Novell.

DEEPENING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS AND EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

Novell's vision is to create software solutions that bring all kinds of networks — intranets, extranets, and the Internet; corporate and private; wired to wireless — together as one Net. To achieve that vision, Novell is focused on developing Net services software that secures and powers the networked world. This software — along with industry-leading consulting and support services — helps Novell customers solve difficult business challenges and gives them the networking tools and expertise they need to take advantage of new business opportunities.

Novell's business objective is to grow through network solutions that determine the effectiveness and value of information technology in business and government. The market for networking software has become increasingly competitive, with more alternatives than ever before.

Given this competitive situation, the relationship between Novell support engineers and Novell customers is extremely important. Support engineers, including call center agents and on-site consultants, play a vital role in the value creation process. Part of their mission is to protect the business and give customers no reason to consider "the other guys." The company cannot rely on switching costs alone to prevent customer disloyalty.

CUSTOMER FOCUS

"Our relationship with Wilson Learning has been very successful, both for our individual employees and the organization as a whole. They helped us implement a culture change, not just a training event. The results have been easy to see."

Dave Cutler — VP of Customer Service, Novell

Strategy Implementation Resource, a Wilson Learning agency in Atlanta, helped the Novell management team implement a comprehensive customer service solution that has already produced outstanding business results. Revenues grew from $68 million to $81 million during the first year the project was implemented, and customer satisfaction has increased dramatically.

"Our relationship with Wilson Learning has been very successful, both for our individual employees and the organization as a whole," says Dave Cutler, vice president of customer service at Novell. "They helped us implement a culture change, not just a training event. The results have been easy to see."

SUPPORT ENGINEERS

Led by Account Executive Marion Bunch, the Wilson Learning team initially focused on two distinct populations in Novell's senior support organization: about 90 engineers who respond to inbound calls and another 120 who take a more proactive role, providing support to the client on site. In addition, there is a management team of about 10 people for each group. Through insightful discovery, Bunch recognized that the desired situation was slightly different for each work group.

"Although customer surveys and gap scores indicated that the engineers were already very good, they also stated that the engineers' interaction and communication skills could be improved," says Bunch. "Therefore, it was essential that support engineers be well skilled in how to conduct interactions with customers that result in a high degree of customer satisfaction. This applied in both the call center and the field."

Marion Bunch
Account Executive
Strategy Implementation Resource

"Based on feedback from customers and management's observations, we determined a significant increase in customer satisfaction would occur through investing in our premium engineers' customer service skills," says Barry Haug, a leading customer service executive at Novell.

The goal for the call center engineers was to develop the skills of service providers — providers who demonstrate empathy and a caring attitude, as opposed to just solving the "technical" problem. "We needed to move the engineers to a new level of customer interaction in order to create value and build lasting customer loyalty," says Bunch.

CUSTOMER LOYALTY

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Strategy Implementation Resource

The goal for the field support team of engineers was twofold: to increase the level of customer satisfaction, and to develop consulting skills. As consultants, engineers seek out managers to explore business issues, thereby assisting the sales effort and generating more revenue from service contracts.

EXTRA INITIATIVE

Tevilla Riddell, the Wilson Learning facilitator for this project, spent two days learning about Novell's services and support business through multiple interviews with managers and engineers. Meanwhile, Glenna Ballard, a Wilson Learning process consultant, worked with senior management to design the engineers' business process and management's process for the field support group.

Riddell also facilitated discussions with the call center management team that resulted in changing the process followed by the engineers. The critical skills necessary for the "desired state" of their job performance were confirmed, and both Bunch and Riddell agreed that the business processes in the call center group would need to be redesigned to reinforce the learned behaviors of the engineers. In addition, business processes for both the engineers and managers needed to be created for the field support group.

Wilson Learning's *Signature Service* program was customized to meet the call center group's needs, including competencies and behavioral standards tied to Novell's critical success factors. To make it more real, Novell took the extra initiative to create live audiotapes of customer calls to be used for role plays and exercises. The new program, entitled *Novell SigNature Support,* has become an integral part of their performance management system.

A custom program — which included all of Wilson Learning's *Signature Service* content and selected models from *The Consultative Process* — was developed for the field support engineers. This new solution, called *Novell: The Customer Partnership Process,* presents an effective process for consulting with both internal and external clients. The program has helped Novell's technical professionals become comfortable in their role as consultants, and has helped them generate greater alignment and commitment with the organization's customers by using a win-win problem-solving approach.

Like many managers, Tony Winter, Novell's Midwest district support manager, is very excited about the program. "When I have taken the time to do this, the results are extraordinary. More than just preparing, the thought and organizational process involved in using these techniques and writing them down results in more effective meetings and presentations."

LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Strategy Implementation Resource and Wilson Learning worked with Cutler, Haug, and the Novell management team to create a true human performance improvement solution, not just a training event. Bunch was adamant that the management team stay involved and committed, prompting executives to announce the project plan to all employees and tie the performance improvement solution to the revenue and service goals of the organization.

There were several management challenges. The management team needed to motivate the engineers and help them realize the value of increasing their customer communication skills. Bunch and Riddell astutely helped the management team realize that the current business process in the call center group rewarded behavior for the "fix" and for the quantity of calls completed, which created a disconnect.

"It was apparent that the engineers' business processes and the management processes of reinforcement and rewards needed to be changed to support the new behaviors learned through the training," says Bunch. "This was true for both sides of the support organization."

Rather than leaving it up to individuals to integrate the behaviors into their daily work, Wilson Learning gave Novell's call center managers additional skills and knowledge. All managers, including senior executives, attended a pilot session entitled *Managing SigNature Support* prior to the call center engineers' attendance, so that they could immediately coach and reinforce the new skills on the job.

"Throughout the selection process and implementation of *Signature Service* and *The Customer Partnership Process* — a hybrid program consisting of *The Consultative Process* and *Signature Service* — Marion and Tevilla have proactively assisted Novell's management team at all levels. They consistently make recommendations helping us in the implementation and ongoing coaching efforts necessary to effect change in our culture," says Haug.

Field support managers also attended a customized version of Wilson Learning's *Managing Consulting Performance* program to learn how to coach the new behaviors. A manager kicked off each of the training sessions for engineers, answering the question, "Why am I here?" Throughout implementation, a manager was present in every class to add commentary and answer critical questions.

In addition, a joint effort between Strategy Implementation Resource and Novell's management team resulted in the creation of multiple job aid tools and reinforcement techniques for managers to use on a daily basis. Participants were also given a letter from the division senior executive reiterating how their performance improvement ties to the business strategy and goals of the organization.

DRIVING RESULTS

Beyond the 20 percent growth rate for services revenue, customer satisfaction increased in the entire service and support organization from 74.39 percent to 82.60 percent.

SUCCESSFUL CHANGE

"We were pleased that Novell decided to change the name of the call center organization to SigNature Support," says Bunch. "But more important, we were able to change their business and management processes so the new behaviors were documented, inspected, measured, reinforced, and rewarded."

"Novell's management team supported and reinforced this development from the very beginning. They did everything that we recommended, plus many things determined on their own, to make this initiative a success," says Bunch.

As Cutler notes, the results have been "easy to see." Beyond the 20 percent growth rate for services revenue, customer satisfaction increased in the entire service and support organization from 74.39 percent to 82.60 percent during the period of January 2001 to January 2002. What's more, the gap score (the difference between what customers expect and what they get) improved dramatically. In January 2001 it was .83; by November it was only .41.

"Novell management has not seen such a commitment from any other vendor. In short, Marion and Tevilla have developed the type of relationship with us that we want to model with our customers," says Haug. "Novell has invested more dollars in our organization through Wilson Learning than we ever anticipated because Marion and Tevilla provide such great value and satisfaction. Novell obviously desires the same type of situation with our customers."