

Importance of Personal Goal Setting for Customer Relationship Executive of An Apparel Retail Store

Kiran Jha

Unitedworld School of Business Chandkheda, Ahmedabad
E-mail: kiranjha.khush@gmail.com

Abstract—*The focus of this exploratory research paper is to highlight the importance of personal goal setting for customer relationship executives (CRE) or customer support staff (CSS) in apparel retail stores. Happy and appealing customer relationship executives play a major role in the success of a store. Their work involves long working hours and monotony. So by setting simple goals of personal satisfaction and contentment they can achieve happiness which in turn will affect their performance at work.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Clear goals increase your confidence, develop your competence and boost your levels of motivation. As sales trainer Tom Hopkins says, Goals are the fuel in the furnace of achievement. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, taught that man is a teleological organism. The word “teleos” in Greek means goals. What Aristotle concluded was that all human action is purposeful in some way. You are only happy when you are doing something that is moving you toward something that you want [4]. It wasn't until 1935 that the first empirical study of goal setting was conducted by the British philosopher, Cecil Alec Mace. Cecil Alec Mace discredited the widely held idea that workers are primarily incentivized by money and found that *people are also motivated by the accomplishment of goals* [1]. Since the mid-1980s, considerable progress has been made in understanding how goals contribute to long-term levels of well-being. The driving concern has been to understand how personal goals are related to long-term levels of happiness and life satisfaction and how ultimately to use this knowledge in a way that might optimize human well-being [3].

1.1 Customer Relationship Executives

The current estimated value of the Indian retail sector is about 500 billion USD and is pegged to reach 1.3 trillion USD by 2020. The penetration level of modern retail (currently 5%) will increase six-fold from the current 27 billion USD to 220 billion USD in 2020. The Indian retail sector is expected to grow at a CAGR of 15 to 20% [9]. It is estimated that currently Indian organized retail employs over 10m people in

India and is estimated that the demand shall reach 70m by 2018. Depending on the size and format of the retail stores one person is employed for every 200-300 sqft.[8].

Retail store staff members are the brand ambassadors for the store. They are in direct contact with the customers at various touch points and deliver the experience [9]. A cheerful retail store staff with an enthusiasm to listen and help builds great rapport with customers and turns instrumental in attracting a customer and thus retaining him or her. Customer relationship executives are critical for the success of a store because they add to customer experience and increased customer satisfaction. It is of utmost importance for these ambassadors or customer touch points to be thoroughly motivated, highly energetic, smiling, and ready to listen and maintain eye-contact throughout the day in order to woo a customer. Doing these apparently simple tasks requires high level of motivation especially when the work demands long, exhaustive hours of continuous work with minimal breaks. In light of the importance associated with these retail staff and the nature of work they perform, the paper explores the need of self-designed personal goal setting for achieving and enjoying simple joys of life for attaining personal happiness and contentment.

2. GOAL SETTING

Mark McCormack in his book “What They Don't Teach You In The Harvard Business School” tells of a Harvard study conducted between 1979 and 1989. In 1979, the graduates of the MBA program at Harvard were asked, “Have you set clear, written goals for your future and made plans to accomplish them?” It turned out that only 3% of the graduates had written goals and plans. 13% had goals, but they were not in writing. Fully 84% had no specific goals at all, aside from getting out of school and enjoying the summer. Ten years later, in 1989, they interviewed the members of that class again. They found that the 13% who had goals, but which were not in writing were earning on average twice as much as the 84% of students who had had no goals at all. But most

surprisingly, they found that the 3% of graduates who had clear, written goals when they left Harvard were earning, on average, ten times as much as the other 97% of graduates all together. The only difference between the groups was the clarity of the goals they had for themselves when they started out [5].

Most thoughts and accompanying emotional states are determined by goals. Goals are the concretized expression of future orientation and life purpose, and provide a convenient and powerful metric for examining these vital elements of a positive life [3]. Goal setting is a positive, powerful practice when it ignites enthusiasm and provides clear direction [2]. Aristotle said that the ultimate purpose of all human action is the achievement of personal happiness. Whatever you do, he said, it is aimed at increasing your happiness in some way. You may or may not be successful in achieving happiness, but your happiness is always your ultimate aim [4].

3. FINDINGS OF RESEARCH

In a survey, conducted at three different apparel retail stores at Ahmadabad in Gujarat, with the help of questionnaire and interview, fifty respondents responded to questions pertaining to their work profile. The questionnaire consisted of 10 closed questions. During the course of research it was found that most of the CREs belonged to the age group of 18-23 which is an indicative of young, enthusiastic and energetic work force. Besides the ability to learn, work in a retail store involves long standing hours and hectic work schedule which makes them recruit young people on floor. Socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen & Mikels, 2005) states that younger people are more likely than their older counter-parts in the workforce to seek assignments that challenge their skills and eventually enhance their performance [6].

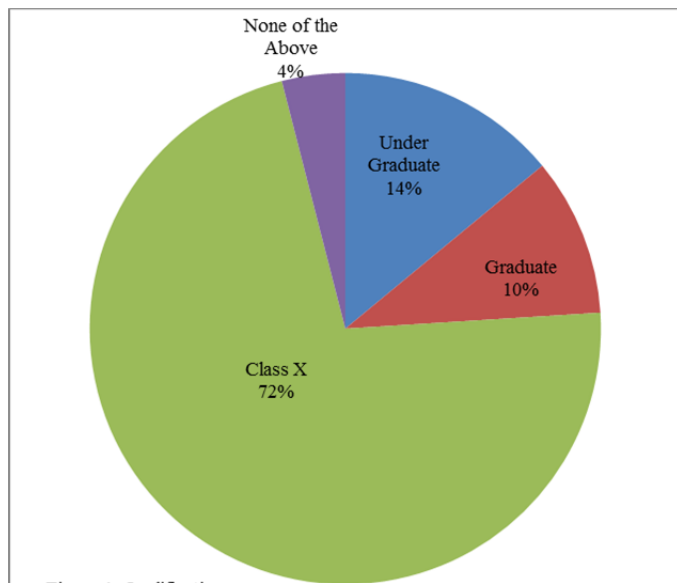


Fig. 1: Qualification

Fig. 1, related with the qualification of store staffs reveals that a significant number of 72% employees have acquired only basic qualification. A report on Indian Retail Trends 2014 stated 80% of this work force is expected to have a Diploma or a XII standard educational qualification or less whereas 75% to 80% of these resources have to specialize in Store operations [8].

Fig. 2, indicates the attrition rate of store staff who leaves the organization in less than a year is 52%. Availability of trained manpower both at the store and managerial level has been a major concern for the Indian retail sector. The problem is escalating with the rise in organized retail and large global players entering the country. The attrition rate in the industry stands at 25 to 35 %. While the paucity of skilled manpower is a challenge, it is important to ensure continuous learning for the existing staff [9]. According to Mohammed Almatoiri, a full commitment of the organization's staff and management is essential for an effective CRM implementation to best serve customers and satisfy their needs [10].

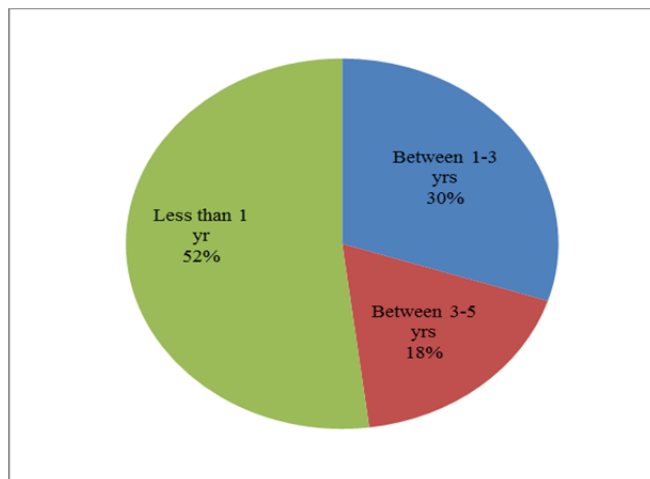


Fig. 2: Work Experience

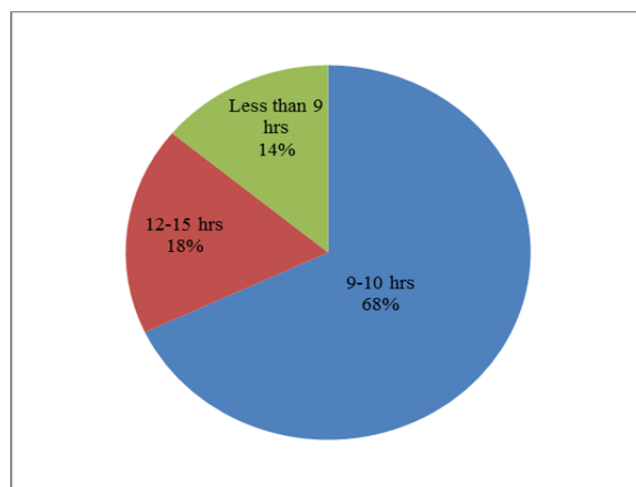


Fig. 3: Work Experience

Fig. 3, justifies long working hours which the store staff have to put in daily in order to fulfill his duty. The strenuous nature of work leaves them with little or no energy at the end of the day. During the day they also accumulate stress which may come in any form – inability to achieve daily targets, customer complaints, conflict at work place, interpersonal conflict, personal problems which gets augmented at work, etc.

Fig. 4, shows that the store staff despite such hard work schedule gets only a day to be with themselves. 92% of the store staff gets a day off for de-stressing.

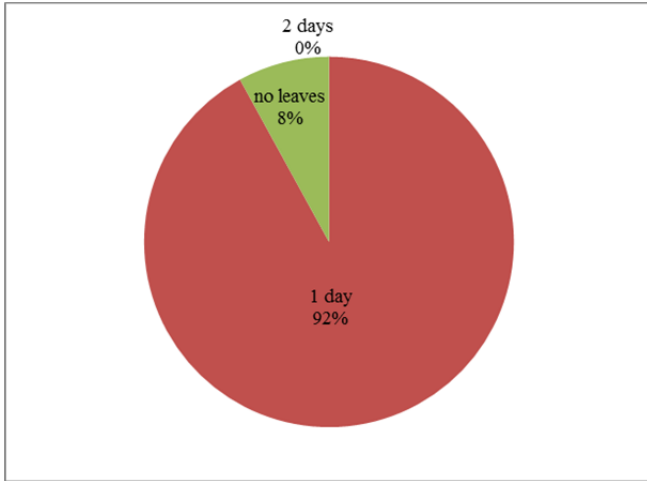


Fig. 4: Number of Holidays

Fig. 5, shows that 46% of store staff takes up the job because of the pay scale and 30% stay on job because of positive work environment. In today’s world, money is the primary (and sometimes the only) form of work compensation. Yet surveys have shown that the most effective motivation for increased performance and creativity is when one feels that his or her work has meaning and value [7].

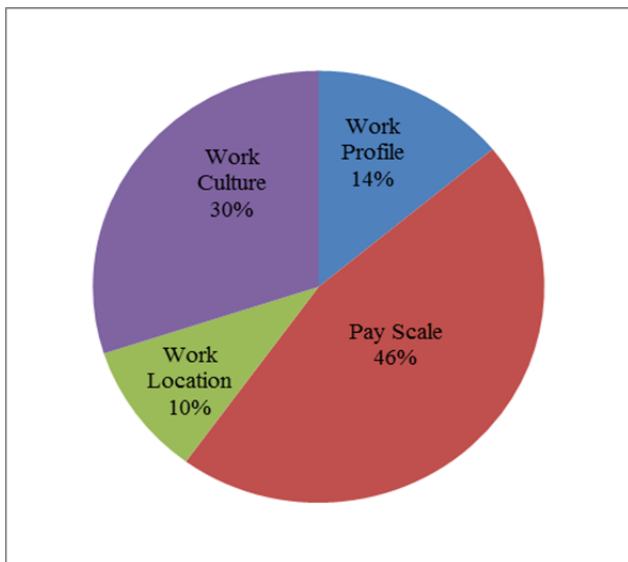


Fig. 5: Motivation Factor

Fig. 6, makes a startling revelation of 42% staffs who find their work monotonous even though 46% stay at work because of pay scale (Fig. 5). Only 24% of staff enjoys their work and a large chunk of 34% enjoys their work partially.

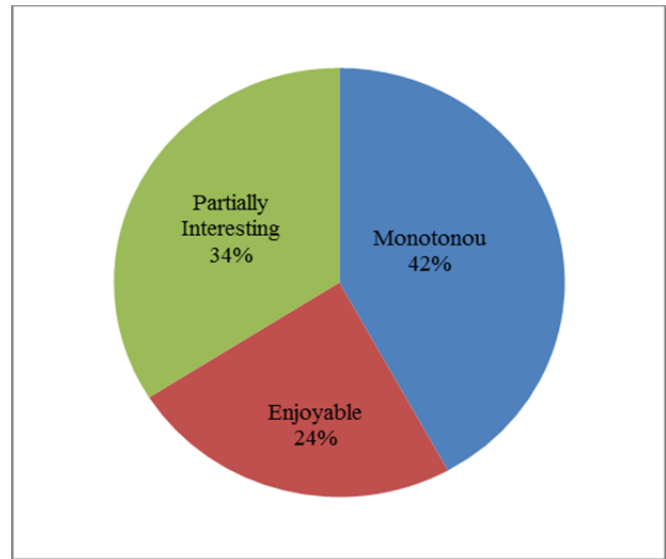


Fig. 6: Work Profile

Fig. 7 and 8, talks about involvement in de-stressing activities and recreation during weekdays and weekends. Fig. 7, shows that 22% of customer support staff do not get time for indulging in de-stressing activities during the weekdays. Fig. 8, shows that 62% of staffs spend more than two hours in recreation during weekends. But the question that looms is whether the amount devoted to oneself is sufficient to rejuvenate given the circumstances. Since they get only a day off, there are household chores also that needs attention. It has become clear from the other figures that there is a need to de-stress for these store staffs. Long hours of work, monotony, minimal breaks demands time for oneself, otherwise it is likely that with passing time staffs will lose interest in work and their productivity will drastically leave forcing them to quit. Pursuit of happiness is lacking in their lives. Aimlessly they get up in the morning perform their tasks and go to bed mechanically.

The American Psychology Association tells us that stress is a major cause of illness today, and oftentimes workplace stress is the primary culprit. Sick or unhealthy workers are unable to function optimally and their performance suffers. Unhealthy workers also cost the company more in healthcare costs and absenteeism. Encourage everyone to take their allotted vacation days. Time away rejuvenates the mind and body, and they will return refreshed and energized [7].

Fig. 9, in accordance with earlier findings it is evident that support staffs of an apparel retail store does not any hobbies or goals to direct their lives. Research shows that 76% of people do not pursue any activities that can generate interest in them. It is also evident that it is our own mindset that helps in the

development of goals or hobbies. The 80/20 Rule applies to the constraints between you and your goals. This rule says that 80% of your constraints will be within yourself. Only 20% of your constraints will be outside of yourself, contained in other people and situations. To put it another way, it is you personally who is usually the major roadblock that is setting the speed at which you achieve any goal that you set for yourself [4].

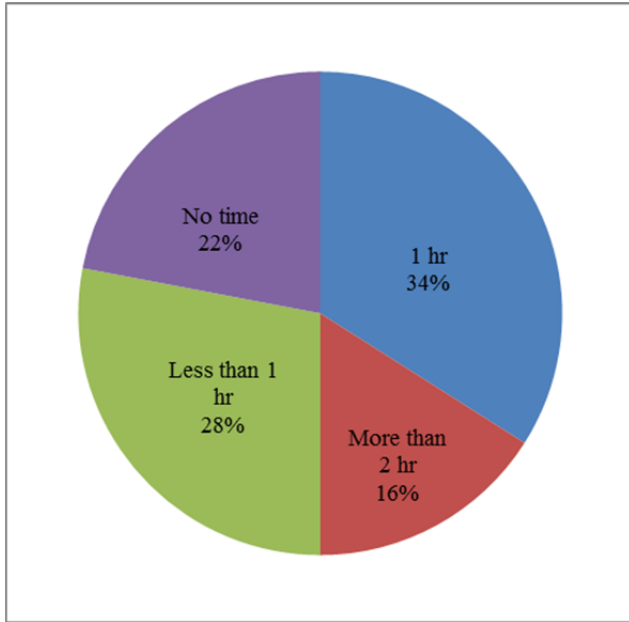


Fig. 7: De-stressing during Weekdays

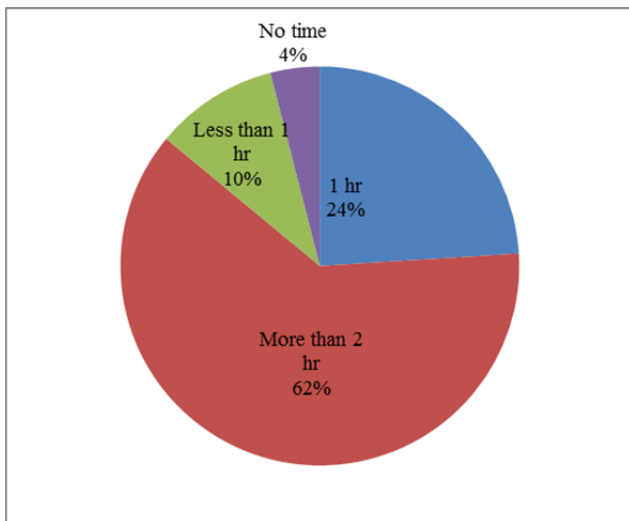


Fig. 8: Recreation during Weekends

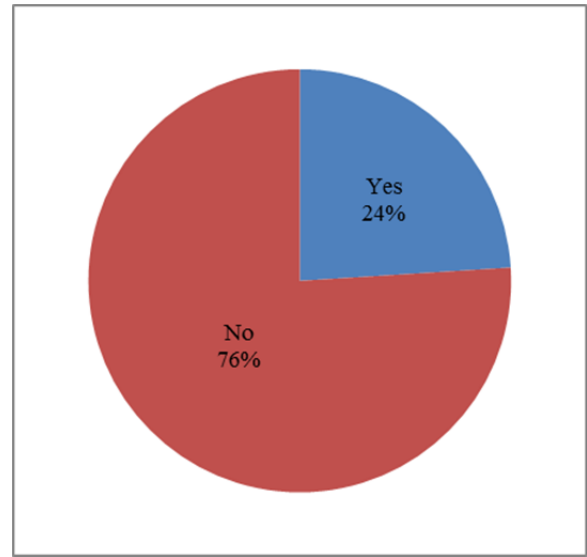


Fig. 9: Goals / Hobby

Fig. 10, reveals the accepted end of 56% employees who do not enjoy their work. Enjoying the work while on floor has lost its significance from their lives. Non-interest in work shows steep decline in customer satisfaction and experience because the very first point of contact for customers appear drab and dull.

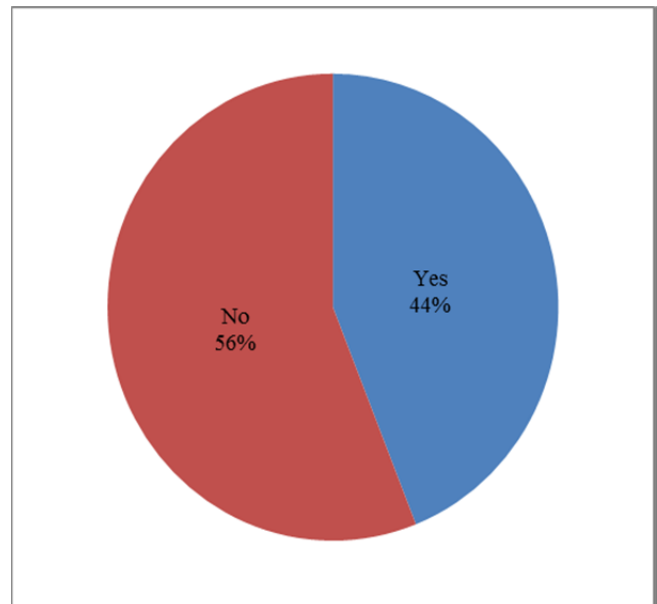


Fig. 10: Enjoyment of Work

4. CONCLUSION

The development of goals that allow for a greater sense of purpose of life is one of the cornerstones of well-being therapy (Fava, 1999), meaning-centered counseling (Wong, 1998), and goal-focused group psychotherapy (Klausner et al., 1998). Without goals, life would lack structure and purpose. Goals, according to Klinger (1998), serve as “the linchpin of psychological organization” [3]. The greatest enemies of success and happiness are negative emotions, of all kinds. It is negative emotions that hold you down, tire you out and take away all your joy in life. When your negative emotions stop, the positive emotions of love, peace, joy and enthusiasm flow in to replace them, and your whole life changes for the better. You remember that, “Happiness is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal.” When you have clear, exciting goals and ideals, you will feel happier about yourself and your world. You will be more positive and optimistic. You will be more cheerful and enthusiastic. You will feel internally motivated to get up and get going every morning, because every step you are taking will be moving you in the direction of something that is important to you [4].

The starting point of all goal attainment is desire. You must develop an intense, burning desire for your goals if you really want to achieve them. It is only when your desire becomes intense enough that you will have the energy and the internal drive to overcome all the obstacles that will arise in your path. For your desire to be intense enough, your goals must be purely personal. They must be goals that you choose for yourself, rather than goals that someone else wants for you, or that you want to achieve to please someone in your life [4]. Dr. William James of Harvard said in 1905, “Belief creates the actual fact.” He went on to say, “The greatest revolution of my generation is the discovery that individuals, by changing their inner attitudes of mind, can change the outer aspects of their lives.” [4]. Happy employees work better together, have greater trust, and are a great recruiting vehicle because they tell others they love where they work but most importantly they are willing to commit to extraordinary results which leads to breakthroughs that lead to Breakaway Innovation [11].

Brian Tracy in his bestselling book “Goals” says, “Your ability to set goals is the master skill of success. Goals unlock your positive mind and release ideas and energy for goal attainment. Without goals, you simply drift and flow on the currents of life. With goals, you fly like an arrow, straight and true to your target. Unsuccessful, unhappy people think and talk about what they don’t want most of the time. They talk about their problems and worries, and who is to blame, most of the time. But successful people keep their thoughts and conversation on the topics of their most intensely desired goals. They think and talk about what they want most of the time. Understanding what drives people is helpful when designing incentive programs to increase satisfaction, and consequently, performance. It is important to show them how their jobs impact the overall success of the company’s mission and tie their remuneration to their

contribution to the objectives of the organization. That way they can comprehend how their efforts are intrinsic to the well-being of the company and be motivated to fully contribute to success [7]. Retail brands should also recruit people as customer support staff who are educated, can be trained and with an acumen to sell. Their core competencies should include people handling skills besides other soft skills. Constant support from the management in the form of trainings should be regularly provided to introduce elements of excitement and enthusiasm.

Brian Tracy in his book also identified the reasons behind non-setting of goals. According to him there are four reasons – First, most people don’t realize the importance of goals. If you grow up in a home where no one has goals, or you socialize with a group where goals are neither discussed nor valued. The second reason that people don’t have goals is because they don’t know how to set them in the first place. Even worse, many people think that they already have goals, when in reality, what they actually have are a series of wishes or dreams like, “Be happy,” or “Make a lot of money,” or “Have a nice family life.” The third reason that people don’t set goals is because of the fear of failure. Failure hurts. It is emotionally and often financially painful and distressing. The fourth reason that people don’t set goals is because of the fear of rejection. People are afraid that if they set a goal and are not successful, others will criticize or ridicule them [4]. It is justified to conclude saying there is no greater guarantee of a long, happy, healthy and prosperous life than for you to be continually working on being, having and achieving more and more of the things you really want. Clear goals enable you to release your full potential for personal and professional success. Goals enable you to overcome any obstacle and to make your future unlimited [4].

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