LD6-15 **Mejorando la rentabilidad de los servicios** 3 de agosto de 2006

Estimados suscriptores:
Es un placer estar de regreso con ustedes. En esta ocasión les envío la primera parte de un artículo acerca del reto empresarial que significa proveer servicios (de atención al cliente, de asistencia técnica, de mantenimiento, etc.) de manera que nuestros clientes estén satisfechos y nuestra empresa obtenga los beneficios que corresponden al costo y esfuerzo de proporcionar los servicios.

Los autores Eric Harmon, Scott C. Hensel y Timothy E. Lukes de McKinsey plantean que aunque los servicios son más difíciles de medir y monitorear que los procesos de manufactura, los ejecutivos pueden superar la variabilidad y aumentar la productividad si implementan sistemas de medición rigurosos y pertinentes. El artículo señala que los factores aparentemente incontrolables en la prestación de servicios ocasionan que los ejecutivos acepten un alto nivel de variación, y por lo tanto un alto nivel de desperdicio e ineficiencia, en los costos de servicio, pero que la variabilidad puede controlarse.

Aumentar la rentabilidad de los servicios es de gran importancia porque los servicios son una parte cada día de mayor valor de la economía. Además, prácticamente todos los productores de bienes tangibles necesitan acompañar esa producción con servicios de apoyo a sus clientes. Así que casi todas las empresas están en el negocio de proporcionar servicios y vale la pena tomar las decisiones correctas para que los servicios no se vuelvan un barril sin fondo que dañe la rentabilidad de la empresa sino que sea un valioso centro de ganancias.

Espero que este material les sea útil.

Roberto Ley Borrás

Measuring performance in services

Eric Harmon, Scott C. Hensel, and Timothy E. Lukes
McKinsey Quarterly 2006 Number 1

Faced with stiffening competition, increasingly demanding customers, high labor costs, and, in some markets, slowing growth, service businesses around the world are trying to boost their productivity. But whereas manufacturing businesses can raise it by monitoring and reducing waste and variance in their relatively homogeneous production and distribution processes, service businesses find that improving performance is trickier: their customers, activities, and deals vary too widely. Moreover, services are highly customizable, and people—the basic unit of productivity in services—bring unpredictable differences in experience, skills, and motivation to the job.

Such seemingly uncontrollable factors cause many executives to accept a high level of variance—and a great deal of waste and inefficiency—in service costs. Executives may be hiring more staff than they need to support the widest degree of variance and also forgoing opportunities to write and price service contracts more effectively and to deliver services more productively.

As with any task or operation, to improve the productivity of services, you must apply the lessons of experience. Consequently, measuring and monitoring performance (and its variance) is a fundamental prerequisite for identifying efficiencies and best practices and for spreading them throughout the organization. Although some variance in services is inescapable, much of what executives consider unmanageable can be controlled if companies properly account for differences in the size and type of customers they serve and in the service agreements they reach with those customers and then define and collect data uniformly across different service environments. To do so, it is necessary to bear in mind a few essential principles of service measurement.

* First, service companies need to compare themselves against their own performance rather than against poorly defined external measures. Using external benchmarks only compounds the difficulties that service companies face in getting comparable measurements from different parts of the organization.
* Service companies must look deeper than their financial costs in order to discover and monitor the root causes of those expenses. This point may seem self-evident, yet many companies fail to understand these causes fully.
* Finally, service companies must set up broad cost-measurement systems to report and compare all expenses across the functional silos common to service delivery organizations. The goal is to improve the service companies' grasp of the cross-functional trade-offs that must be made to rein in total costs.

None of these principles is easy to implement. Top executives are likely to face resistance from managers and frontline personnel who insist that services are inherently random and that service situations are unique. Managers who have grown used to the protection that lax measurement affords may be reluctant to view their operations through a more powerful lens. But only by adopting these principles and implementing rigorous measurement systems throughout the organization can service executives begin to identify reducible variance and take the first steps toward bringing down costs and improving the pricing and delivery of services.
