



THE IMPORTANT FACTORS THAT DETERMINE CLIENT SATISFACTION AT EXPAT MANAGEMENT GROUP WHEN IT COMES TO ESTABLISH STRONGER BUSINESS RELATIONS WITH ITS CLIENTS

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this research is to provide credible information on the topic "What important factors determine client satisfaction for Expat Management Group (EMG) when it comes to establishing stronger business relations with its clients?". To achieve a comprehensive understanding of this research, qualitative methods such as interviews and observations were used. Secondary data collection involved analyzing previously gathered data from various sources, such as systematic reviews, existing large-scale datasets, and documentary analysis. This dual approach ensured a comprehensive dataset that enriched the research findings. The study begins with an introduction to EMG, detailing its operational scope, service offerings, and the importance of client satisfaction in maintaining competitive advantage. It identifies a gap in the current business relations strategy, highlighting the need for a more structured approach to client engagement and satisfaction. This research contributes to the enhancement of EMG's business relations strategy by proposing actionable insights derived from client feedback and satisfaction survey accumulation. By implementing these recommendations, EMG can strengthen its position as a trusted partner in corporate immigration and relocation services, fostering sustainable client relationships and improving operational efficiency.

Keywords Client satisfaction, Business relations, Client relations

INTRODUCTION

Expat Management Group is a global mobility company that operates 9 hours daily on weekdays. It provides high-quality services to maintain long-term relationships with its clients, particularly their corporate clients which give the most cases in the business and this is the primary goal of Expat Management Group. They have a system where the clients will be handled by one consultant depending on the services they choose, and the consultant will be the contact person for every case. The client of EMG is a corporate client. The consultant will always be in touch with the HR departments because the client is a corporate client and the end-user who will be assisted by EMG is the expatriate (the corporate client's employee). Therefore, HR people are basically the clients because they are the representatives of the corporate client and both the HR people and the expat need to be satisfied because they are related to each other.

However, the current business relations approach related to fulfillment of client satisfaction is not yet effective and optimal. The business relations department at Expat Management Group still does not have a fixed strategy approach with regard to prioritization for the clients who need to be reached. Moreover, there are some clients who have lost contact with EMG because they do not have an exact guide and prioritization for approaching clients, particularly for clients with no current cases.

Expat Management Group plans to make the business relations team run more effectively and establish long-term client relationships. Currently, Expat Management Group has clients with whom they have established long-term partnerships. EMG aims to maintain these relationships and also seeks to establish similar long-term partnerships with clients who do not yet have such relationships with EMG. Long-term relationships are very important for EMG, this is because Expat Management Group will be at the top of clients' minds whenever they need immigration and relocation services.

Expat Management Group wants to be connected with all of its corporate clients as a strategic partner and not only a service provider so that they can maintain a good relationship in a long-term basis. Expat Management Group also wants to understand client satisfaction and examine the clients' proactiveness in contacting EMG. They plan to use this knowledge to make a guideline and list of prioritization of clients who need to be focused in terms of contact, meetings, and service offerings. The final result of this report is the recommendation of planning solutions to enhance the effectiveness of establishing stronger business relations based on clients' satisfaction.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Expatriates are defined as individuals who have relocated to a foreign nation primarily for occupational purposes or to pursue opportunities for global exposure (Gatti, 2009). There are several criteria identified among migrants, expatriates, and travellers within the framework of international mobility, including geographical relocation across national boundaries, alteration of primary residency, engagement in employment overseas, and the legal status of employment (Andresen et al., 2014). Edstrom and Gailbraith (1977, as cited in Collings et al., 2007) stated that there are three reasons for the deployment of expatriates first, expatriates are used to filling roles when host country nationals (HCNs) are not available; second, help managers improve their skills and enhance their proficiency; third, to enhance knowledge sharing in MNCs and improve organizational frameworks and decision-making processes.

Expatriates play a crucial role for multinational corporations (MNCs) across various dimensions. The choice of expatriate practices by MNCs is typically influenced by their international management strategies, which can be centralized, local, or global. These strategies help determine whether the focus will be on controlling foreign subsidiaries or facilitating two-way knowledge transfer through the deployment of expatriates (Wang, 2020).

The rise in global expat mobility can be attributed to the growing number of international assignments that foster business growth. Consequently, having a global talent pool is more than a competitive advantage (European Relocation Association & Canadian Employee Relocation Council, n.d.). Despite the growing complexity of global staffing, the appointment of executives in foreign subsidiaries remains a crucial element for many multinational corporations (Lee, 2021). One of the reasons why the mobility of sending and bringing expats is increasing because businesses are becoming more international, and companies view it as necessary.

RESEARCH METHOD

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of this research, qualitative methods such as interviews and observations were used. Qualitative research is described as an iterative process that involves making new, significant distinctions by closely examining the phenomenon being studied, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The reason for selecting qualitative methods is that the method allows the researcher to explore the behavioural and experiential dimensions of the object under investigation. This approach helped gather rich and detailed information, facilitating a thorough analysis of client behaviour.

This section describes the data collection methods used to obtain the necessary information and the models that supported this research. The data collection methods were divided into primary

and secondary sources. Primary data collection methods included direct interactions with participants through structured interviews, as well as direct observations in the real settings. These methods were designed to capture in-depth insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences. Secondary data collection involved analyzing previously gathered data from various sources, such as systematic reviews, existing large-scale datasets, and documentary analysis. This dual approach ensured a comprehensive dataset that enriched the research findings.

Additionally, the SERVQUAL analysis model was used to support the research analysis. SERVQUAL helped assess the service quality dimensions of EMG's business approach, identified potential areas for improvement, and provided a structured framework for analyzing client satisfaction and service quality. By combining qualitative methods with the SERVQUAL model, the research aimed to provide a detailed understanding of the client's behavior and experiences, contributing to the overall depth of the study.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. Internal Analysis

The internal analysis of Expat Management Group's business approach focuses on evaluating its current strategies and how they are implemented by employees. The analysis aims to identify the most effective methods that have received positive client feedback, using the SERVQUAL model to assess service quality and pinpoint areas for improvement. This model evaluates five key dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, which are critical for understanding and enhancing client satisfaction.

This study also examines the communication strategies used by EMG, including the use of emails, phone calls, in-person and online meetings, newsletters, and client events. These communication methods are crucial for maintaining consistent and personalized interactions between consultants and clients, ensuring that clients receive timely and appropriate responses to their needs. The effectiveness of these strategies is further analyzed through internal interviews and feedback sessions, highlighting the importance of reliability and responsiveness in client relations.

Finally, the research underscores the importance of assurances and empathy in service delivery. EMG's commitment to responding to client inquiries within agreed-upon timeframes and understanding client needs are pivotal in building trust and maintaining high levels of client satisfaction. The findings from the SERVQUAL model and internal interviews offer valuable insights for refining EMG's operations and enhancing overall service quality.

B. External Analysis

An external analysis was conducted to explore client satisfaction at Expat Management Group (EMG) and its influence on strengthening business relationships. This analysis, which involved a past survey and interviews with five clients, aimed to assess the services provided by EMG, their presentation, and the impact on client satisfaction, both positive and negative. Additionally, the chapter examines client perspectives on EMG's communication methods and compares EMG's services to those offered by competitors in the Netherlands, highlighting differences that could argue for the importance of client satisfaction in building stronger business relations.

The analysis begins with an overview of EMG's current client satisfaction rate, based on internal data from a survey conducted between November 2023 and March 2024. The survey, which included responses from 60 HR representatives of EMG's corporate clients, utilized the Net Promoter Score (NPS) to gauge satisfaction with various aspects of EMG's services, such as communication quality and support levels from the immigration and relocation teams. The results revealed generally favorable NPS scores, with most clients expressing satisfaction, though some indicated a need for more support from the relocation team and a desire for greater proactiveness and innovation.

Further insights were obtained through in-depth interviews with five clients who used EMG's immigration and/or relocation services. These interviews revealed that while clients were generally satisfied with EMG's services, some expressed concerns about the processing times for immigration services, which were attributed to delays from external authorities. Despite these challenges, clients appreciated EMG's prompt responses and the e-portal's functionality, though one client raised concerns about the portal's security.

The analysis also explored the application of the SERVQUAL model from a client-based perspective, focusing on the five dimensions of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The findings from client interviews indicated that EMG's services were perceived as reliable and responsive, with clients valuing clear communication and the ability to track cases via the e-portal. However, clients noted that external factors sometimes delayed responses, particularly in immigration cases. Overall, the SERVQUAL analysis confirmed that EMG's services met client expectations across most dimensions, with room for improvement in certain areas.

In addition to client satisfaction, the external analysis included a competitive analysis of EMG's position in the Netherlands market. The analysis compared EMG's services and market strategies with those of its competitors, such as SIRVA, Santa Fe Relocation, and Eres Relocation, noting that while EMG has a strong brand presence locally, it faces challenges in expanding its international reach. EMG's innovative e-platform, Myexpating, and its strong reputation among multinational clients were identified as key competitive advantages, but the analysis suggested that further efforts could enhance EMG's global footprint and competitive position.

The external analysis underscores the importance of client satisfaction in strengthening business relationships at EMG. The findings from the survey and interviews, combined with the SERVQUAL model and competitive analysis, provide valuable insights into how EMG can continue to meet client needs while addressing areas for improvement. These insights will be further examined in the conclusion chapter to inform future strategies for enhancing client satisfaction and business relations.

CONCLUSION

The comparison of the SERVQUAL model analysis results for employees and clients overall supports each other's statements between employees and clients. However, in the tangibility section, there are responses that are not linear in terms of miscommunication. Specifically, the relocation manager stated that there is no miscommunication between clients using relocation services and the relocation team. In contrast, the immigration manager indicated that miscommunication between the immigration team and clients using immigration services typically arises due to language barriers and not other factors. Nevertheless, there is another statement that is linear between clients and employees in terms of tangibility. Overall, across the five aspects of the comparison between clients and employees in the SERVQUAL analysis, their statements are linear with one another. Below is the comparison table of employees' and clients' statements.

Table 1
SERVQUAL Analysis Comparison Result

Tangibility		
	Employees	Clients
Linear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Communication • Setting clear expectations Provide full attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never abandoned client cases (Validate by all of the respondents). Always have initiative (Validate by all of the respondents).
Not-linear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocation manager stated that there is no miscommunication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a moment miscommunication happened in

	Immigration manager stated that miscommunication happened because of language barrier and not for other reason.	explaining the case, but both parties are managed it (Stated by two of the respondents).
Reliability		
	Employees	Clients
Linear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable particularly in an ongoing case • Always available to respond client's inquiries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMG service is reliable, particularly in an urgent situations (Validate by all of the respondents).
Not-linear	-	-
Responsiveness		
	Employees	Clients
Linear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide speedy communication • If there is a slow in respond, usually it is when it is out of office hour, holiday season, or slow in the authorities (external factors) . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In overall services, EMG is fast respond (Validate by all of the respondents).
Not-linear	-	-
Assurance		
	Employees	Clients
Linear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide service level agreement of responding clients within 24 to 48 hours • Two hours reply based on European Relocation Association (EuRA) certification, but it depends on the questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have service level agreement with EMG of responding clients within 2 business days, and EMG always fulfil that (Validate by one of the respondent).
Not-linear	-	-
Empathy		
	Employees	Clients
Linear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care to clients • Understanding clients' needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Got monthly visit by EMG's representatives (Validate by all of the respondents). • Got a free training (Validate by one of the respondent). • The service is customable depending on client's condition (Validate by three of the respondents).

Not-linear - -

Overall, EMG has demonstrated strong performance with its clients. This is supported by the result of the SERVQUAL analysis comparing employee and client perspectives, as well as a comparison of competitive advantage between EMG and their three competitors in the Netherlands. However, certain aspects need improvement, such as understanding client's needs deeply and providing a platform for immigration and relocation consultants to easily report the activity of clients to the business relations manager. This would enable EMG to remain proactive with these clients despite their inactivity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This part provides recommendations for the Expat Management Group (EMG) derived from the research findings. The writer comes up with two key recommendations for EMG. The first recommendation is the establishment of Client Advisory Boards (CAB). The Client Advisory Board (CAB) is one of the options that can be utilized by the Expat Management Group to obtain feedback and suggestions from clients. This process is crucial for enhancing service quality and client engagement in every strategic action. According to Pearce (1985), advisory boards consist of external members who gather together periodically to provide guidance to the organization's managers. These members are typically appointed or approved by the organization's full-time managers. The selection process for CAB members is encouraged to represent a diverse cross-section of EMG's client base, ensuring comprehensive feedback and broad insights.

The second recommendation is the implementation of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform. This platform is essential for EMG in managing client activity data. Currently, EMG lacks a dedicated platform for managing clients data. Thus, the introduction of such a platform is anticipated to enhance the effective management of client data.

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