

## **Clients or Employees, Who Comes First?**

### Balancing Priorities for Business Success

In today's day and age, many organizations and leaders find themselves struggling with serving two seemingly disparate goals: taking care of their employees first or taking care of their customers first. The first thought provoking question one may consider is – does it really matter?

Having worked with countless organizations, we can assure you, it certainly does matter. First, we will explore some background into why this is a discussion at all. Then we will explore the significance of both customers and employees, lastly we will discuss strategies to find the equilibrium that can drive success.

#### Understanding Customers and Employees

Clients are typically long-term, strategic partners with whom a business engages in ongoing relationships. They may be corporations, organizations, or individuals who rely on specialized services, personalized attention, and a deep understanding of their unique needs. On the other hand, motivated and engaged employees are essential for delivering high-quality engagements that keep clients coming back.

#### The Client Perspective

Clients often require personalized solutions and a high level of intimacy. They require a deep understanding of their business, industry, and goals. Building strong client relationships requires investing time and effort into understanding their evolving needs and providing exceptional value. By putting clients first, organizations can cultivate loyalty, generate positive referrals, and foster strategic partnerships that fuel growth.

#### The Employee Perspective

Knowledgeable, skilled, and motivated employees are the backbone of any company. Their expertise is the foundation upon which client solutions are built. Engaged employees are more likely to deliver exceptional service, leading to satisfied clients who in turn are more likely to return for future projects. Employees who are encouraged to learn and grow can transfer their knowledge to peers and junior staff, creating a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. A supportive work environment and opportunities for career growth are essential for retaining top talent.

#### The Balancing Act

While prioritizing either clients or employees may seem like an all-or-nothing proposition, the key lies in finding a delicate balance. Successful organizations recognize that clients and employees are interconnected and that neglecting one can have consequences for the other. For example, a business may lose clients if it fails to address customer needs or provide satisfactory support. Conversely, a singular focus on creating a fun workplace culture can sometimes lead to a lack of structure where deadlines are not met and productivity dwindles (plus significant financial impact!). Disgruntled employees can also be a cause for clients to look elsewhere.

## Strategies for Striking the Balance

1. **Create an Employee-Centered Culture:** Prioritize creating a workplace culture that values and supports employees. This includes offering competitive compensation, providing opportunities for skill development, flexibility and maintaining healthy work-life harmony. More importantly people want to feel that their voices are heard; this means listening to concerns and acting on them.
2. **Develop Talent:** Invest in training and development programs that empower employees to continuously enhance their skills. Encourage cross-functional training to foster a broader knowledge base within your team. This allows you to leverage knowledge across the board.
3. **Listen to Client Needs:** While employees are essential, the ultimate goal for the business is client satisfaction. Develop a client-centric approach that focuses on understanding client needs, delivering quality results, and building strong relationships.
4. **Get Employee Feedback:** Regularly solicit feedback from employees to gauge their satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. Act on their input to create a better workplace and enhance client service.
5. **Measure Satisfaction:** Measure both client and employee satisfaction, using key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess success in both areas. Strive for equilibrium rather than favoring one over the other.

## Conclusion

In the business world, the question of what comes first, clients or employees, isn't a matter of choosing one over the other. It's about finding the right balance that maximizes client satisfaction and employee engagement. SLKone recognizes that these two elements are interconnected; happy employees are more likely to generate satisfied clients.

By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, investing in employee development, and maintaining a relentless focus on client needs, organizations can strike the delicate equilibrium that leads to long-term success, growth, and sustainability. In the end, it's not a matter of choosing between clients or employees – it's about optimizing both for the benefit of your firm and its stakeholders.