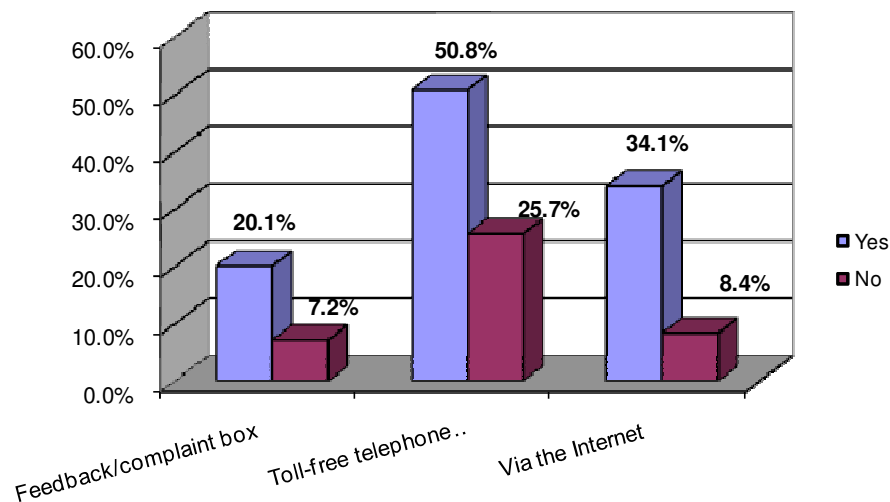


Customer Service Practices and Policies among Missoula Area Businesses
January, 2010 Report

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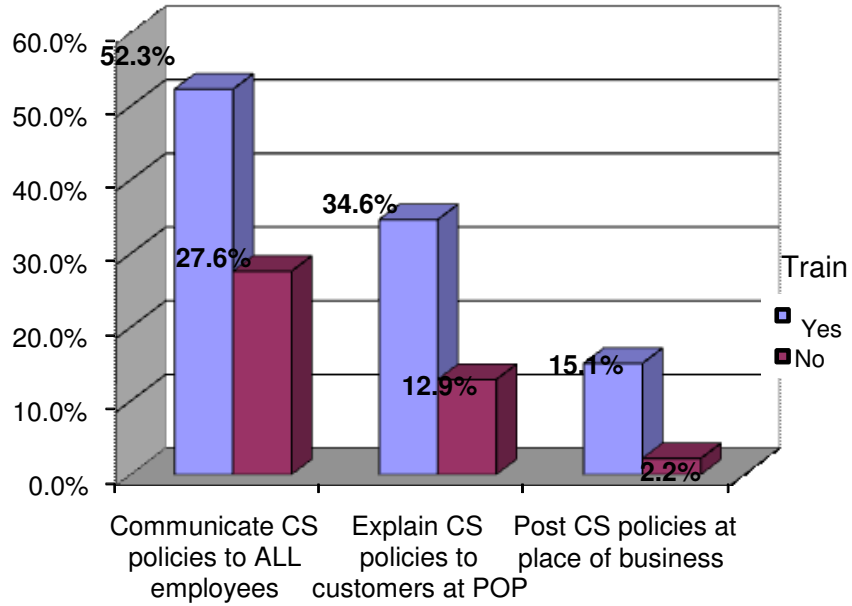
This is part five of the report on the survey of the Missoula Chamber of Commerce members with regard to their customer service policies and practices and includes the results of the last three structured questions in our survey. We considered how companies received customer feedback based on whether they provided employee training in handling customer complaints. The results support the trend evident in the earlier parts of our report; companies who provide training are more likely to receive customer feedback regardless of the method through which such feedback is provided by the customer compared to companies that do not provide training (see Figure 1). The results show a difference of 20.1% versus 7.2% for feedback via feedback/complaint box, 50.8% versus 25.7% for feedback via toll free telephone numbers, and 34.1% versus 8.4% for feedback via the Internet. These findings lend support to having adequately trained customer service employees who encourage and welcome customer feedback regardless of the venue the customers choose for providing such feedback to the firm.

Figure 1. Differences in Method of Receiving Customer Feedback



We also examined differences between firms that did or did not provide employee training specifically focused on handling customer complaints. Clearly, those firms that provide training in handling customer complaints are more likely to also communicate their customer service policies both internally to their employees and externally to their customers (see Figure 2). In all, the difference between the two groups of firms was 52.3% versus 27.6% for communicating such policies to all employees, 34.6% versus 12.9% for explaining customer service policies to customers at the point of purchase, and 15.1% versus 2.2% for whether they posted their policies at their place of business.

Figure 2. Differences in Communicating CS Policies



In the last structured questions we compared firms that provided their employees with specific training aimed at handling customer complaints. Significant differences were found between firms that provided employee training specifically focused on handling customer complaints and firm that did not provide such training when it comes to handling customer complaints. Firms that provided such training were more likely to solve customer complaints based on established company policies (17.9% versus 3.9%), communicate to customers how the complaint would be handled in writing (45.3% versus 18.9%), and keep track of customer complaints (32.2% versus 7.6%), as compared to those who did not provide customer service training for employees (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Differences in Customer Complaint Handling

