

‘Teaming with the Client’: A Co-production Strategy for Innovation

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Co-production or co-creation between service providers and customers has become a growing trend in service organizations (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Webber & Torti, 2004; Webber & Klimoski, 2004). This strategy involves including the client or consumer as a “partial” employee of the service organization or an active participant in a “co-production” engagement (Webber & Klimoski, 2004). Researchers have proposed that organizations increase their effectiveness by including the customer in the design and delivery of the service (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Webber & Torti, 2004). However, to date, little is known about the effectiveness of different strategies for co-producing with a client. This research examines one important co-production strategies, the creation of a co-production project team.

Although co-production has been largely cited as an effective service strategy, the different techniques or approaches for achieving co-production have yet to be fully discussed. Researchers have primarily focused on bringing the customer into the service organization as a “partial” employee to participate in the service design and delivery. Although not well documented in the business-to-business literature, numerous organizations beginning with accounting firms have utilized the opposite approach. That is, they have placed their own employees (project manager/account manager and project teams) within the client organization to enhance the design and delivery of the service. The impetus behind such a strategy is to be closer to the client organization to facilitate a more successful engagement both with regard to better service solutions as well as facilitating a long term, customer-intimate relationship (Webber & Torti, 2004; Skjolsvik, Lowendahl, Kvalshaugen & Fosstenlokken, 2007).

Creating a co-production team consisting of client and service provider employees has been proposed as a strategy to facilitate effective training of client users, enhance buy-in of new products/techniques, and facilitate opportunities for innovation that ultimately create a stronger relationship between the client and the service provider. Blending service and client employees into a team is used by information technology service companies, as well as other service providers; however, we lack strategies for achieving such success. The present research uses qualitative interviews and theoretical concepts from the teaming domain to examine this business-to-business service organization strategy for achieving co-production engagements, temporarily locating service providers on the client’s site to create “co-production teams.” Understand how to design, develop, and manage a co-production team is critical for the success of these engagements. This paper will focus on these elements as well as highlight the typical

problems and challenges facing co-production teams as they work to develop innovative solutions. The MOPAN conference theme examining multi-organization partners is an ideal context for discussion of strategies and techniques for 'teaming with a client' to co-produce a service solution.

Co-production, teams, service organization, innovation

References

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