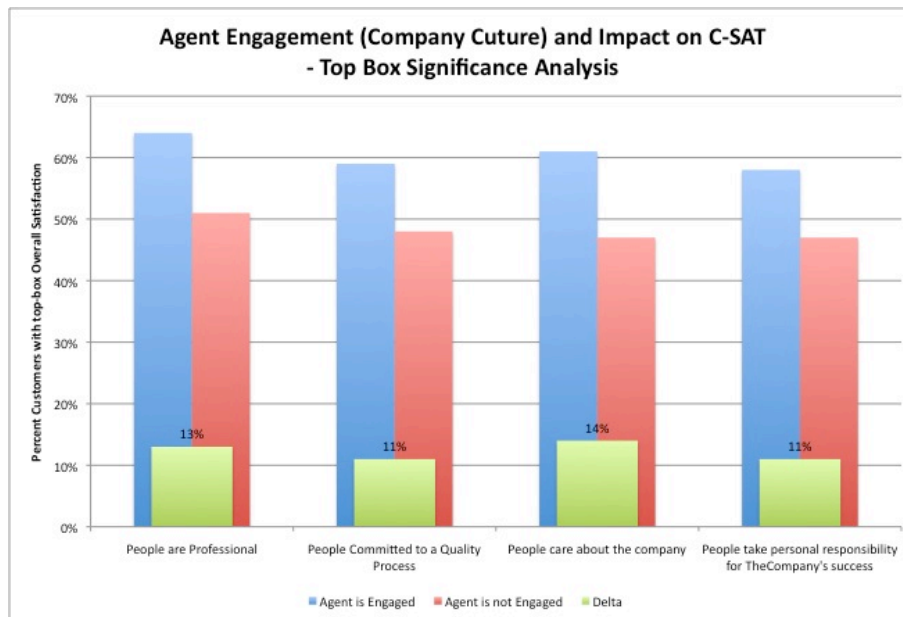
## COMMUNICATION

The ability to make your ideas and opinions heard across the organization is another important psychological boost for all employees, service agents being no different. This is even more important than feeling like you know what is going on across the entire company, not just within your own department. The sense of teamwork, of belonging to something bigger than your day-to-day, helps to provide meaning and focus for our jobs.



## CULTURE

How we feel about the people we work with has a distinct impact on how we feel about our jobs. After all, these are people with whom we spend as much time (if not more on a bad week) as we spend with our family. That being said, the professionalism and work-focus of our peers has a much larger impact on agent performance than the softer, more personal drivers. This seems to fly in the face of current trends to “promote fun” at work but makes sense in light of the earlier observations. If we are focused on making an impact and improving the lives of our customers and performance of our business, we prefer to work with people who share the same goals.



## EXECUTION

It was somewhat surprising to us that drivers related to the agent's ability to get her job done very rarely (if ever) had a significant impact on customer satisfaction:

- I am empowered to solve customer problems
- I have the resources and tools I need to do my job
- I can solve problems on the first contact
- The company hires the highest caliber people

One theory we have worked up, but not researched in more detail, is related to the maturity of the service organizations who participated in this study. If the processes, policies, and technologies are established and efficient, it is less likely that they will have a differentiating influence on customer satisfaction. In other words, they are the "table stakes" necessary to be a world-class service organization in today's competitive markets.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

As we said at the beginning, we don't believe these results show any great surprises to students of organizational behavior and personnel theory. They do provide some quantitative context, however, and we believe they can be used to help prioritize issues in managing and improving a company's employee relations strategy with its customer service agents.

We realize that, while unique and interesting, C-SAT feedback is not the whole of an agent's performance. Future studies are planned to include operational metrics of agent performance as well customer feedback. Some candidates include: Average call time, first call resolution, performance ratings, even attendance.

We also plan to analyze the connections between agent employee drivers and other high-level measures of customer satisfaction, specifically: Use again and Recommend.

## ABOUT KNOWLEDGE WAVE INTERNATIONAL

### *YOU'VE NEVER SEEN YOUR BUSINESS LIKE THIS BEFORE!*

Founded in 1999, KWI (“*kee-wee*”) provides innovative customer loyalty and employee engagement programs to clients in almost every market and industry. Our more than 250 clients drive business growth off of feedback programs in more than 35 languages, across all customer touchpoints. Our proprietary feedback platform provides the basis of a scientifically rigorous and effective research framework, where the philosophy is hard data and individual results rather than generic theory. Customer advocacy is different for every business and even for different types of customers within a business ... KWI helps you to understand and take advantage of the unique needs and expectations of your different customers quickly, effectively, and quantitatively.

To learn more about KWI, please visit us at <http://www.knowledge-wave.com> or call 1.800.329.9159 or email [info@knowledge-wave.com](mailto:info@knowledge-wave.com).