

CHAPTER 5

5. DISSEMINATION

In this chapter the aim is to give the reader a short holistic overview of the preceding four chapters in this research document. Furthermore, also to note future research and development with regards to this study.

5.1 MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS

Chapter one defined the problems in the Contact Centre mainly as the lack of soft skills among agents with regards to conflict management, communication skills, customer service, planning, organising and being solution focused. In chapter two the focus was on researching the literature towards developing a training program to address the problems outlined in the first chapter. Chapter three discussed the development of the soft skills training program and a pilot implementation session in the Contact Centre. Feedback was obtained on a qualitative basis to improve the innovation after the pilot implementation. In chapter four the focus was on the results of the qualitative and quantitative data for the new innovation for the target group.

In this chapter the aim is to describe in a holistic manner the interaction of the four phases in Rothman's Development Research Model and how these phases were used in this study. Furthermore the focus is also on the future use of this study and the innovation thereof.

In the first phase, of this study of the analysis phase the aim was to identify the problems among the agents in the Contact Centre via interviews, questionnaires (done by the external company) job descriptions and competencies. Management was also involved in this process. The needs of the agents were identified within their working environment.

The second phase, (the design phase) researched the literature that could assist with designing of a training program to address the needs of the agents in the Contact Centre. Again the agents and management were consulted in the design phase as their needs were the focus.

In the third phase namely, the development phase the pilot implementation of the designed innovation took place. The practical aspects of training, arranging and printing workbooks for the workshops and arranging for agents to be taken off the phones to training rooms were also addressed. Here a group of thirty agents went through this pilot training program. Feedback was received in a form of a feedback questionnaire and final enhancements to the training program were made based on the feedback and needs of the agents.

In the fourth phase, the evaluation phase full implementation of the innovation, namely, the workshops, took place. There were six groups clustered together into three main groups each with a control and experimental group so that the innovation was tested three times. There was pre- and post testing for both groups and data was acquired by means of the Customer Contact Competency Inventory. The agents in the experimental group showed a clear indication of growth in skills. The agents in the control group had no indication of growth; indeed, there was an indication of stagnation and regression. The essential need for a training program among agents became clear.

5.2 METHODOLOGY

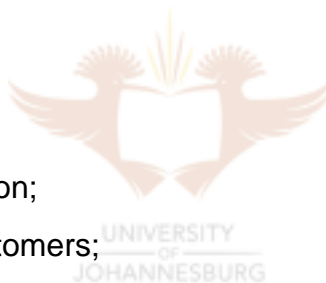
The knowledge of the problem areas identified in the analysis phase was used to design a workshop to develop skills to help the agents to cope with the problems in the Contact Centre. In the development phase, the workbooks were compiled to enhance the skills needed by the agents to overcome or cope with the problems in their Contact Centre and the pilot implementation of the training program was

implemented. The training material was adjusted and enhanced to keep up with the needs of the agents as well as to empower them with certain skills to overcome the problems identified in the first phase.

In the last phase, the focus was on the qualitative and quantitative data of the experimental and control group. The problems identified in the analysis phase were addressed and formed part of the workbooks. Agents were therefore, given the necessary training on the skills needed to address the problems in the Contact Centre.

The following skills were identified as problems areas. Therefore, agents received training on the skills listed below.

- Communications skills;
- Building Relationships;
- Conflict Management;
- Planning and organisation;
- How to handle irate customers;
- Emotional control;
- Customer service;
- Being professional
- Taking responsibility for own actions;
- Coping in a Contact Centre environment;
- To focus on facts and being solution focused.



The above skills will empower the agents to bridge the gap between reality and ideal, which was identified in the analysis phase.

From a business point of view the problems in the analysis phase were:

- Absenteeism because of stress levels and burnout;

- Poor customer service;
- Lack of professionalism;
- High staff turnover;
- Low morale and productivity;
- Agents were immature and did not take responsibility for their work.

At the end of the training program the experimental group learnt how to cope with the above aspects of their work and the morale, service level to the customers and productivity increased. The staff turnover and absenteeism decreased. Agents now wanted to make a career out of the Contact Centre and tended as to view it merely as a job.

5.3 FUTURE USE OF THE CONTACT CENTRE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



In the analysis phase, the need for a training program for agents became apparent. The design and development phase, indicated that there was enough literature to create such a training program and via the pilot implementation the reader will be aware of the commitment of agents and management for this training become clear. In the evaluation phase, the qualitative and quantitative data supported the success of the training program.

This training program for Contact Centres is compatible with most Contact Centres in South Africa. Almost all agents in any Contact Centre need skills such as:

- Dealing with irate customers;
- Customer service;
- Professionalism;
- Relationship building;

- Conflict Management;
- Communication;
- Planning; and
- Organisation.

This training program can thus be modified to suit the needs of any Contact Centre and provide the agents with the skills needed in their particular Contact Centre's needs.

It is important for the trainer of any Contact Centre to be aware of the needs and the specific skills required by the agents. Not all of the above skills might be relevant to each Contact Centre and their agents. Therefore, the subsections of the entire Skills Development Program can be used independently of each other as the need arises.



The Skills Development Program can be modified to suit the needs of different Contact Centres. The workshops can also be conducted over a period of two days, weekly for a couple of hours or on a monthly basis. The training program can thus be adjusted to suit the needs of a specific Contact Centre.

As mentioned, not all the skills and workshops are relevant to all agents or Contact Centres. In future the need to adjust, add or remove certain workshops might arise and the training program can easily accommodate these demands. For example, if a workshop or time management needs to be addressed the training program can easily accommodate this.