

SERVICE CONTRACTORS ASSESSMENT - SR ISO 9001:2001 REQUIREMENT –

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Dezvoltarea și implementarea unui sistem de management al calității în conformitate cu SR ISO 9001:2001 implică desfășurarea unui anșmablu de procese manageriale necesare coordonării activităților interne și asigurării unui sistem de relații în amonte și în aval.

Ori de câte ori o organizație economică apelează la serviciile unei terțe părți cu scopul de a externaliza anumite procese ca de exemplu cercetarea – dezvoltarea sau mențenanța echipamentelor, evaluarea furnizorilor este foarte importantă deoarece organizația nu se poate degreva de responsabilitatea de a furniza un produs care să satisfacă cerințele clientilor. În astfel de situații, pentru a-și demonstra abilitatea de a realiza produse conforme cu specificațiile, organizația ar trebui să evaluateze furnizorii de servicii pe baza unui sistem de criterii specifice managementului calității serviciilor.

În lucrare se prezintă un sistem de criterii pentru evaluarea furnizorilor bazat pe modelul conceptual al calității serviciilor.

Developing and implementing a quality management system in conformity with SR ISO 9001:2001 involves an aggregate of management processes required to coordinate internal activities and to provide the organization's up- and downstream relationships.

Whenever an economical organization applies for third party service in order to externalize certain processes as research & design or equipment maintenance, contractors assessment is highly important because the organization cannot relieve itself of the responsibility to deliver products which satisfy the customer's requirements. On such occasions, in order to prove its ability to manufacture products according to the specifications, the organization should assess its service contractors using a criteria system specific to the service quality management.

The paper presents a contractors assessment criteria system based on the service quality conceptual model.

1. The importance of service contractors assessment

Developing a quality management system in conformity with SR ISO 9001:2001 – “Quality Management Systems. Requirements.” implies to determine an aggregate of management processes whose implementation should permit the organization to fulfill the standard's requirements. One of these processes is required to fulfill the requirements referring to procurement; by implementing this

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process the organization ensures its products'/service's conformity with the specified requirements.

When an economic or non-economic organization buys a service, the way it assesses the contractors in order to determine their capability to provide the service has certain characteristics which depend mainly on:

- a. the variety of elements which determine the service quality perception;
- b. the possibility for the organization to externalize certain manufacturing processes.
- a. The peculiarities of a service quality dimension, compared to those of a product quality dimension, impose also a peculiar way to assess the contractor's capability, because the perception of the service quality level is strongly influenced by the expectations fulfillment level. The peculiarity is also determined by the big number of expectations for the service quality dimensions compared to those for a product.

Systematic researches performed by qualified specialists [3,1] have proven that, when buying a service, the clients expectations refer to: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication and understanding (table 1).

Table 1

<i>expectations</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>examples of buyer's questions</i>
tangibles	the presence of physical elements as equipment, personnel, communication means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is the bank's equipment attractive? - is my stock broker adequately dressed? - is the service kit modern? - is the credit card's guide easy to understand?
reliability	the ability to safely provide the promised service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - when the loan officer says he will call back in 2 days, does he do so? - does the stock broker follow my exact instructions? - is my credit card statement correct? - is my car repaired right?
responsiveness	the goodwillness to help the customer and to provide the service promptly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - when there is a problem with my statement does the bank resolve the problem quickly? - is the stock broker willing to answer my questions? - will the service company give me an exact time when the car will be repaired?
competence	the existence of abilities and knowledge required to provide the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is the bank teller able to process the transaction? - does the brokerage company have the research capabilities to track market trends? - is the bank teller able to answer my questions? - does the service personnel know what it is supposed to do?

courtesy	the politeness, respect and friendly attitude of the front-desk personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are the bank's phone operators polite when answering my questions? - does the service personnel take off his dirty shoes before stepping on my carpet?
credibility	the service provider should be trustfully and honest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - does the bank have a good reputation? - does my broker refrain from pressuring me to buy? - does the service company guarantee its services?
security	without danger, risks or doubts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is it safe to use the bank's ATM's? - is it possible that the brokerage company lose my stock certificate? - can I be confident that the repair job was done properly?
access	approachability and easy to contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - will it be possible for me to talk to the bank's manager when I have a problem? - does the credit company have a 24 hour telephone number?
communication	to inform the customer in common language and to listen to him	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - does my broker avoid using technical jargon? - is the bank's personnel willing to listen to my complaints? - does the service company announce my about changing a scheduled appointment?
understanding	the organization's effort to know the customers and their requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - does the bank's personnel recognize me as a regular customer? - does my broker try to determine my financial objectives?

b. Externalizing certain manufacturing processes allows the organization which develops a quality management system in conformity with SR ISO 9001:2001 to exclude the standard's requirements referring to them as being non-applicable. In such situations, declaring the conformity with the standard is made possible if:

- exclusions are limited to those specified in Ch. 7 of the standard;
- “exclusions don't alter the organization's ability to provide a product which satisfies the customer's and the applicable regulations' requirements” (SR ISO 9001:2001).

Therefore, when carrying out the externalized service is determinant for satisfying the organization's customer requirements and expectations, the contractors assessment is highly important.

2. The contractors assessment process

Among the requirements in the standard ISO 9001:2001 referring to procurement there stand:

- “the organization has to assess and select its contractors based on their capability to provide a product complying to the organization’s requirements”;
- “the selection, assessment and re-assessment criteria have to be established”.

A systemic approach needed to fulfill these requirements implies the development of a process; the flow diagram for the general model we introduce for this process is presented in figure 1.

Consideration regarding the process stage development:

- The variety of information required to perform the assessment implies using several means for collecting them, as: structured interview, non-structured interview, questionnaires sent by mail. As well, the sources for information should be multiple; we consider that potential contractors’ customers should not be ignored as a source for information.
- The accepted contractors classification should be made based on a quantitative assessment, also considering the importance conferred by the organization to fulfilling its requirements and expectations for the service to be bought. Therefore, the qualitative collected information should be transformed into quantitative ones.

In order to correctly assess the importance conferred to fulfilling the requirements and expectations by the service to be bought, there should be interviewed people from different compartments of the organization, who will be the service’s direct customers.

- There is also necessary to assess the behavior of the contractor’s employees who directly contact the customer, because the service quality perceived by the latter is also determined by its expectations fulfillment level. Therefore, when the probability of personnel fluctuation is high we consider that re-assessing the service contractors should be done more frequently than the products ones.
- The rapid evolution of materials, technology and equipment used by the contractors in order to provide several kinds of services may determine to modify the criteria used to assess them.

Of course, there should be conferred an outstanding importance to the stage when contractors assessment criteria are established.

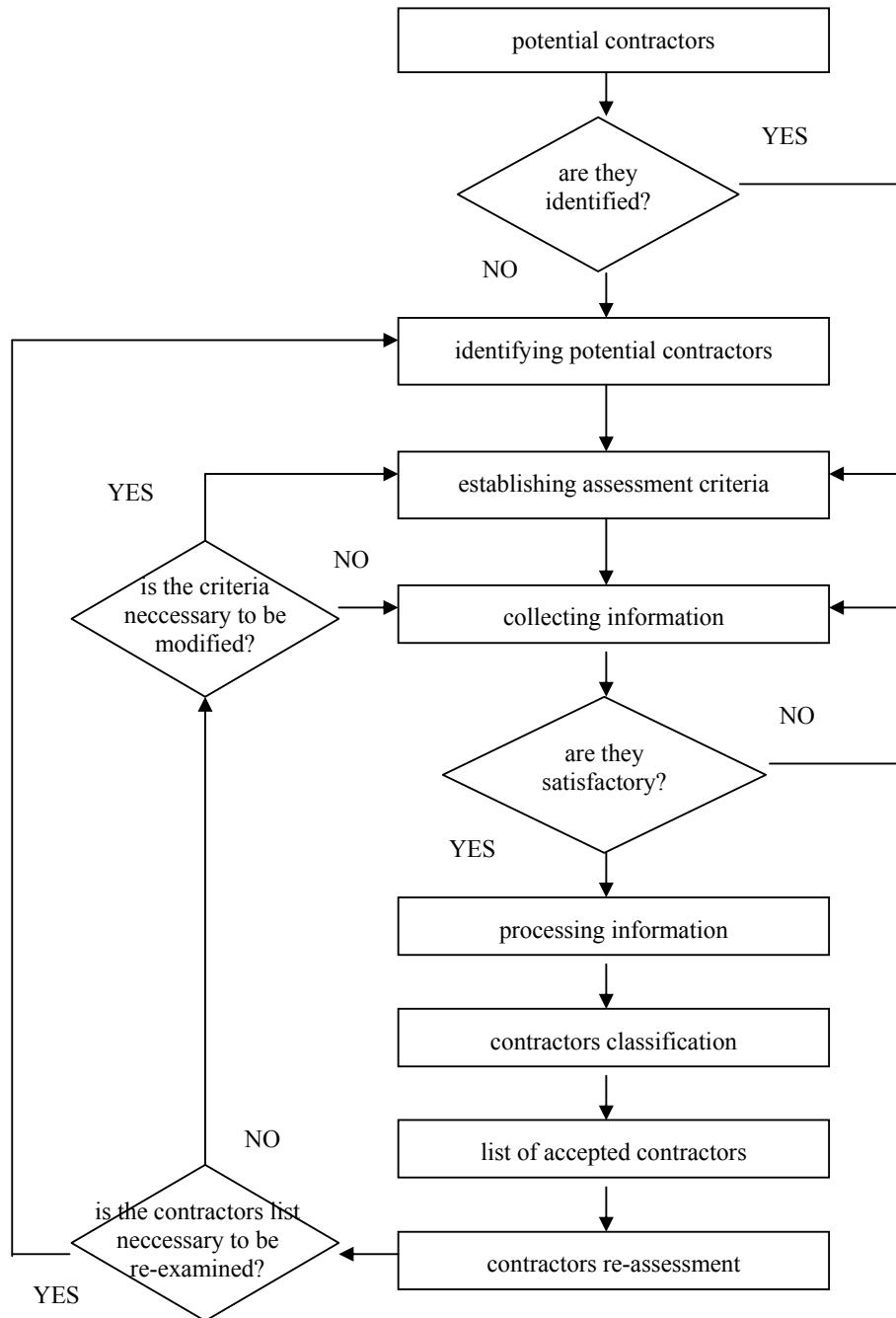


Fig. 1. The contractors assessment process

3. The service contractors assessment criteria

Generally, the contractors assessment criteria are established so that there may be anticipated their potential “answer” to the customers’ requirements and expectations.

When establishing the service contractor assessment criteria the organization which has implemented a quality management system in conformity with SR ISO 9001:2001 has also to consider certain peculiarities. As we already have shown in the first chapter, the peculiarities which have to be considered are:

- all the service quality dimensions, i.e. the specifications and the variable customer’s expectations;
- the organization’s responsibility to provide a conformable product even that several manufacturing processes are being externalized.

We consider that a complete service contractor assessment should be done based on an aggregate of criteria which can be structured in the following categories:

a. Criteria used to identify contractors who are able to fulfill the service’s requirements in the most adequate economic conditions, in order to achieve the organization’s objectives.

This type of criteria may be:

- the competence of the personnel who is directly involved in providing the service;
- the contractor’s technical equipment – its physical and moral wear condition;
- the price asked for the required service;
- the operating capacity;
- the guarantee terms provided for the required service;
- the accepted payment forms and terms.

b. Criteria used to assess certain management processes which are developed in the contractor’s organization, whose unsuitable development would lead to a discrepancy between the expected and perceived service quality.

The management processes which should be assessed using these criteria are presented in the service quality conceptual model (fig. 2). Its conclusion is that, if there are discrepancies between the expected and perceived service quality, the contractor’s organization may have the following problems:

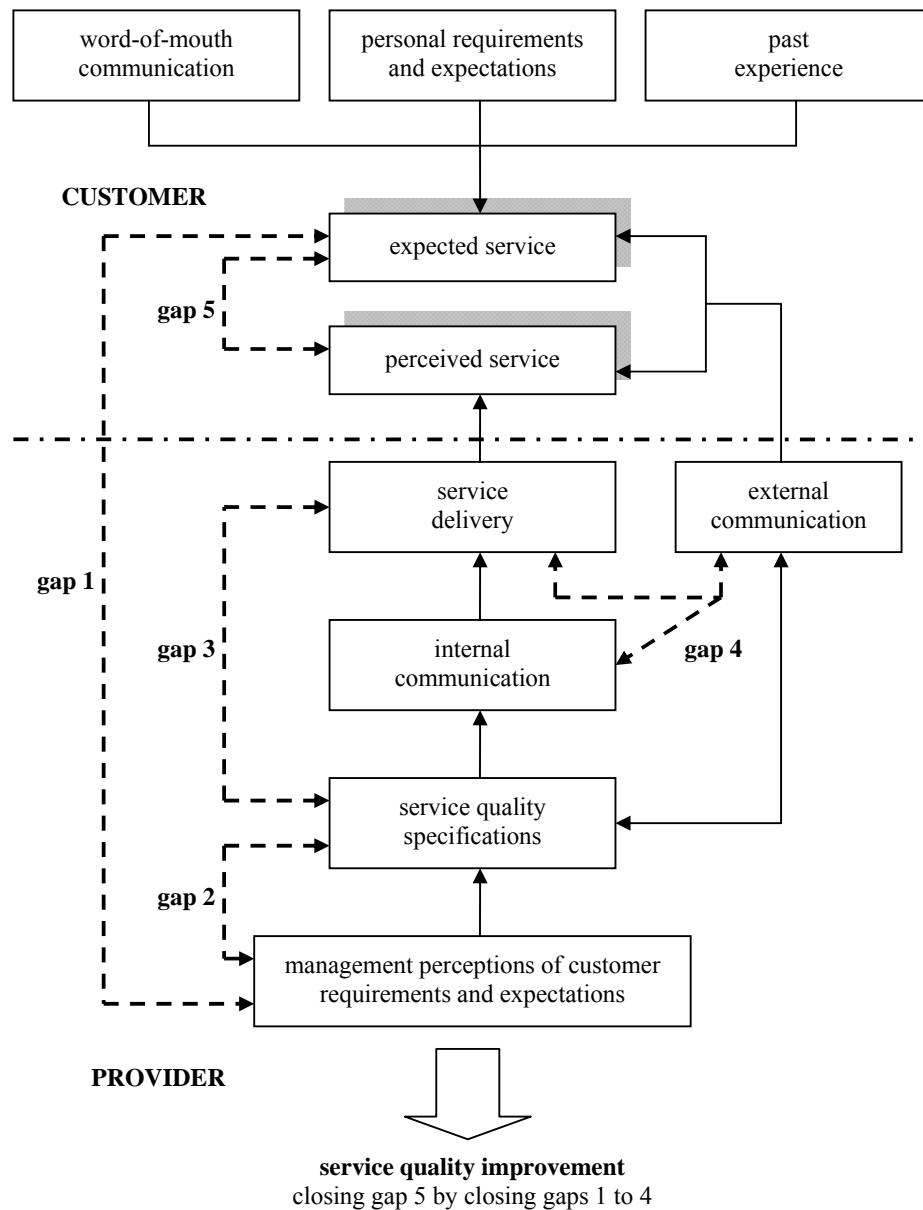


Fig. 2.The quality service conceptual model – compiled after V. Zeithaml, A. Parasuraman, L. Berry – Delivering Quality Service, The Free Press, 1990

- the customers' requirements and expectations aren't sufficiently known (gap 1);
- the required services quality level isn't correctly perceived and, consequently, the work tasks aren't suitable specified or their achievement fezability isn't correctly estimated (gap 2);
- the service is inadequately provided because of the employees' inadequate competence for their work tasks, the inadequate technology and equipment, the inadequate control (gap 3);
- the promises made to the customers aren't suitable to the provided service because of the defective communication between the organization's compartments and the inaccurate external communication of the service's characteristics (gap 4).

If these are the contractor's problems whose results lead to a low level of customer satisfaction, then the criteria required to assess it are:

- the way the potential contractor informs itself about organizational customers requirements and expectations;
- the processes established by the contractor in order to communicate with the customer before and during providing the service;
- the categories of information which are communicated to the customer;
- the satisfaction level declared by the assessed contractor's customers.

A more detailed service contractors assessment would be performed if there are established criteria referring to the causes leading to the gaps presented in the service quality conceptual model [2].

4. Conclusions

The service contractors assessment which is performed based on the criteria aggregate we have presented provides the economic organization an important premise to accede the management level of excellency.

Our assessment is based on the results that may be obtained by an organization which buys services from contractors which had been assessed using the methods we have presented:

- purchasing services of a quality level which permits to achieve its objectives referring both to economic results and to customer satisfaction;
- achieving the conditions required to establish long term partnerships with its contractors; organizational sales bilateral partnerships are established as a result of the trust and commitment level obtained by assessing the contractor using the suggested criteria and providing the required feedback.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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