



## Powering up the 'Service' in Shared Services

Shared Services are not new. They have been around for decades and we all rely on them to varying degrees. While the most common examples include IT, HR, Finance, Facilities Management and Procurement, other services are increasingly being shared across the enterprise, for example Legal, PR and Communications, and Business Intelligence.

In the majority of cases the rationale for moving to Shared Services is to reduce operating costs. This is underpinned by the argument that to 'centralise' resources into one dedicated Shared Service organisation, which delivers services through standardised processes and systems, must be cheaper than individual business units doing it themselves.

A second, less tangible argument is that by centralising expertise, service quality will also improve. Many organisations have taken this thinking further by choosing to outsource all or part of their Shared Service operation to external providers, many of whom operate off-shore.

Shared Services are now an established part of our organisational landscape, and will continue to evolve as the requirements of its users change and new sourcing strategies emerge. But how can we ensure that the focus is not solely on cost, but also on higher levels of service quality and value?

### Factors that determine service quality

Over the past 20 years, the body of knowledge on Shared Services has significantly increased, and during this time we have developed a point of view on the factors that influence service quality and value. We believe there are 10 of these factors and they are described in the full [article](#) available on our website. We believe that people are fundamental when it comes to service quality, and that these factors create an environment and context within which people are able to deliver their best.

### A framework for continual improvement

An assessment of each of the factors, in terms of the extent to which they are in place, is a powerful leading indicator of future performance, unlike customer satisfaction surveys that are lagging indicators.

## Customer service happens when someone takes responsibility

In a recent HBR article Sarah Green tells how Joyce Davis, an Amtrak employee working on the information booth at Pennsylvania Station in New York, gave outstanding customer service by taking responsibility for a problem.

The problem was not of Amtrak's making, but resulted from Sarah forgetting to leave the keys to the house where she'd been staying. Without them her friend would be homeless. Joyce's response was to take the keys and tell Sarah to get her friend to call her on her cell phone.

The solution was simple: all it required was Joyce's willingness to take responsibility for the problem to assist an Amtrak customer.

To read Sarah's article, click [here](#).

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## Recent survey indicates that more needs to be done to improve service

The popular UK financial website [This is Money](#) is inviting its readers to nominate those UK companies that have given particularly poor service over the past 12 months.

The winner of this 'competition', now in its fourth year, gets the Wooden Spoon Award for rotten customer service.

By all accounts service has not improved over the past four years and in many cases it has got worse, indicating that some of our leading companies and government departments still have more to do.

To find out who is on this year's shortlist, click [here](#).

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## An opportunity to gain insight through two Collaborative Explorations

The aim of our [Collaborative Explorations](#) is to help participants gain insight on an important issue, thereby enabling them to make informed choices. As the exploration is consortium-

Their assessment can therefore be used as a framework for the planning of continual improvement and change. It's important to note that these factors cannot be addressed in isolation as they are very closely interrelated. An holistic approach therefore needs to be taken, which considers how changes to one factor will result in changes having to be made to others.

A further value of such an assessment tool is that it can be used to measure progress over time.

If you would like to read our full article where we describe the 10 factors that determine service quality, click [here](#).

We welcome your thoughts.

[Peter Boggis](#)  
[peter.boggis@formicio.com](mailto:peter.boggis@formicio.com)

[Peter Turgoose](#)  
[peter.turgoose@formicio.com](mailto:peter.turgoose@formicio.com)

based, the cost is shared between member organisations.

We are currently inviting organisations to join us in the following explorations:

[Making IT Organisations Truly Service Centric](#)

[Optimising your HR Operating Model](#)

If you would like to participate in either of these explorations we'd be delighted [to hear from you](#).

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## Parting thought

"It is not enough to do your best; you must know what to do, then do your best."

William Edwards Deming  
Quality Guru, 1900-1993

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