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SCIENCES

Customer Satisfaction in Internal Customer Service

Case: Abloy Oy Internal Customer Service

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis discusses and studies service quality and customer satisfaction in internal customer service. The main objective is to find out what the service quality level in the internal customer service at Abloy Oy is and whether there exists a difference between customer expectations and perceptions of the internal customer service quality. The objective is also to identify areas of strength and weakness for each customer service department for process improvement purposes.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are applied in the research. For collecting data a questionnaire with attitudinal scale questions and open questions is used. The theoretical framework concentrates on explaining the characteristics of internal service, internal customer and service quality dimensions that customers use in judging service. Additionally, a gap model discusses the causes for the discrepancy between customer expectations and perceptions in the service delivery.

Altogether seven customer service departments are evaluating each other's internal customer service quality in eight service quality attributes. The main findings are that the service of all departments' is polite, adequate and professional. In addition, gaps are found in the service quality when concerning the following attributes: efficiency of internal communication, prompt handling of requests, ease of communication, availability of the personnel, proactivity and activity of developing ways of working. However, from the results it can be found that the gaps vary between departments.

The results collected and analyzed provide information for customer service process improvement for Abloy Oy. The questionnaire designed for the study will be used for measuring the service quality of internal customer service continuously.

Keywords: Service delivery, service quality, internal customer, customer service, customer service management.

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#### APPENDIX 1: WEBROPOL QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH AND IN FINNISH

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an introduction to the background of this thesis work. The motivation, research objectives and research questions are presented in this chapter. At the end of the chapter the structure of the thesis is introduced to the readers.

### 1.1 Background and Motivation

According to Naumann & Giel (1995, 374 - 375), there is a strong correlation between employee satisfaction and both internal and external customer satisfaction. The distinction between employee satisfaction and internal customer satisfaction is that employee satisfaction consists of employee attitudes about the overall satisfaction with the workplace whereas internal customer satisfaction consists of a more narrow focus on the outcome of the company's internal process. Therefore, internal customer satisfaction is a reasonably accurate measure of the company's processes. Also these two types of satisfaction are closely linked together; a satisfied employee is probably also a reliable supplier of high quality customer service. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 374 – 375.)

Also Hallowell, Schlesinger and Zornitsky (1996, 21) suggests that the internal customer service quality is important indication of an organization's work environment. Furthermore, Hallowell continues that internal service quality relates both to customer satisfaction and job satisfaction. Hallowell and the co-writers (1996, 22) refer to author Heskett (1990 and 1994), who has written on service profit chain and claims that internal service quality drives employee satisfaction, which enables the delivery of high value service, resulting in customer satisfaction, leading to customer loyalty, which produces profit and growth. (Hallowell, Schlesinger & Zornitsky 1996, 21.)

According to Marshall, Baker and Finn (1998, 381) it is only recently that there has risen an interest in service quality issues in business-to-business markets, both in internal and external perspective. The authors continue that the service quality requirements of external customers have been the focus of much research, but internal customer service requirements has received little attention in the resent researches.

(Marshall, Baker & Finn 1998, 381.) I also came to this conclusion when exploring the literature available on internal customer and internal customer service.

Kokkonen (2010) suggests that in order to serve external customers as well as possible, it is not enough to focus on the product sold and external customer service only. In order to guarantee that the external customers get the products and services wanted, the whole process must be in order. Internal customer service is part of this entire process. When the process of internal customer service is in order, the end customers as well will get products and services that meet their expectations and needs. If internal customer service is effective, the whole process until the external customer service is effective. (Kokkonen 2010.)

As a continuum to Heskett's and Kokkonen's opinion on internal customer service being part of service-profit-chain, ISO 9001:2000 standard has a process-oriented approach in continuous improvement. The standard expects from an organization a continuous improvement of processes based on measurements. The way how organizations measure and accomplish the continuous improvement is left for the organizations to design and realize. According to Summers (2009, 56.), ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management Systems consist of four main sections, which are as follows:

- Management responsibilities i.e. how the analysis of data affects the performance of organization's quality management.
- Resource management i.e. resource availability and deployment.
- Product and/or service realization i.e. how customer requirements and organizational self-assessment lead to continued improvement of processes and work methods.
- Measurement, analysis, and improvement i.e. the methods company uses to measure its systems, processes, products, or services. (Summers 2009, 56.)

Also EFQM MODEL 2010 (2010, 16) takes position of researching different steps in the processes. The model claims that effective organizations know that the customers are the primary reason for their existence. Effective organizations create value for the customers by understanding and anticipating their needs. In practice, effective organizations know their various customer segments and meet their needs and

expectations. They also make sure that the personnel have the necessary means, know-how, information and authority to maximize the customer satisfaction. (Laatukeskus 2010, 16.)

Even though both ISO 9001:2000 and EFQM model do not differentiate internal and external customer, but refer to customers only, the same instructions can be applied to the processes of internal customer service as much as to external customer service. Companies should be customer driven for both internal and external customers. (Laatukeskus 2010; SFS 2010.)

What you cannot measure that you cannot manage or control. Effective organizations know that if they do not have sufficient information about a process, product or service, they cannot control it. And if a process cannot be controlled, the organization is then at the mercy of change. (Summers 2009, 250.) Both ISO 9001:2000 standard and EFQM model are the guidelines and quality standards that Abloy Oy follows and utilizes in the process development. In order to follow the standard, Abloy Oy is interested in measuring the performance in all levels in the processes. Abloy Oy has continuously measured the performance of the customer service departments among external customers. Recently there has been an interest to study closer the internal customer service quality. This study offers now a good possibility to start a continuous measurement of internal customer service delivery and an increasingly structured way of process development of internal processes in customer service departments. Developing internal processes will benefit eventually the external customers.

## 1.2 Research objectives and research questions

The main objectives of this thesis are to assess the quality of internal customer service delivery and identify possible gaps between customer expectations and perceptions of the service delivery. Also, the objective is to explore the strengths and weaknesses of Abloy Oy customer service departments chosen for this study. As a result of pursuing the research objectives, a questionnaire for measuring internal customer service delivery is developed. The aim of Abloy Oy is to utilize the questionnaire for measuring regularly the internal service quality for continuous process improvement purposes.



The thesis work will address two main research questions drawn from the objectives as follows:

1. What is the service quality level of Abloy Oy customer service departments in internal customer service?

The literature review in chapter 3 defines what a service quality is and what the dimensions are which customers use in judging the service quality. From the service quality dimensions were formed altogether eight attributes and statements against which the internal service quality is measured at Abloy Oy. These attributes are: polite service, efficient and adequate internal communication, prompt handling of requests, ease of communication, professional and adequate service, easy availability of customer service personnel, proactive preparation to variable changing situations and needs and active development of working practices. The service quality levels for each department and thus the answer to this research question are presented in chapter 4.

2. Are there differences in customers' expectation and perception of internal customer service quality?

The difference between customer expectation and perception results in a failure in the service delivery. In order to identify the possible differences between expectations and perceptions in the service delivery, both aspects are measured in the study when concerning the eight service quality attributes. The literature review and methodology chapter will discuss further why both customer expectation and perception are measured in the study. The empirical findings in chapter 4 will answer to this research question.

Three sub-research questions are drawn as complimentary for the main research questions. The answers to sub-research questions will provide more information on the service delivery and service quality for process development purpose at Abloy Oy. The sub-research questions as follows:

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each customer service department in internal customer service?

This research question is linked closely to the first research question and is partly

overlapping. Therefore the answers to the first research question will provide answers also to this question. However, some open questions were designed to the questionnaire especially for this research question in order to find more precise information on the strengths and weaknesses. The answer to this research question is presented in chapter 4.

4. What are the obstacles if any in delivering high quality internal customer service?

The gap model presented in literature review will explore the possible reasons and obstacles generally for the discrepancy between customer expectation and perception. Additionally, chapter 4 will provide the empirical findings to this question in case of Abloy Oy internal customer service.

5. What is each customer service department's own assessment of their service?

Self evaluation is one way of collecting information for process development as per EFQM model 2010. In this study the results of self evaluation are compared to customer satisfaction scores and analyzed against the gap model introduced in the literature review. The results of this comparison are presented in chapter 4.

### 1.3 Outline of the Study

The second chapter reviews the related literature of the study. The third chapter presents the methodology of the study. The fourth chapter tells the results and discussions. The fifth chapter provides the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the results of the study and summarizes the main findings.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the theoretical framework for the study is presented. The chapter introduces characteristics of service, the concept of customer perceptions and expectations and the gap model in service delivery. The literature review gives also insight into the characteristics of internal customers and how the internal customer service measurements can be utilized for process development and increasing employee satisfaction and commitment.

### 2.1 Characteristics of a Service

The special characteristics of a service result in challenges in managing, marketing or even studying and measuring a service quality. Therefore the characteristics of services are presented and discussed in the beginning of the literature review in order to explain the readers how a complicated phenomenon service is. The characteristics presented here apply to the service directed both to internal or external customers.

Most common approach in defining services has been the comparison of differences between services and physical products. According to Palmer (1994, 3-7), services have five characteristics when compared to products. The characteristics of services are: intangibility, inseparability, variability, perishability and ownership.

Intangibility of a service means that services do not have tangible properties which can be examined by consumers before consuming the service. Customers cannot touch, feel, smell or taste or otherwise study the properties of the service before the purchase. The intangible characteristics of the service, e.g. reliability, personal care, attentiveness of the staff, their friendliness can only be verified when a service has been purchased and consumed. The intangibility, i.e. the lack of physical evidence makes it difficult to the customers to evaluate competing services in advance. (Palmer 1994, 3-4; Lovelock & Wirtz 2007, 16-17.)

Inseparability means that a service cannot be separated from its means of production. A service is typically produced and consumed simultaneously. Producers and consumers

must normally interact in the way that the service can be produced and the consumers must be present during the entire production process. The inseparability occurs even whether the producer is human or a machine, e.g. in case of a bank ATM machine. (Palmer 1994, 4-6; Kotler 2003, 447.)

Because of the variability, services are difficult to be standardized. The variability depends on the customers as they always are part of the service production and the outcome. For a service delivery there is no possibility for pre-delivery inspection and rejection, i.e. quality control in order to ensure consistent standards for the service. Also the employees of the same company may provide services that are quite different from each others. (Palmer 1994, 6; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007, 19.)

Perishability of a service refers to the fact that services cannot be stored, but are consumed during the production process. The life span of a service tends to be very short and if service providers are not able to estimate the demand of a service accurately, they will then suffer unnecessary costs because of unused service employees and facilities. Because of the perishability of services, attention needs to be paid to scheduling service production to follow peaks and troughs in the service delivery demand. (Palmer 1994, 6; Lovelock & Wirtz 2007, 16.)

A service has no ownership, which also relates to the intangibility and perishability of a service. When purchasing goods, buyers generally acquire the ownership of the goods. However, when a service is performed, no ownership is transferred from the seller to the buyer. In the service production, the buyer merely buys a right to a service process, e.g. for the use of a car park. (Palmer 1994, 6-7.)

There have been many attempts to define service in the literature in simple sentences, but no consensus has been reached by the researches to have one definition which covers all characteristics and types of services. So far, the best definition given in the literature seems to be the one from Grönroos (2007, 52) as follows:

“A service is a process consisting of a series of more or less intangible activities that normally, but not necessarily always, take place in interactions between the customer and service employee and/or physical resources of goods and/or systems of the service

provider, which are provided as solutions to customer problems. “ (Gröönroos 2007, 52.)

## 2.2 Service Quality Dimensions of Internal Service

Because the characteristics of services are complex, the quality of services can also be complicated. When service providers understand how customers evaluate the service quality, they can also better control and manage the service quality. (Gröönroos 2000, 98.) Various researchers have contributed to the identification of service quality dimensions, but the most publicized quality dimensions are the dimensions identified by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, 23; 1990, 16 -26.) They first identified ten different dimensions, but through exploratory research consolidated them into five principal dimensions that customers use in judging the service quality. These dimensions are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. The concise definitions for the dimensions are discussed below (Awoke 2010).

Reliability means the service provider’s ability to perform the promised service both dependably and accurately. Customers expect reliable service delivery and that the service is delivered on time, in the same manner, and without errors every time. (Awoke 2010, 10.)

Responsiveness is customer service’s willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service. For example keeping customers waiting may create unnecessary negative perceptions of quality. Whenever a service failure occurs, the ability to recover quickly and with professionalism can still leave customers very positive perceptions of service quality. (Awoke 2010, 10.)

“Assurance refers to the knowledge and courtesy of employees as well as their ability to convey trust and confidence. The assurance dimension includes the following features: competence to perform the service, politeness and respect for the customer, effective communication with the customer, and the general attitude that the server has the customer’s best interests at heart.” (Awoke 2010, 10.)

Empathy refers to the caring and individualized attention what the customer gets during the service delivery. This includes the approachability, sensitivity of service employees and effort to understand the customer's needs. (Awoke 2010, 10.)

Tangibles are the physical aspects of service delivery i.e. the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials. (Awoke 2010, 10.)

The above dimensions identified by Parasuram, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, 23) are the basis for SERVQUAL questionnaire designed by the same researchers for measuring the service quality. The same authors (1990, 180) conclude that the SERVQUAL questionnaire and therefore the five service quality dimensions are suitable for measuring the quality of internal services as well, and not just for measuring external service quality:

“SERVQUAL, with appropriate adaptation, can be used by departments and divisions within a company to ascertain the quality of services they provide to employees in other departments and divisions.” (Zeithaml, Parasuram & Berry 1990, 180.)

Further, the research of Reynoso and Moores (1995, 80) confirms that these five dimensions of Parasuram et al. can be used when studying internal customer's perception on the service quality. However, these dimensions are not to be used as the only ones for measuring internal service quality, but there can be other additional dimensions important to internal customers. For example, Vandermerwe & Gilbert (1991, 51) identified six key needs of internal customer in their research on internal services. These six key needs are responsiveness, relevance, i.e. the service provided is useful and easy to use, reliability, cost within budget, i.e. cost of the service does not exceed its expected price, and on time service, i.e. service is delivered when promised. However, most of these dimensions are highly consistent with those identified by Parasuram et al. (1988, 23). Only the cost within budget and relevance are different from the dimensions of Parasuram et al. (1988, 23).

When looking at the statements designed for the service quality measurement for Abloy, it can be seen that the attributes and dimensions important for the internal customer service at Abloy are highly consistent with the five dimensions by Parasuram et al.

(1988, 23.) The statements include assurance in the sentences: “Service is polite” “Internal communication is efficient and adequate”, empathy in the sentence: “Communication with the department is easy”, responsiveness in the sentences: “Requests are handled promptly” and “The employees of the department are readily available” and reliability in the sentence: “Service is professional and adequate”. Two additional attributes were considered important in the internal service delivery. These attributes were proactivity and activity of developing ways of working. These dimensions are not mentioned by Parasuram et al (1988). Dimension tangibles was left out from the empirical study as it was not considered an important dimension for internal customer.

#### 2.4 Characteristics of Internal Customers

Internal and external customers are similar in some respects, i.e. both use goods and services. Distinctively internal customers mainly consume services provided by other departments whereas external customers consume both goods and services. When external customers rely on the company’s employees to meet and exceed their needs, internal customers in turn rely on each other for products, services, and support in order to meet or exceed their needs. (Marshall & Baker & Finn 1998, 383; Naumann & Giel 1995, 363-364.)

Another difference between external and internal customers is the captivity of internal customers. The employees working in different department have usually very little input about those hired into other departments. The employees depend highly on other department’s services and typically have no choice about where to do business, or choose to outsource for a better product or service they need. Because of this captivity issue, there is no pressure to change the internal service as employees often are expected to adjust to the situation and be satisfied with the fact that they are employed by the company. (Marshall & Baker & Finn 1998, 383; Naumann & Giel 1995, 364-365.)

In addition to captivity the resistance to change exists very often in internal customer service. Whatever worked in the past will continue to work in the future as well if no cataclysmic events happen. Typical cataclysmic events, which force organizations to

change, are customer departures and the resulting decline in profits and share, alarming employee turnover, safety violations and accidents, and regulatory or social backlash. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 365.)

Fourthly, internal customers are paid, professional consumers of the services they use inside the organization. This means they are more familiar with and knowledgeable about the services provided than external customers. (Marshall & Baker & Finn 1998, 383.)

These differences in characteristics of internal and external customers result in different service requirements for internal customers. This may cause that the dimensions of service quality for internal customers may be unique and it can be more useful to have an own measurement tool designed for measuring service quality of internal providers. (Marshall & Baker & Finn 1998, 383.)

The special characteristics of internal customers resulted in this study to the way the questionnaire for measuring service quality was designed and which service qualities were measured. The designing and planning of the questionnaire for measuring internal service quality at Abloy Oy was started by defining what service qualities are important for Abloy Oy internal customer service. The SERVQUAL questionnaire was used as an inspiration for the design work, but still it was considered necessary to keep in mind the unique characteristics of Abloy internal customers.

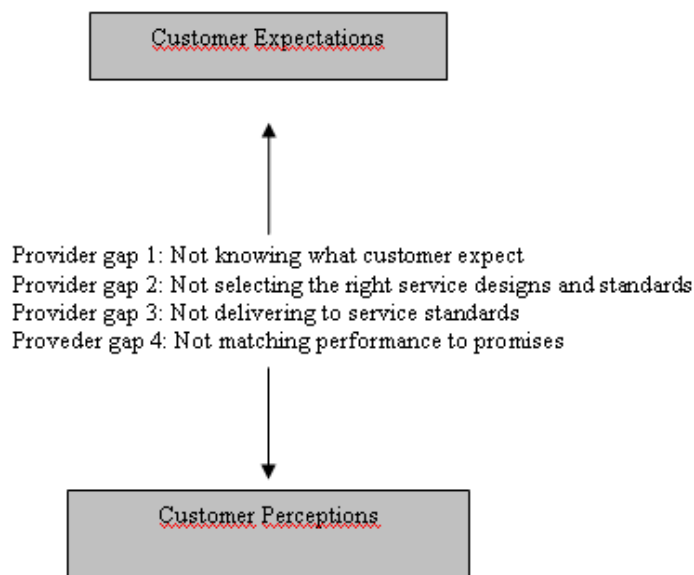
In the following chapter I will discuss the theory of customer expectations and perceptions and a gap model. The gap model deals with the reasons that can cause the differences between customer expectations and perception and a failure in meeting the customer expectations in a service delivery.

### 2.3 Customer Expectations and Perceptions – gap model

Customer satisfaction is the customer's evaluation of a service or product in terms of whether that service or product has met his needs and expectations (Wilson 2008, 80.) Customer perceptions are subjective assessments of actual service experiences.



Customer expectations are the standards of performance against which service experiences are compared. If there is a difference between what customer expects, i.e. customer expectations compared to what customer perceives in the service delivery, then there exists a discrepancy called a customer gap. The customer gap is a gap between perceived service and expected service. The discrepancy between expectation and perception leads to customer dissatisfaction with the product or service. In order to close this gap, the gap model of service quality suggests that four gaps called provider gaps from one to four need to be closed. It is vital for companies to close the gap between customer expectations and perceptions in order to satisfy their customers and build long-term relationships with them. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2000, 481 – 482.) The gap model is described in Figure 1, which shows the four provider gaps that may lead to a customer gap.

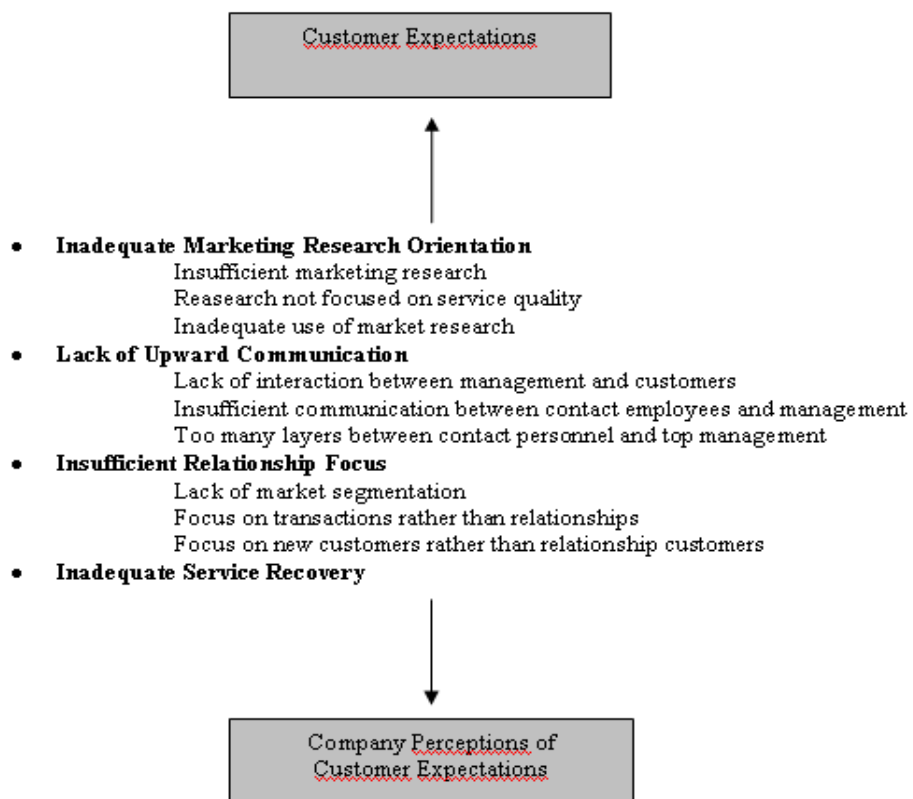


**Figure 1.** Key factors leading to customer gap (Zeithaml & Bitner 2000, 483)

In the empirical part of the study the service quality of internal customer service is measured. The results provide information whether there is a gap between customer expectation and perception when concerning the eight service quality attributes identified for Abloy Oy internal customers. The following sub chapters in the literature review will explain which factors may lead to the discrepancy and a customer gap.

### 2.3.1 Provider Gap 1: Not Knowing What Customer Expects

The first of the provider gaps is the difference between customer expectations of service and the understanding of the customer service management of customer expectations. In order to provide the service that customers perceive as excellent requires that a company knows what the customer expectations of the service are. Knowing what the customers expect is possibly the most critical issue in delivering quality service. Not knowing or being a little bit wrong about what the customers want can mean losing customers to another company, not surviving in a competitive market or spending money, time and resources on things that do not matter to customers. Because services are tangibles, it is very common that especially within manufacturing companies the provider gap is very large. This is due to the tendency of being more a product centered than customer centered. (Zeithaml, Parasuram, Berry 1990, 51.) In Figure 2 there are described the key reasons leading to provider gap 1.



**Figure 2.** Key factors leading to provider gap 1 (Zeithaml & Bitner 2000, 483)

Zeithaml and Parasuram (2000, 483) recognize four key reasons that are responsible for provider 1 gap. One of the reasons is inadequate marketing research orientation. Acquiring information from the customers on their expectations is vital for keeping the

gap narrow. Information on customer expectations can be collected both by formal and informal methods. Methods such as customer visits, survey research, complaint systems and customer panels must be used in order to stay close to customers and acquire the understanding on the expectations.

Another key factor leading to provider gap 1 is lack of internal upward communication from service providers to management. Front-line service providers usually know very well about their customers' expectations, but if the management is not in contacts with front-line service providers and does not understand what they know, the gap widens. (Zeithaml & Parasuram 2000, 484.)

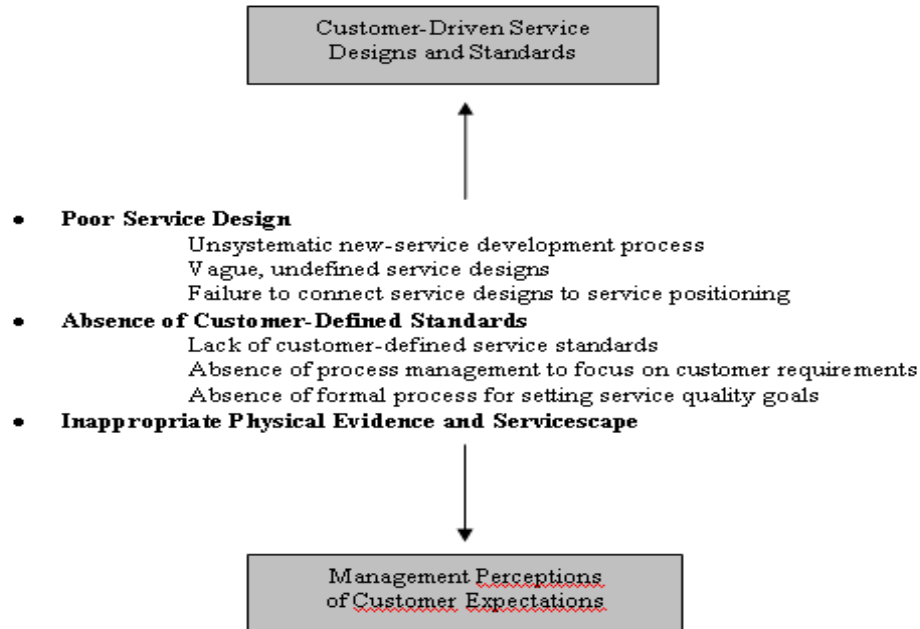
The third key factor leading to provider gap 1 is insufficient relationship focus. When companies have long-term and strong relationship with existing customer, the provider gap 1 is less likely to exist. If companies are more concentrated on attracting new customers, they may fail to recognize the changing needs and expectations for their existing customers. Companies need to have clear strategies to retain customers and strengthen relationships with them. (Zeithaml & Parasuram 2000, 484)

The fourth and final key factor leading to provider gap according to Zeithaml and Parasuram (2000, 484) is a lack of service recovery. Companies must understand why customers complain, what they expect when they complain. Companies need to have a clear strategy for service recovery. This may mean a well-defined complaint handling procedure, training employees to react in real time to fix the failure, a service guarantee and ways to compensate the customer for not meeting the expectations.

### 2.3.2 Provider Gap 2: Not Selecting the Right Service Designs and Standards

The provider gap 2 is about the difficulty of turning customer expectations into service-quality specifications. Figure 3 lists the key factors leading to this provider gap. The provider gap 2 exists when there is a difference between company understanding of customer expectations and developed customer-driven service designs and standards. The customer-driven standards are different from the conventional key performance indicators which companies establish. The customer-driven standards should correspond

to the customer expectations and priorities rather than to productivity or efficiency. (Zeithaml & Parasuranam 2000, 484)



**Figure 3.** Key factors leading to provider gap 2 (Zeithaml & Bitner 2000, 485)

The provider gap 2 may exist for several reasons. Sometimes the management or others responsible for setting the service standards in a company believe that customer expectations and requirements are unrealistic or unreasonable. If there are no standards against which customer service personnel is evaluated and compensated or if the standards do not reflect customer expectations the quality of service will suffer and customer expectations cannot be steadily met. Pre-set standards for customer service would signal to the front-line personnel what the management priorities are and which type of performance in customer service is desirable and really count. (Zeithaml & Parasuranam 2000, 485.)

Services are intangible and they are difficult to describe and communicate. When new services are developed or existing services are further developed, it is critical that all people involved share the same vision based on the customer needs and expectations. Therefore a systematic service development process needs to be defined in the

companies in order to avoid oversimplification, incompleteness and subjectivity from the development process. (Zeithaml & Parasuranam 2000, 485.)

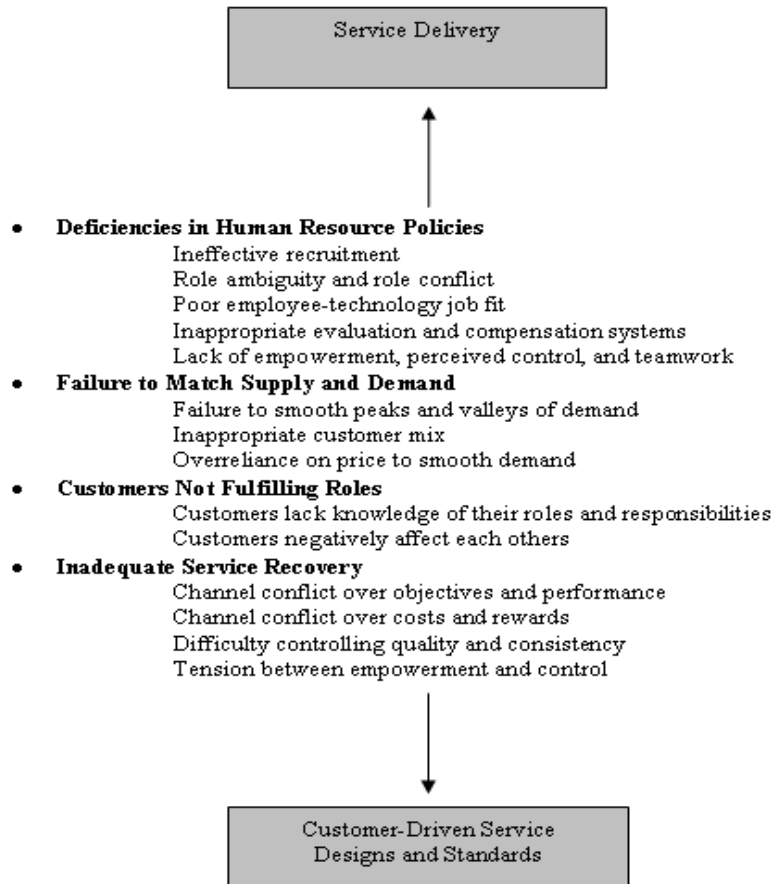
Another key factor in provider gap 2 is the servicescape i.e. physical setting where the service is delivered and physical evidence, i.e. the tangibles around the service. This physical evidence means for example business cards, internet pages, reports and facilities. For certain service industries, e.g. hospitals, theme parks, spas, the physical facility is critical in terms of making the entire service experience pleasurable. (Zeithaml & Parasuranam, 2000, 485)

### 2.3.3 Provider Gap 3: Not Delivering to Service Standards

Zeithaml & Parasuranam (200, 486) defines the third gap called as provider gap 3 as a discrepancy between development of customer-driven service standards and actual service performance by company employees. High-quality service is not a certainty, not even when the guidelines and quality standards exist within the company. Standards and guidelines need still appropriate recourses, i.e. people, system and technology. The employees must be measured and compensated based on the performance against the set standards. Even the most accurate standards on customer reflections are useless, if the company do not encourage and require their personnel to follow the standards. The provider gap 3 can be narrowed only by ensuring that all the resources in the company can achieve the standards. (Zeithaml & Parasuranam, 2000, 486.)

Zeithaml and Parasuranam (2000, 486 - 487) have identified many reasons that cause the gap 3. The reasons are summarized in Figure 4. The employees might not be aware of the role and responsibilities they are to have and perform in the company. Employees might also experience a conflict between customer and company management. Also having the wrong employees hired to customer service, inadequate technology in use, inappropriate compensation and recognition, and lack of empowerment and teamwork are some of the reasons leading to provider gap 3. Avoiding the provider gap 3 requires expertise from the company's human resource practices. Correct people must be hired to the customer service and employees must get enough and correct training in order to be able to serve customers professionally. Employees should get constructive feedback

on their work performance and their working motivation must be looked after by the company.



**Figure 4.** Key factors leading to provider gap 3 (Zeithaml & Bitner 2000, 486)

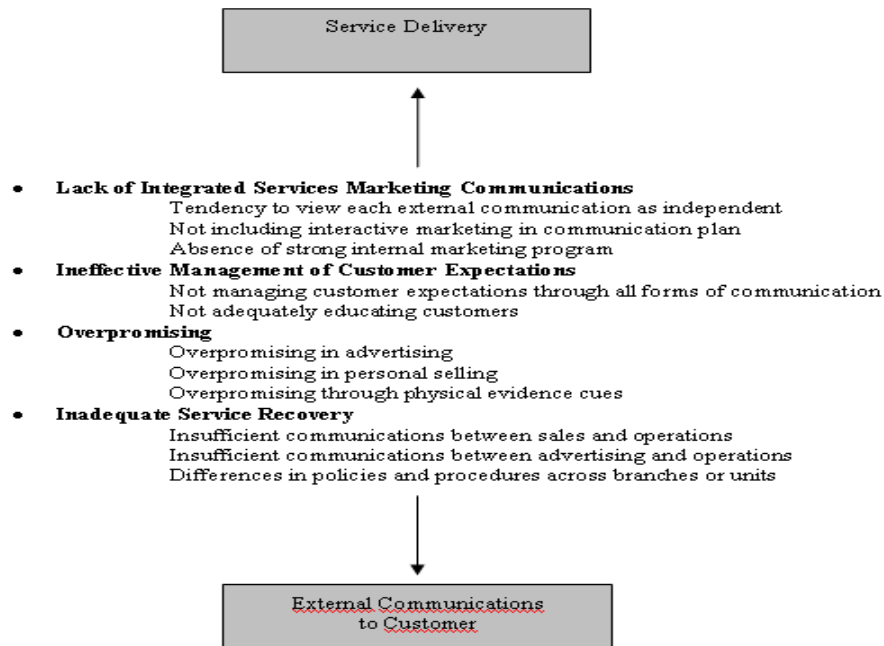
In addition to company's service personnel it can be intermediaries and customers who may cause a company to have a provider gap 3. When companies are providing services through intermediaries such as retailers, franchisees, agents or brokers, the control over the service delivery and its quality is not directly in the hands of the company. Someone other than the producer is critically important in the delivery of quality service. In these cases a company must effectively communicate the service standards to the intermediaries and develop ways to control or motivate them to meet the company goals on service quality. In addition, customers can cause the provider gap 3 by not managing to perform as they are expected in the service situation. If customers do not provide all the necessary information for the service provider or fail to follow instructions given, service quality is jeopardized. (Zeithaml & Parasuraman 2000, 487.)

In order to avoid provider gap 3, companies must also be able to synchronize the demand and capacity. Services cannot be inventoried or stocked and therefore it is difficult for service companies to be prepared for the fluctuation of the demand. In slow periods the capacities, i.e. employees are underutilized whereas on over demand companies loose customers as there is not enough employees to handle the customer needs. (Zeithaml & Parasuranam 2000, 487.)

#### 2.3.4. Provider Gap 4: Not Matching Performance to Promises

Provider gap 4 is about the difference between service delivery and the service provider's external communication. Promises that a service company communicates to the customers via media advertising, sales force or other communication means must equal with the actual service. If there is a discrepancy between actual and promised service, the provider gap 4 widens. Overpromising in advertising or personal selling, inadequate coordination between operations and marketing and differences in policies and procedures across service outlets may all cause the discrepancy that widens the gap. In addition to external communication, it is possible to affect customers' exaggerated claims and service quality assessments. For a service company it is important to educate the customers to use services correctly and manage customers' expectations of what they will receive in the service transactions and relationship. (Zeithaml & Parasuranam 2000, 485-486.)

Another very important aspect for the companies is to make sure that the front-line employees in customer service understand the reality of service delivery and are aware of company's marketing strategy and service standards. The interactive marketing between the customer and service personnel must equal to the company's external marketing. If the employees make exaggerated promises or fail to service customers according to promoted standards, the service delivery leads to poor service quality perceptions. Effectively coordinated service delivery with good external communication helps to avoid the discrepancy and narrows the provider gap 4. (Zeithaml & Parasuranam 2000, 486.) Figure 5 summarizes the key factors leading to the customer gap.



**Figure 5.** Key factors leading to provider gap 4 (Zeithaml & Bitner 2000, 488)

## 2.6 Using Customer Service Data for Process Improvement

When the gathering and analyzing of the data are done, the organizations face the dilemma of putting results into use and making the necessary changes drawn from the results. It is not enough to know the results of customer service measurement (henceforth CSM) but it is essential to interpret the results and to improve the critical processes that affect customer satisfaction and to further leverage the organizations strengths. When communicating the results to the personnel, a powerful signal is sent to all employees that customer satisfaction is important. When CSM data is provided for employees, they are able to see how a particular job or process affects customer satisfaction. This awareness of the importance of each job improves employee commitment. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 256-257; Naumann & Hoisington 2001, 79.) With commitment and good planning, use of the CSM data can provide a focus and a direction for continuous improvement throughout the entire organization. Some organizations have also been able to successfully link customer satisfaction and CSM results into financial performance. (Naumann & Giel 1995, 241.)

Naumann & Giel (1995, 242) continue that the first step of using CSM data in process development consists of communicating the CSM results in a timely and effective



manner to the various internal and external audiences. It is important to communicate the results to each audience of the organization highlighting the aspects that are most interest for this specific audience. The challenging audience in communicating the results is middle-level managers who are the most important persons in putting the data in use for process improvement efforts. It is also important that the CSM results are communicated to the front-line service personnel because the better they know their customer expectations and perceptions of the service given, the better they can improve the service.

There are many techniques which to use in communicating CRM results to personnel and which at the same time increase personnel's motivation and commitment to improve work performance and customer service. In the following sub chapters I will deal with the techniques useful for putting CRM results for the use of process development in the organizations.

#### 2.6.1 Suggestion Programs

According to Naumann & Giel (1995, 258-259) the suggestion programs are intended to solicit and capture employees' ideas for improvements and many companies have found out that customer-contact employees who engage in many moments of truth each day with customers are an excellent source of ideas for improvement. The suggestion programs have three essential elements. First, the role of the first-line supervisor is critical in establishing the climate receptive to new ideas. The suggestions are directly related to the way employees perform their own job and the supervisor can help to polish and refine suggestions. Negative comments, attitude or feedback from the supervisor can easily kill the enthusiasm of employees to suggest any improvements. Second important element in the suggestion programs is prompt feedback. The enthusiasm of employees is highest first when a suggestion is submitted. Gradually the enthusiasm may turn into skepticism or even resentment if nothing is done. The third characteristic is recognition and rewards. Both recognition and financial rewards can serve to reinforce the employee's involvement in the suggestion. Recognition and rewards communicates to employees that their suggestions, ideas, and involvement are notice and appreciated.

### 2.6.2 Group Discussions

Group discussions are relatively simple way to receive employee's feedback and thoughts on customer service measurement data. The group discussions can be either an open, free flowing meeting or a highly structured approach. In either case the supervisor or manager has a very big influence on whether the group discussions are useful. If the ideas generating from group discussions are resented by manager, the employee involvement may decrease remarkably and they will loose faith in the process. The employees find the group discussions useful and valuable only if their ideas are accepted by manager. It is important aspect of group discussions that the employees' ideas and wishes are honored if employees' strong involvement in the process generating and implementing ideas is wanted. The brainstorming in group discussions can often generate very creative ideas for improving customer satisfaction and also contribute to each individual's intrinsic satisfaction. (Naumann & Giel, 1995, 259-260.)

### 2.6.3 Task Forces

A task force is an ad hoc cross section of managers and employees brought together to analyze a problem or a challenge e.g, how to improve customer satisfaction. A task force would be responsible for evaluating the data, conducting additional information gathering, and developing recommendations on procedure. The recommendations would then be passed to management for realization and the task force group would then return back to its normal daily work. The task force with limited life expectancy and temporality is a low-risk involvement technique. However, this may also cause that its intrinsic satisfaction tends to accrue only to the task force members and generate less involvement by a broad range of employees outside the task force. (Naumann & Giel, 1995, 260.)

### 2.6.4 Cross-Functional Teams

When employees are actively involved in the problem solving, they experience a high degree of organizational commitment. Using cross-functional teams in communicating

CRM results and making changes into customer service processes is one way of increasing employee commitment and motivation. (Naumann & Giel, 1995, 260.) Cross-functional teams are used to improve and coordinate a work process that crosses organizational lines and to accomplish tasks that require varied levels of skills and experience brought together. As the name implies, cross-functional teams consist of members from different organizational units. (Human Resource Development Council 2011.)

#### 2.6.5 Autonomous Work Groups

Autonomous work group is a team of employees that have autonomy or independence over the work they do within an organization. The group has been given a responsibility and oversight of particular task within organization and granted independent decision-making related to a specific work function. The benefit of using an autonomous work group is that several individuals are working together toward a common task come up broader and stronger ideas than one person working alone. Autonomous work groups may also include sharing of responsibilities and built-in support mechanism for employees, better overall ideas and results, creative exchanges and as sense of belonging and importance which all are important elements of employee motivation. (Kokemuller, Neil, 2011.)

### 3 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This section of the study will present the research methodology used in the study. The section will explain which data collection methods were used to carry out the study.

#### 3.1 Research approach

According to Dutka (1995, 25 - 26) customer satisfaction methodologies can be divided into qualitative and quantitative categories. Qualitative research involves free-format responses and provides in-depth information obtained from a few cases. The results can be used as explanatory information. Quantitative research is used to collect viewpoints and opinions and representing them in numbers. The quantitative results are analyzed and presented by using arithmetic and statistics. Dutka (1995, 25 – 26) also discusses that choosing qualitative or quantitative research is not an either-or-situation, but the methodologies are complementary and should be combined in order to maximize their individual strengths. Below I will discuss which methodologies were used in this study and reasoning for the choice of the methodologies.

The data for the study was collected from primary sources by a questionnaire. The questionnaire included both structured questions with attitudinal scales and open questions. The main purpose of the questionnaire survey was to measure the current quality level of the internal customer service delivery. Therefore, the quantitative study method was chosen as the primary way of collecting data. Four open questions were used in the questionnaire as complementary questions in order to collect information which might help to interpret the data received in the attitudinal scale questions.

According to Kumar (2011, 148), the choice of using an interview or a questionnaire for data collection is important and the strengths and weakness of these two methods must be considered thoroughly. The choice of the method used can affect the validity of the findings. The selection between an interview and questionnaire should be based on the nature of the investigation, the geographical distribution of the study population and the type of the study population. (Kumar 2011, 148.)

Because the nature of the investigation was to evaluate other colleagues work and daily communication between the different departments, it was decided that a questionnaire where you can maintain anonymity is the best way of collecting the information. During my work history at Abloy I have worked at some of the customer service departments now measured in the study and this might affect the respondents' reluctance to discuss freely and give feedback as I would have been too a familiar interviewee. Another matter in favour of using a questionnaire was that the study population was geographically scattered to three countries, i.e. Finland, Sweden and Poland and therefore the questionnaire was found to be the easiest way to reach the study population.

Abloy Oy provided a software called WEBROPOL for the use of this study. WEBROPOL is a software for conducting surveys and gathering data on-line. All of the study population was considered to have adequate computing skills in order to be able to participate and answer the questionnaire carried out as an on-line study. Another advantage of using this WEBROPOL on-line survey was considered to be the freedom of answering when it best suits in the schedules of respondents and not having to agree a special appointment with the researcher. Also the questionnaire is easily sent to respondents' email address and answers are returned back to WEBROPOL software without anybody having to mail envelopes or to load information from questionnaire to e.g. reporting software.

### 3.2 Selection of sample group

When I started to map out the customer services of Abloy Oy to be chosen for the study, I soon noticed that it is a vast area and different services could be found in every step in the order-delivery process from order entry to after-sales. There are many different customer service departments serving both internal and external customers or serving directly internal customers only. Studying all of them and their dependencies towards each others would be an interesting study, but too wide an area to be covered in Master's thesis and within the time frame reserved for it. Therefore the study population needed to be limited with some additional criteria, which I will discuss in the following paragraph.

The writer's background in Exports customer service and interest in international business gave natural starting point to narrow down the study and study population to customer services which have connections to export customers. Other limitation criteria were that the departments to be studied must have direct connections to external customers and their performance has been studied already in external customer service studies. The results of the internal and external customer satisfaction could be analyzed for possible correlation if needed. In addition, the purpose was to study customer services which situated in Abloy Oy Joensuu Factory. This selection left out the customer services that situate in the other factories or offices in Finland. This limitation of studying the customer services at Joensuu Factory was also considered necessary in order to avoid extending the research area out of the scope of this thesis.

All together seven customer service departments were chosen and measured in the study. The departments selected by using the criteria discussed above are as follows: Industrial Locking, Construction Locking, Electromechanical Lock Cases, Door Control, Architectural Hardware and Network Solutions. The customer services of these departments were considered to consist of the technical support and R&D personnel. The Exports and Marketing departments were included in the study population based on the selection criteria. The customer services of these departments were considered to consist of assistants and managers. The sample population consisted of totally 90 persons.

### 3.3 Data collection and analysis

For data collection a questionnaire was designed with attitudinal scale questions and open questions. In order to measure customer expectation on the service delivery the respondents were asked in the beginning of the questionnaire to evaluate the same statements used for evaluating service quality per department, now only when concerning internal customer service in general. The five-point Likert scale ranging from "Important" to "Not important" was used to measure customer expectations of service quality. Following attributes were formed for measuring expectations on service quality:

- Polite service

- Efficient and adequate internal communication
- Prompt handling of requests
- Ease of communication
- Professional and adequate service
- Easy availability of customer service personnel
- Proactive preparation to variable changing situations and needs
- Active development of working practices

For measuring perceptions on performance on the eight attributes of service quality eight statements were formed. Respondents evaluated each department's performance against these eight statements. The five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" was used to measure customer perceptions of service quality through the quantitative attitudinal questions. The statements used for evaluating the service quality in internal customer service were:

- Service is polite
- Internal communication is efficient and adequate
- Requests are handled promptly
- Communication with the department is easy
- Service is professional and adequate
- The employees of the department are readily available
- The department is proactive in terms of possible changing situations and needs
- The department is actively developing its ways of working

The expectation scores and perception scores are compared together in order to find out possible gaps in the service delivery. The average score of perception is decreased from the average score of expectation. If the result of this calculation is negative, there exists a gap in the service quality. The bigger the difference is, the bigger the gap is. If the result between the average of expectation and average of perception equals to or is over one unit of measure, then the difference and gap is considered significant in this study and noted in the analysis of the results. No statistical tools were used for analyzing whether the difference is statistically significant in this study.

Two open questions were designed into the questionnaire as complementary for the attitudinal questions. These qualitative open questions were designed to help further find out the strengths and weaknesses as well as the areas of improvements of each department. It was considered important to introduce self evaluation to the customer service departments in this questionnaire, because EQML Model emphasizes self evaluation as one way to process development. The results of the self evaluation are compared to performance evaluation evaluated by other respondents.

At the end of the questionnaire there were designed two open questions in order to find out what kind of challenges and obstacles there might be in general in providing high quality internal customer service. Further, the intention was to find out personnel's own ideas how to improve internal customer service.

The questionnaire and use of online web survey was chosen as the most suitable method of collecting answers for this thesis. The questionnaire allows for collecting the answers anonymously. It also gives freedom to the respondents to choose and plan the time they are able to answer the questionnaire. An anonymous on-line survey provides more honest answers that could not be collected if the survey was carried out as a face-to-face interview. Carrying the survey out with the questionnaire is time effective and more respondents could be reached easily as the questionnaire could be answered everywhere where there is an access to your email.

The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small test group in order to assure that the questionnaire survey will technically work and the answers can be analyzed in the WEBROPOL software. In addition, feedback was collected from the test respondents on the study questions, structure and instructions in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was published both in English and Finnish. The questionnaire was published in English for those respondents who do not speak Finnish. However, all customer service at Abloy Oy must know some English, the knowledge level of English can vary very extensively. Therefore, it was considered better to publish the questionnaire in Finnish for Finnish speaking respondents in order to avoid misunderstandings in the questionnaire statements. The use of the English questionnaire for all respondents might have decreased the number of answers. The WEBROPOL



software enabled the use of two languages in the same research and the responses could still be analysed together in the software.

### 3.4 Validity and reliability

Validity means the validity of the results, i.e. how well the questions measure the matters chosen to be studied. In order to get valid results, the meters for measuring must be in order. Using experts as help and pre-testing are ways of ensuring that the questions are formed correctly and that they measure what they are wanted to be measuring. (Webropol 2011.)

Reliability tells about stability of the results i.e. how accurately the study or measuring has been carried out. The problem in reliability and stability of the results is that questions are answered differently than what the question was designed for even though the question was designed correctly. Instructing respondents carefully all the way in the questionnaire and designing questions carefully are one way of increasing the reliability (Webropol 2011.)

For this study the questions to the questionnaire were verified by the Quality Manager at Abloy Oy and by the Master's Thesis supervisor at Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences (henceforth UAS). The translations for the English questionnaire were verified by a Kemi-Tornio UAS Senior Lecturer for English language and communication. Further, the questionnaire was pretested with a small group where also feedback on questions were asked and received. The results of the pre-test were also analyzed in the WEBROPOL software in order to validate the analysis possibilities.

However, in view of the results it must be noted that the meter designed for estimating the importance of the statements first in general is different from the meter used for evaluating the performance of the departments in each statement in the service delivery. The expectation of the service was evaluated by using five-point scale from "Important" to "Not important", whereas the perception was evaluated by five-point scale from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree". However, some researches, e.g. Vandermerwe & Gilbert (1991, 52) has used similarly the different scaling when

researching the importance of service needs and the internal performance to the same extent.

In addition, as per Reynoso (1995, 68) many researches has criticized the use of twin scale approach adopted from the SERVQUAL approach because of its being illusory as it would be logical to response “important” to what is expected from a service experience. Therefore, it is possible that the average expectation scores formed from the answers by the respondents can be illusory and set the service standards too high for Abloy Oy in this study.

A total of 90 persons were invited to answer the questionnaire and 41 replies were collected. This led to the response rate of 46%. However, only the first three questions in the questionnaire were obligatory and rests of the questions were optional. This way the respondents were given the freedom to choose which department’s performance to evaluate and not to evaluate those departments’ performance with which they had no contacts in their daily work. Because of this freedom given the response rate varied between 19 – 32% in rest of the sections in the questionnaire.

In the self evaluation part, not enough data was collected as the response rate per department varied greatly. In WEBROPOL training by the trainer it was mentioned that usually when only five or less persons from the organization answer, the answers are not analyzed. The reason for not analyzing the answers in such situations is the fact that the anonymity would be endangered. Despite this comment, the self evaluation results are presented in this study. In addition, the feedback from the open questions where person names were used was changed into anonymous format, i.e. names were left out in the analysis.

### 3.5 Limitation of the Study

Even a profound pre-testing of the study in the WEBROPOL software cannot help avoiding all technical problems at the time of actual answer collection. The WEBROPOL published an upgrade of the software right before my survey was released and this caused some unpredicted slowness in the performance of the software. Due to this reason some of the respondents were not persistent to finish the questionnaire. The

problems also resulted in the need to inform the respondents to stop answering the questionnaire for a moment before the supplier of the software was able to solve the issues with the update. The upgrading of the software might have influenced on the response activity and decrease the quantity of answers received.

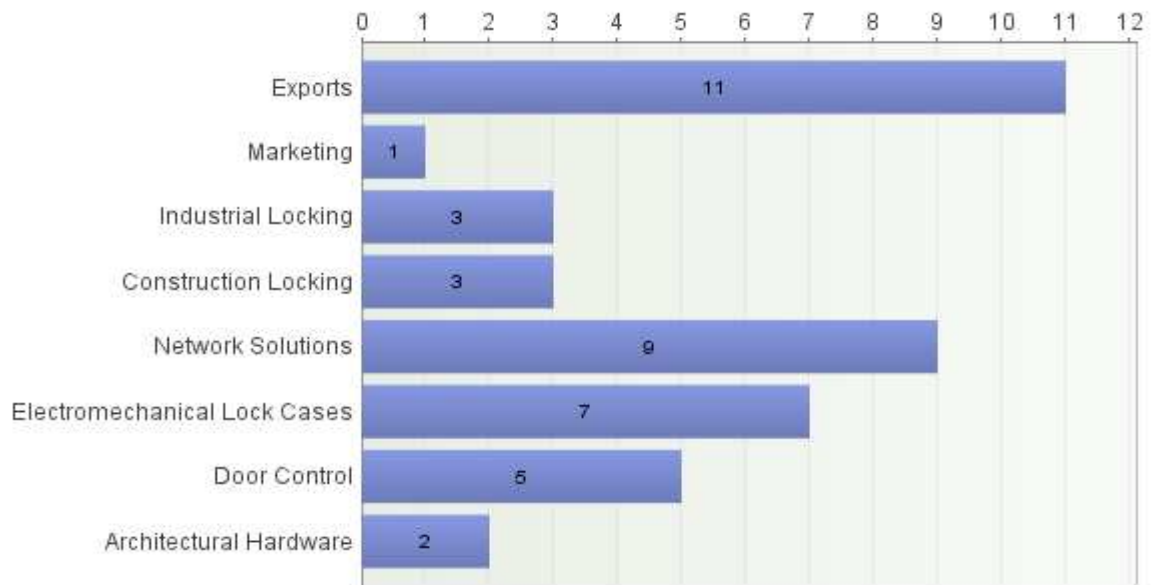
In the following chapter the results of the study are presented and analyzed.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter the results of the study are presented and discussed.

### 4.1 Respondents

All respondents who participated in the study were working in one of the customer service departments chosen for this study. The customer service departments chosen for the study were from the following organizations: Exports, Marketing, Industrial Locking, Construction Locking, Network Solutions, Electromechanical Lock Cases, Door Control and Architectural Hardware. Figure 6 shows the number of respondents per department.

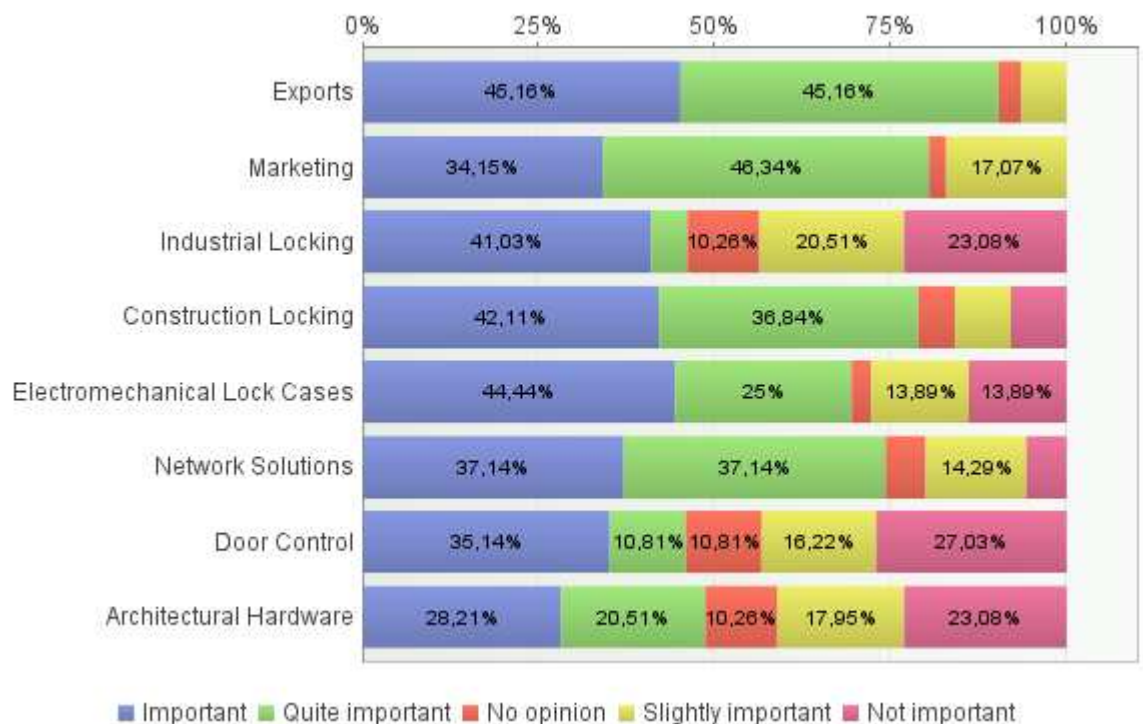


**Figure 6.** Quantity of respondents per department

A majority of the respondents, i.e. 27% of all respondents work in the Exports department, 22% in Networks Solutions and 17% in Electromechanical Lock Cases. The uneven participation of the different departments in the study affects the generalization of the results in the way that not all self evaluation results can be generalized or do not provide enough information on the departments. Also the results in general may reflect mainly the opinions of the three most active departments instead of all departments chosen for the study.

#### 4.2 Dependency on other departments' work

In the beginning of the questionnaire the following question was asked: “How important do you find the following departments for your work performance?” The question was designed additionally because of Abloy Oy’s interest in studying what kind of dependencies there might be between different customer service departments. This question was obligatory and therefore the quantity of answers to this question was 41. The most important departments for the respondents in this study were Exports, Construction Locking, Network Solutions and Electromechanical Lock Cases. However, the response rate per department varied a lot in the study so the results reflect the opinion of the three biggest respondent groups i.e. Exports, Marketing, Networks Solutions and Electromechanical Lock Cases. Also it is possible the respondents of these organizations may have chosen the “home” organization where they work as the most important department for the work performance.



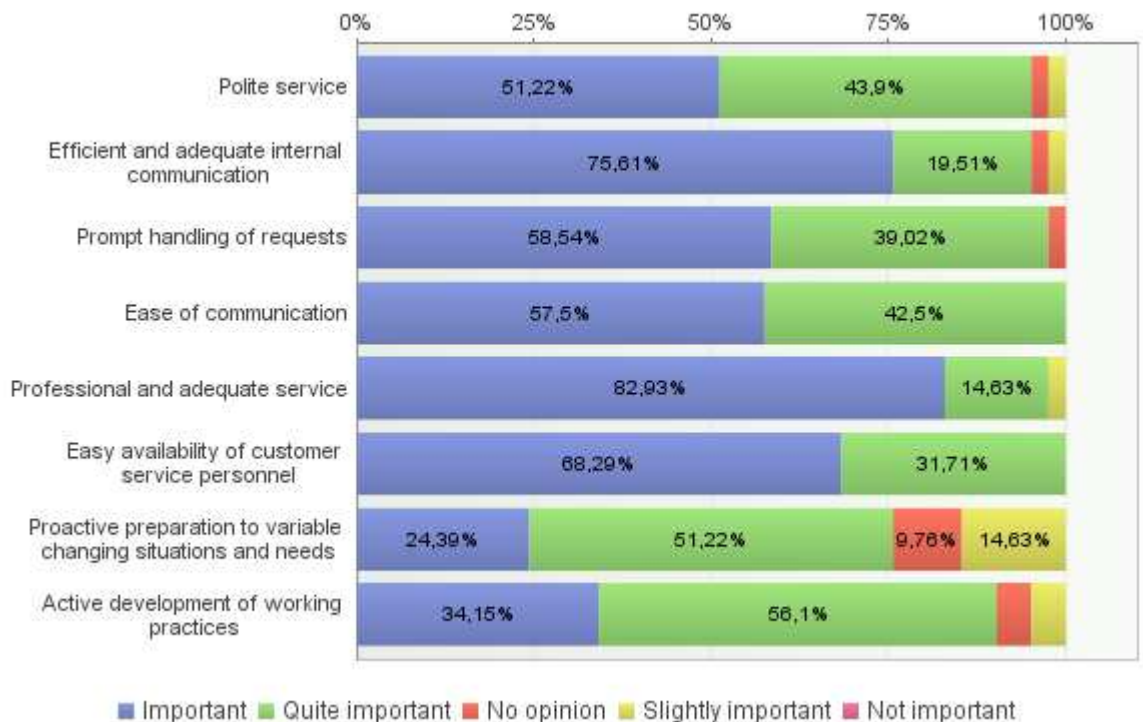
**Figure 7.** The importance of the customer service department for the work performance

It is possible to analyze further the answers and priorities of different departments in this question in the WEBROPOL software used to carry out the research, but the analysis is left for Abloy Oy if further interest arises in this area. There are other

customer service departments as well at Abloy that were left out of this study and in order to get the whole picture of the dependencies between customer service departments those departments should be taken into the possible study in the future. A separate study should be dedicated in studying this area in order to get a better picture on the dependencies and interactions of the departments.

#### 4.3 The importance of statements

Before evaluating each department's performance in service delivery, respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of the same statements used in the evaluation per department but now in terms of internal customer service in general. This evaluation provided result to which the performance i.e. perception results per department will be compared. As can be seen from the Figure 8, all the measured statements were positively important for customer service performance.



**Figure 8.** Importance of the statements in terms of internal customer service

Professional and adequate service was the most important aspect in customer service delivery, secondly efficient and adequate internal communication. Easy availability of customer service personnel was rated as third most important aspect. Polite service,

prompt handling of requests and ease of communication were rated quite equally important or quite important.

The average scores of each statement in this question are used in comparison to each department's average perception scores later in the study in order to reflect how close or how far from the ideal situation each customer service department's service delivery level is at the moment. This question was one of the obligatory questions so the results reflect the opinion of all respondents participated in the study.

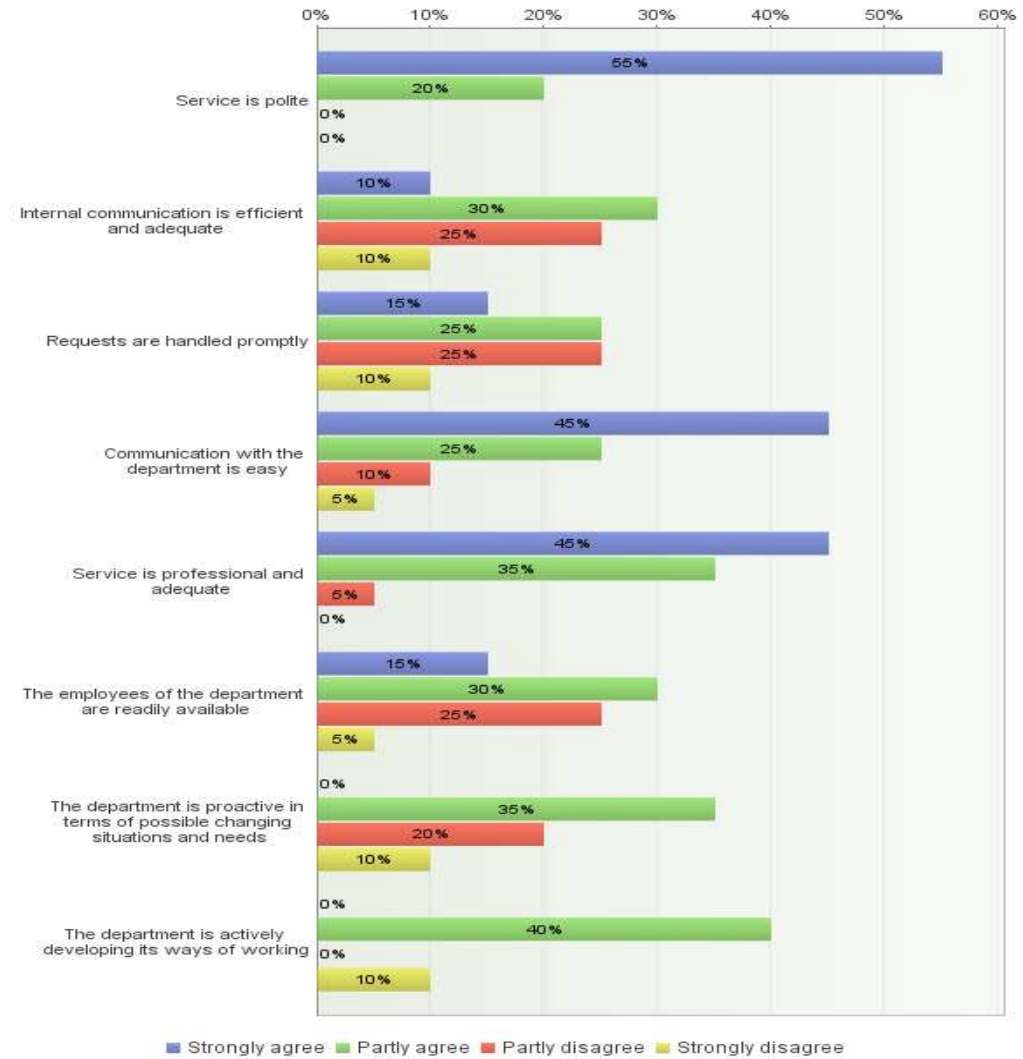
#### 4.4 Industrial Locking

According to the results, the service of Industrial Locking is polite. The share of positive answers to these statements is total 75% and no negative answer, i.e. partly disagree or disagree are given. Other positive answers mainly were received to the following statements; "Communication with the department is easy" and "Service is professional and adequate". In these three statements the feedback is clearly positive. When estimating the efficiency and adequacy of internal communication, the share of positive feedback is 40% and negative 35%. While 40% of the respondents estimate that requests are handled promptly, 35% of the respondents answer negatively. 45% of the respondents have experienced that the employees of the department are readily available, whereas 30% disagree with the statement. The feedback on the department's proactive way of working is also fairly equally positive and negative. The difference is only 5%, 35% being positive and 30% negative. The Industrial Locking customer service department is experienced as actively developing its ways of working. While 40% of the feedback to this statement was positive, 10% was negative.

The open questions "What is good in the internal customer service of Industrial Locking?" and "What could Industrial Locking improve in their internal customer service?" support the findings in above statements. The service is regarded as polite and friendly by 3 respondents and also as professional by 3 respondents. Also, clear message was given that the response time to request should be faster by 4 respondents and the lack of resources in the customer service was also pointed out by one respondent. The feedbacks reflected that recently two new persons had been appointed to the department and before that the department had worked with under capacity. This

under capacity situation might have affected the low scores on certain statement, i.e. the availability of the employees in the department.

In Figure 9 the results of Industrial Locking customer service in each statement are illustrated.

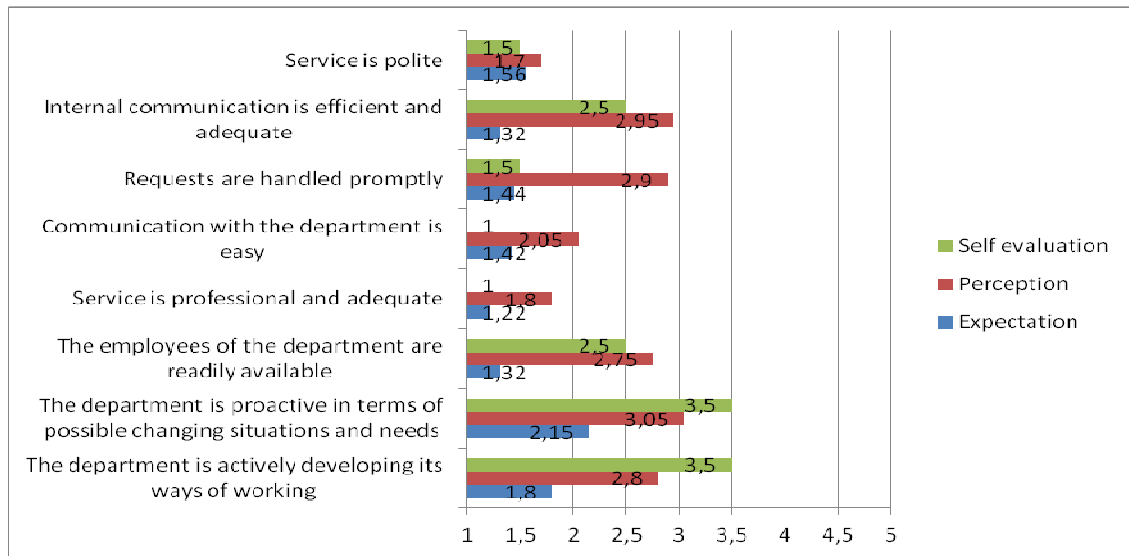


**Figure 9.** Service delivery results of Industrial Locking

In Figure 10 the average scores per each statement are given in three categories. The perception average in red is the average score of evaluation received from the respondents, the expectation average in blue is the average scores of the importance of the each statements, and the self evaluation average in green is the average scores of Industrial Locking respondents evaluating themselves their department’s performance. The evaluation of service i.e. perception and self evaluation was carried out with statements that was answered by using the scale from 1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. The expectation was evaluated by using the scale from 1 = important to 5 =



not important. The lower the score, the better the perception or higher expectation. For identifying a possible gap in service quality the perception and expectation scores are compared by decreasing the perception scores from expectation scores. If the result is negative and the difference equals to or is more than one unit of measure, then there exists a gap in that service quality attribute.



**Figure 10.** Expectation versus perception scores of Industrial Locking

When reviewing the difference between expectation and perception scores it seems that there are several gaps in the service quality of Industrial Locking customer service. The polite service, professional and adequate service and easy communication with the departments seem to be the only statements where the performance is closer to the respondents' expectations and no gap exists i.e. the difference is less than one unit of measure. When concerning effectiveness of internal communication, prompt handling of requests and availability of the personnel the difference between respondent's expectations and perceptions is approximately 1,5 half unit of measure and gap exists. The difference in the statement "The department is actively developing its ways of working" is one unit of measure and gap exists as well. The difference between expectation and perception in department's proactivity is very close to gap, but remains under one unit of measure, i.e.-0.9.

Only two respondents from Industrial Locking made self evaluation and in most of the statements the self evaluation scores align with the perception scores. However, there is a substantial difference between self evaluation and perception scores in following

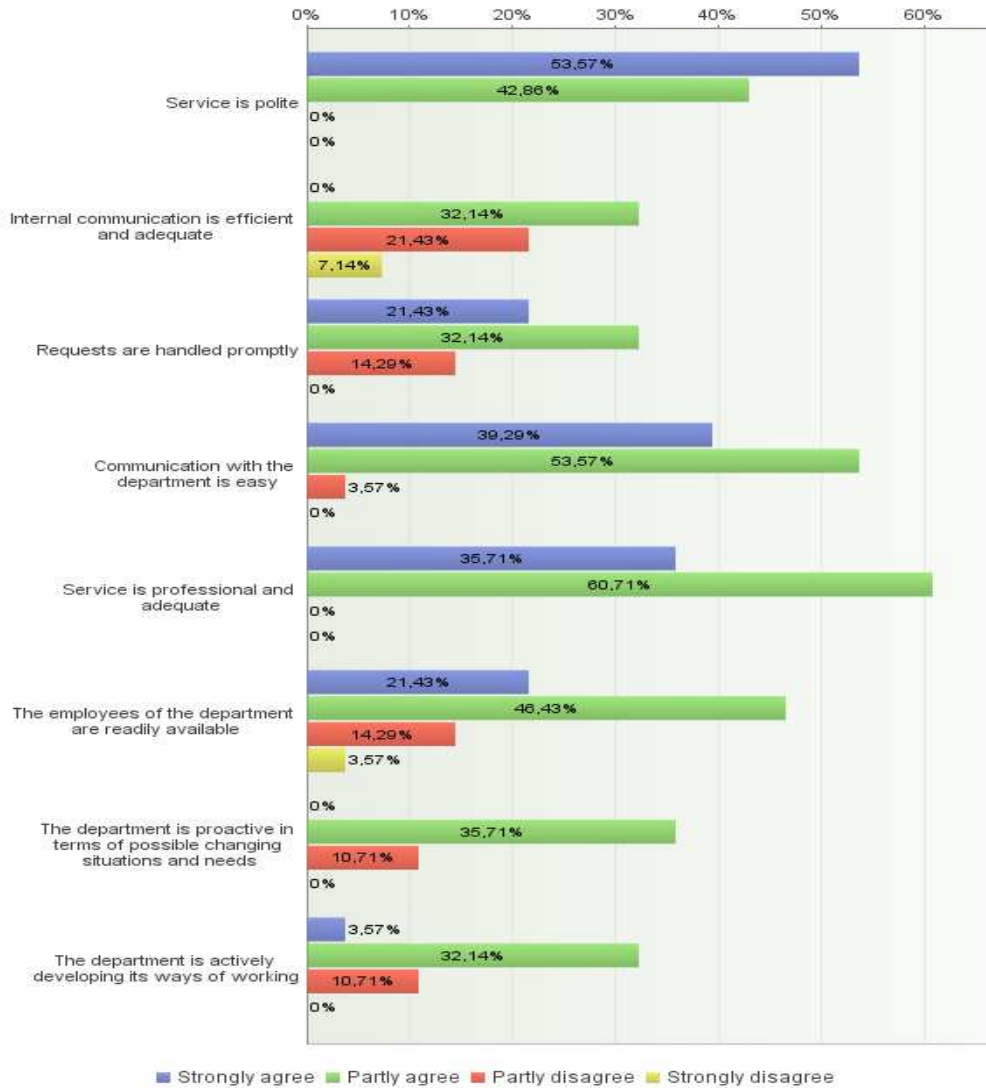
statements “Requests are handled promptly”, “Communication with the department is easy”. The self evaluation average scores in these statements indicate that the Industrial Locking customer service regards their own service quality better than what has been perceived by other respondents. On the other hand, in the self evaluation the two persons working in Industrial Locking seem more negative on department’s proactivity and activity on developing ways of working than other respondents.

#### 4.5 Construction Locking

The service of Construction Locking was clearly estimated polite. Approximately 54% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement, while 43% agrees partly, with no negative (partly disagree or strongly disagree) answers were given. Also the service of the department is professional and adequate as the feedback was only positive, 36% strongly agree with the statement and 61% partly agree. Also in the statements “Communication with the department is easy”, “The employees of the department are readily available” and “Requests are handled promptly” the feedback is clearly positive even though some of the respondents partly disagreed with the statements. The feedback received on the efficiency and adequateness of internal communication is almost evenly positive and negative. The portion of positive feedback is about 32% and negative about 29%. Evaluating the department’s proactivity in terms of changing situations and needs and activity in developing ways of working was a challenge for respondents to an extent as approximately half of the respondents had no opinion on these statements. The majority of the feedback is positive to these two statements.

The feedback received in the open questions supports the positive feedback on the service’s professionalism and adequateness. Altogether four respondents have commented that the service was professional, but three respondent commented also on the too long a response time and lack of resources.

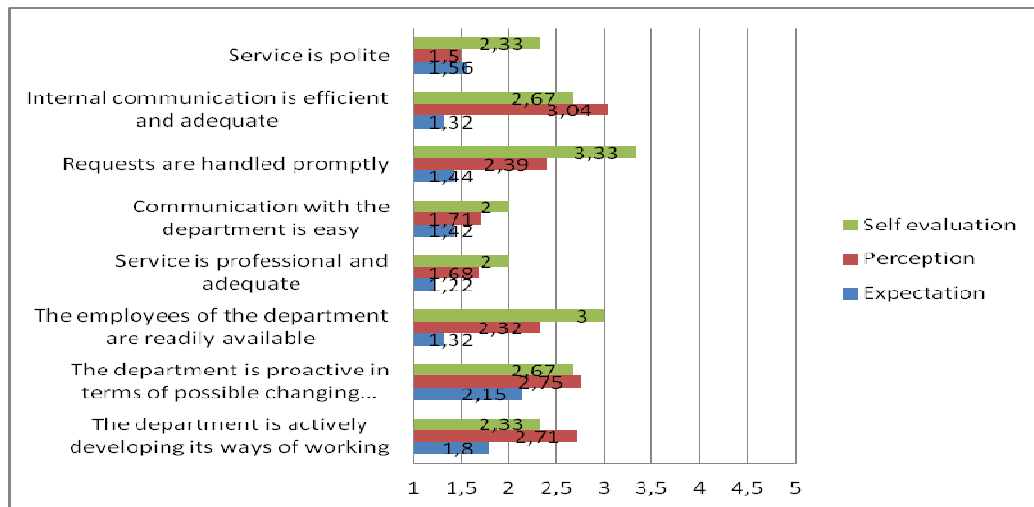
The results of Construction Locking customer satisfaction are presented in the Figure 11 in the following page.



**Figure 11.** Service delivery results of Construction Locking

In Figure 12 the average scores per each statement are given in three categories. The perception average in red is the average score of evaluation received from the respondents, the expectation average in blue is the average scores of the importance of the each statements, and the self evaluation average in green is the average scores of Construction Locking respondents evaluating themselves their department’s performance. The evaluation of service i.e. perception and self evaluation was carried out with statements that was answered by using the scale from 1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. The expectation was evaluated by using the scale from 1 = important to 5 = not important. The lower the score, the better the perception or higher expectation. For identifying a possible gap in service quality the perception and expectation scores are compared by decreasing the perception scores from expectation

scores. If the result is negative and the difference equals to or is more than one unit of measure, then there exists a gap in that service quality attribute.



**Figure 12.** Expectation versus perception scores of Construction Locking

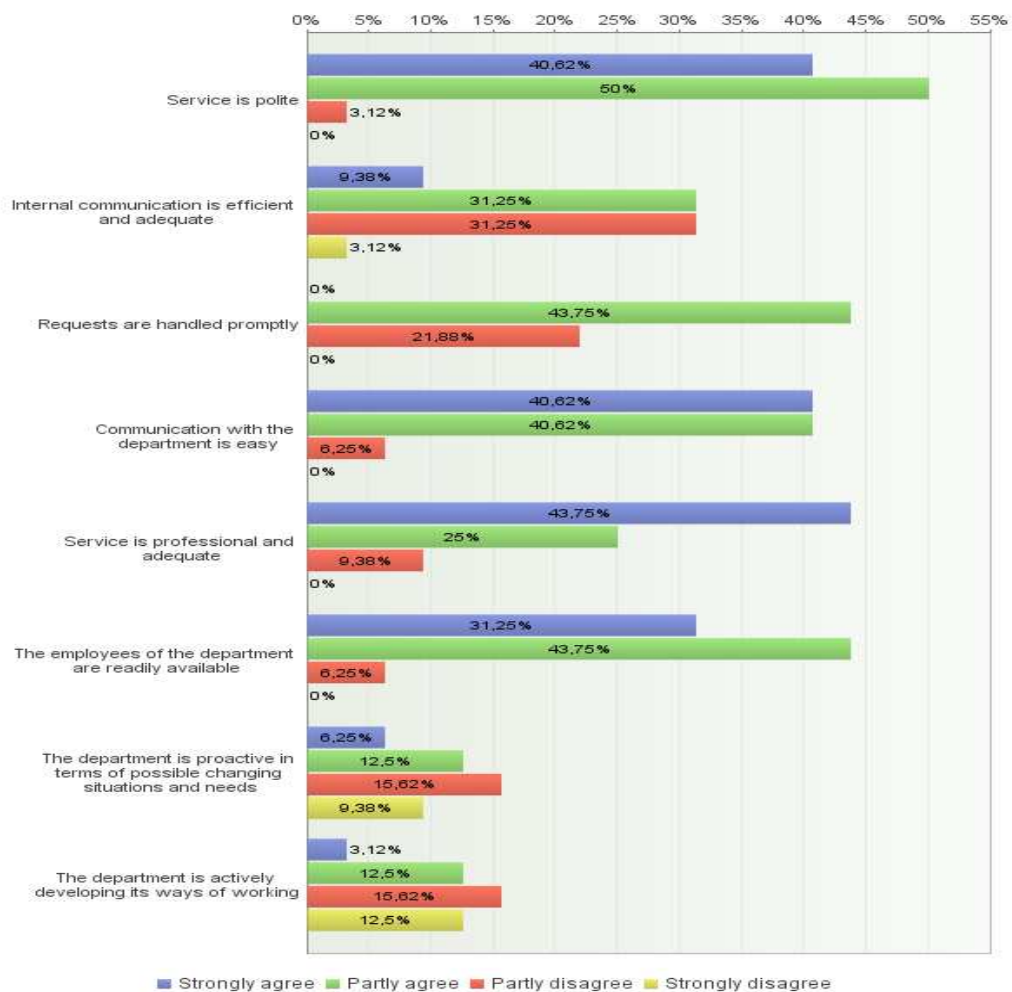
Based on the scores it can be concluded that the communication with Construction Locking is easy and service is polite and also professional and adequate as the perception average score is very close to the ideal i.e. average expectation scores. The efficiency of the internal communication is showing a gap as the difference between expectation and perception is more than one unit of measure, i.e.-1,72. Also the difference when concerning the availability of department's personnel is within the range to be considered as a gap, i.e. -1. The attributes of prompt handling of requests and department's activity in developing ways of working are very close to gap as the difference between expectation and perception in these statements is only a little under -1.

Three employees of the Construction Locking made self evaluation on their department's performance. The self evaluation endorses the perception scores or it is more negative than the perception.

#### 4.6 Marketing

The service of the marketing department is clearly positive as 41% strongly agreed with the statement of service being polite and 50% partly agreed. Only 3% partly disagreed

with the statement. Also the communication with the department is considered easy with about 81% positive feedback. Service is also professional and adequate with 69% agreeing with the statement and little less than 10% disagreeing. Employees of the department are also readily available as 75% agrees with the statement. The requests are handled mostly promptly as about 44% agrees with the statement, but 22% is disagreeing. The efficiency and adequateness of the internal communication gets 41% positive and 34% negative feedback. Figure 13 depicts the service delivery results of Marketing department.



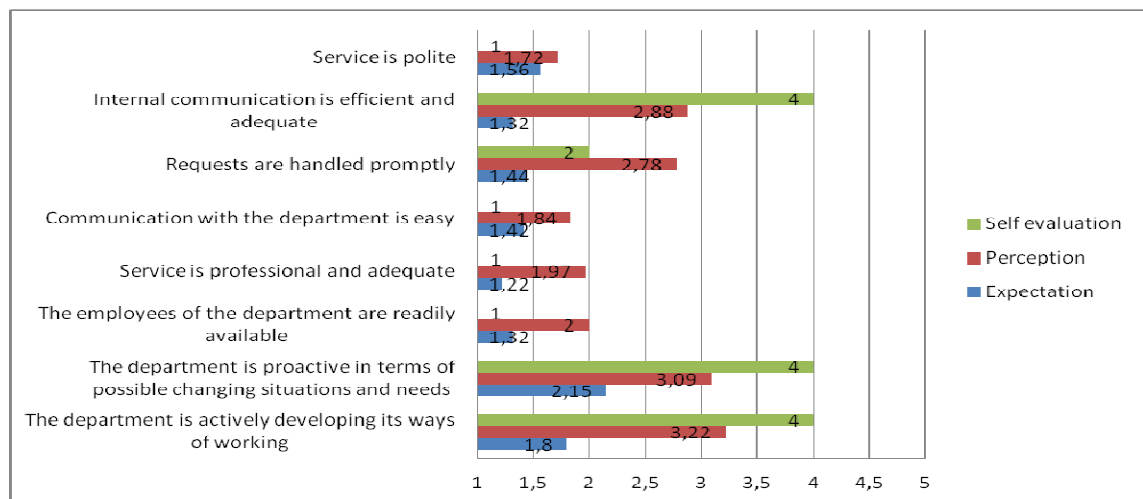
**Figure 13.** Service delivery results of Marketing

The statements “The department is proactive in terms of possible changing situations and needs” and “The department is actively developing its ways of working” have once again been challenging to evaluate as majority answers were given to “No opinion” choice. Also these two statements seem to be the areas of development for Marketing as the negative feedback is exceeding the received positive feedback. 25% of respondents

feel that Marketing is not proactive and 28% feel that Marketing is not actively developing its ways of working. The portion of positive feedback in the same statements was 19% and 28%.

Altogether five answers to open questions included positive feedback on the easy and friendly communication with the department. Additionally, the professionalism and expertise of the department's personnel was gratified by four respondents. Two respondents commented that Marketing could do better in coordinating the requests. Two respondents suggested that Marketing could improve in handling product launches. Three respondents commented that the lack of marketing strategy and lack of team leader i.e. marketing manager is affecting negatively to the performance of the department.

In Figure 14 the average scores per each statement are given in three categories. The perception average in red is the average score of evaluation received from the respondents, the expectation average in blue is the average scores of the importance of the each statement, and the self evaluation average in green is the average scores of Marketing respondents evaluating themselves their department's performance.



**Figure 14.** Expectation versus perception scores of Marketing

The evaluation of service i.e. perception and self evaluation was carried out with statements that was answered by using the scale from 1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. The expectation was evaluated by using the scale from 1 = important to 5 = not important. The lower the score, the better the perception or higher expectation. For identifying a possible gap in service quality the perception and expectation scores are

compared by decreasing the perception scores from expectation scores. If the result is negative and the difference equals to or is more than one unit of measure, then there exists a gap in that service quality attribute.

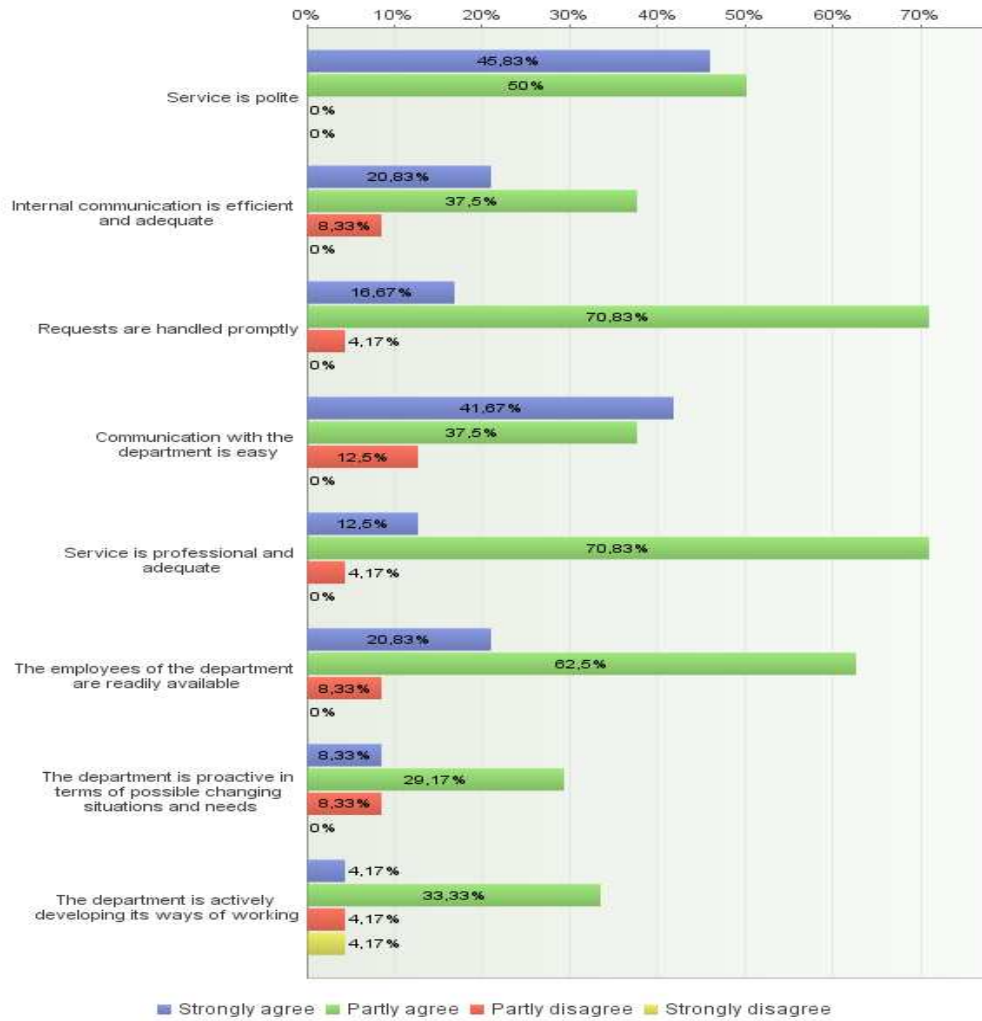
The service of the Marketing department is polite and quite equal to expectation. In addition the ease of communication, professionalism and adequateness of service, and personnel's availability are evaluated close to expectations. The difference between expectation and perception is over one unit of measure in the efficiency of internal communication and prompt handling of requests and in the activity of developing ways of working. In these attributes there exist gaps in service quality. The difference in department's proactivity is quite close being a gap, but still a little under the limit of one unit of measure.

#### 4.7 Exports

In overall, Exports' performance was regarded positive in all eight statements, i.e. service quality attributes. The proactivity and activeness of developing ways of working has been in this case also a little difficult to estimate, but still the majority feedback is positive.

In open questions the activity of exports assistants to ask and check things from business units was gratified as well as the internal communication on visiting quests and changes in Export organization by two respondents. Feedback was also given that the personnel changes too often so that the ways of working do not develop in the department. Also aggressive customer service and instructing other departments in their work was mentioned as something negative in the performance of Exports department.

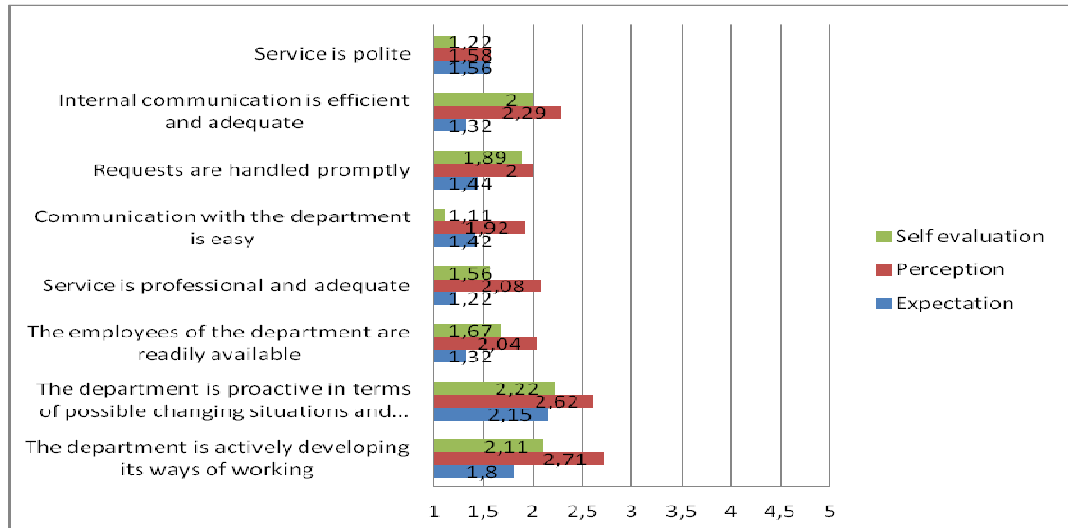
The results of Exports department in service delivery are presented in Figure 15 in the following page.



**Figure 15.** Service delivery results of Exports

In Figure 16 the average scores per each statement are given in three categories. The perception average in red is the average score of evaluation received from the respondents, the expectation average in blue is the average scores of the importance of the each statement, and the self evaluation average in green is the average scores of Exports respondents evaluating themselves their department’s performance. The evaluation of service i.e. perception and self evaluation was carried out with statements that was answered by using the scale from 1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. The expectation was evaluated by using the scale from 1 = important to 5 = not important. The lower the score, the better the perception or higher expectation. For identifying a possible gap in service quality the perception and expectation scores are compared by decreasing the perception scores from expectation scores. If the result is negative and the difference equals to or is more than one unit of measure, then there exists a gap in that service quality attribute.





**Figure 16.** Expectation versus perception scores of Exports

The performance of Exports department is very close to ideal situation in statements;” Service is polite”, ”Requests are handled promptly”, ”Communication with the department is easy”. In other statements there is a bigger difference between perception and expectation, but still within one unit of measure and therefore there are no gaps in the service delivery of Exports customer service. There are two attributes that are close to being gaps as the difference is only a little under one unit of measure i.e. -0.97 in the efficiency of internal communication and -0,91 in the department’s activity of developing its ways of working.

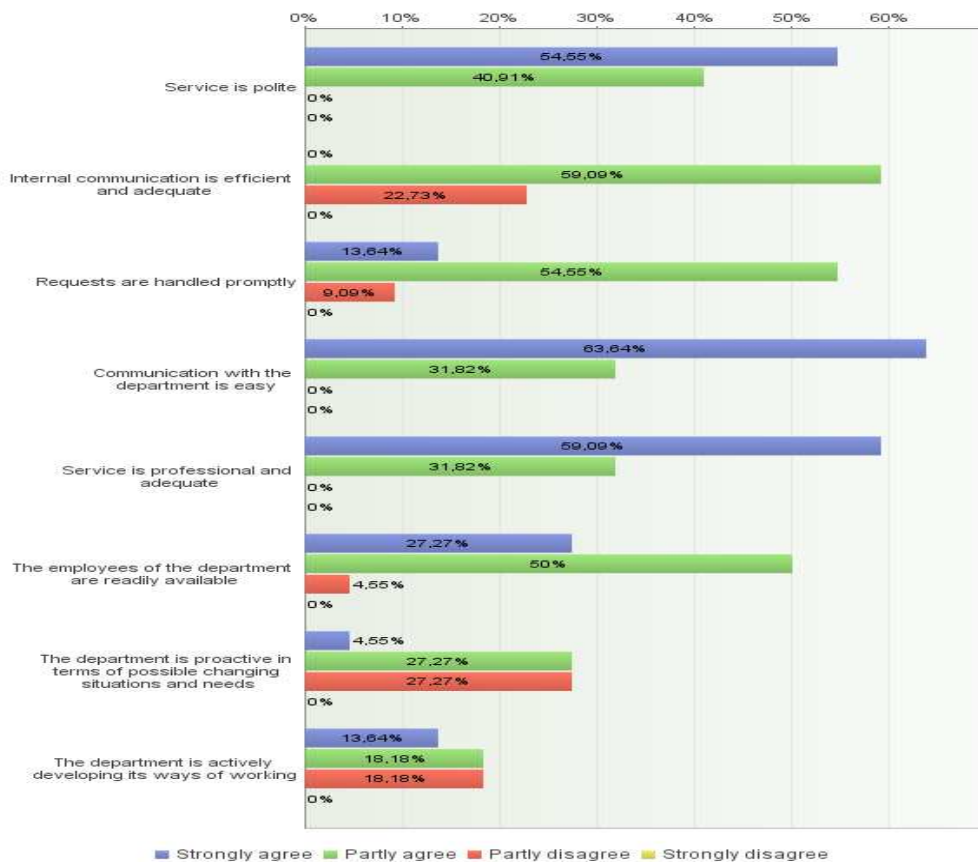
It was notable that Exports personnel had been quite active in the self evaluation. Nine respondents made self evaluation and they had also answered and commented on the open questions about their organization. Exports personnel had evaluated that they themselves are customer focused and they have understood the importance of internal customers. They answer all the requests fast and they have a good team spirit, they support and help each others, are motivated and want to learn new things. In overall it can be concluded that in the results of Export department the good motivation of the personnel correlates into good positive results in the perception scores given by other respondents.

In the open self evaluation questions Export had wished there would be more time to giving feedback and having a more proactive attitude within the organization. It was

also mentioned that more resources would be needed in order to improve the customer service delivery level.

#### 4.8 Electromechanical Lock Cases

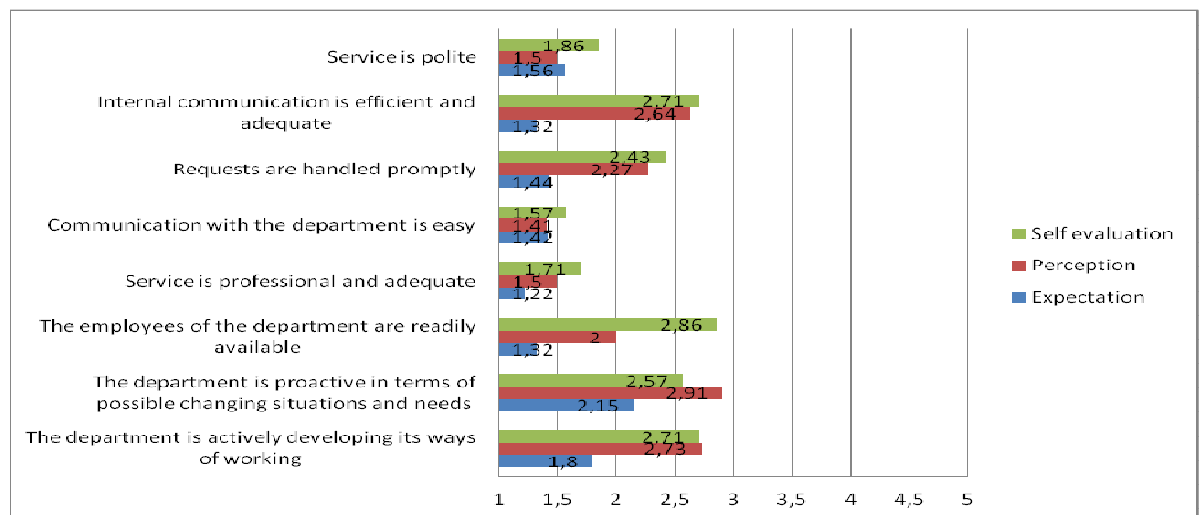
The feedback on service politeness, ease of communication and service being professional and polite was only positive. Internal communication is efficient and adequate in opinion of majority of respondents as 59% partly agrees with the statement and only 22% partly disagrees. Also majority of respondents answered positively on the availability of the personnel in Electromechanical Lock Cases and majority feels the requests are handled promptly as well. Only a small portion of respondents partly disagree in these statements. In the last two statements the positive feedback exceeded only a little the negative feedback so that it is not clear whether the department is considered to be a proactive and actively developing its ways of working. Figure 17 presents the results of Electromechanical Lock Cases.



**Figure 17.** Service delivery results of Electromechanical Lock Cases

The feedback in open questions highlights the professionalism and knowhow of the department's personnel and ease of communication. Improvements were hoped in the area of internal communication.

In Figure 18 the average scores per each statement are given in three categories. The perception average in red is the average score of evaluation received from the respondents, the expectation average in blue is the average scores of the importance of the each statement, and the self evaluation average in green is the average scores of Electromechanical Lock Cases respondents evaluating themselves their department's performance. The evaluation of service i.e. perception and self evaluation was carried out with statements that was answered by using the scale from 1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. The expectation was evaluated by using the scale from 1 = important to 5 = not important. The lower the score, the better the perception or higher expectation. For identifying a possible gap in service quality the perception and expectation scores are compared by decreasing the perception scores from expectation scores. If the result is negative and the difference equals to or is more than one unit of measure, then there exists a gap in that service quality attribute.



**Figure 18.** Expectation versus perception scores of Electromechanical Lock Cases

The service delivery of Electromechanical Lock cases in polite service, easy communication with the department and professionalism and adequateness of service seems to be quite equal to the ideal situation i.e. expectations. There difference between expectation and perception in the efficiency of internal communication is over one unit

of measure, i.e. -1,32 and this is the only attribute which is a clear gap in the service quality of Electromechanical Lock Cases. There is a difference also between expectation and perception in prompt handling of requests, personnel's availability and department's proactivity, but the difference is less than one unit of measure. In the statement "The department is actively developing its ways of working" the difference is close to gap being – 0,93.

Seven of the Electromechanical Lock Cases personnel made the self evaluation and the results of that are quite align with the perception results. In estimating department's proactivity the personnel seems to be a bit more positive, but the difference is minor.

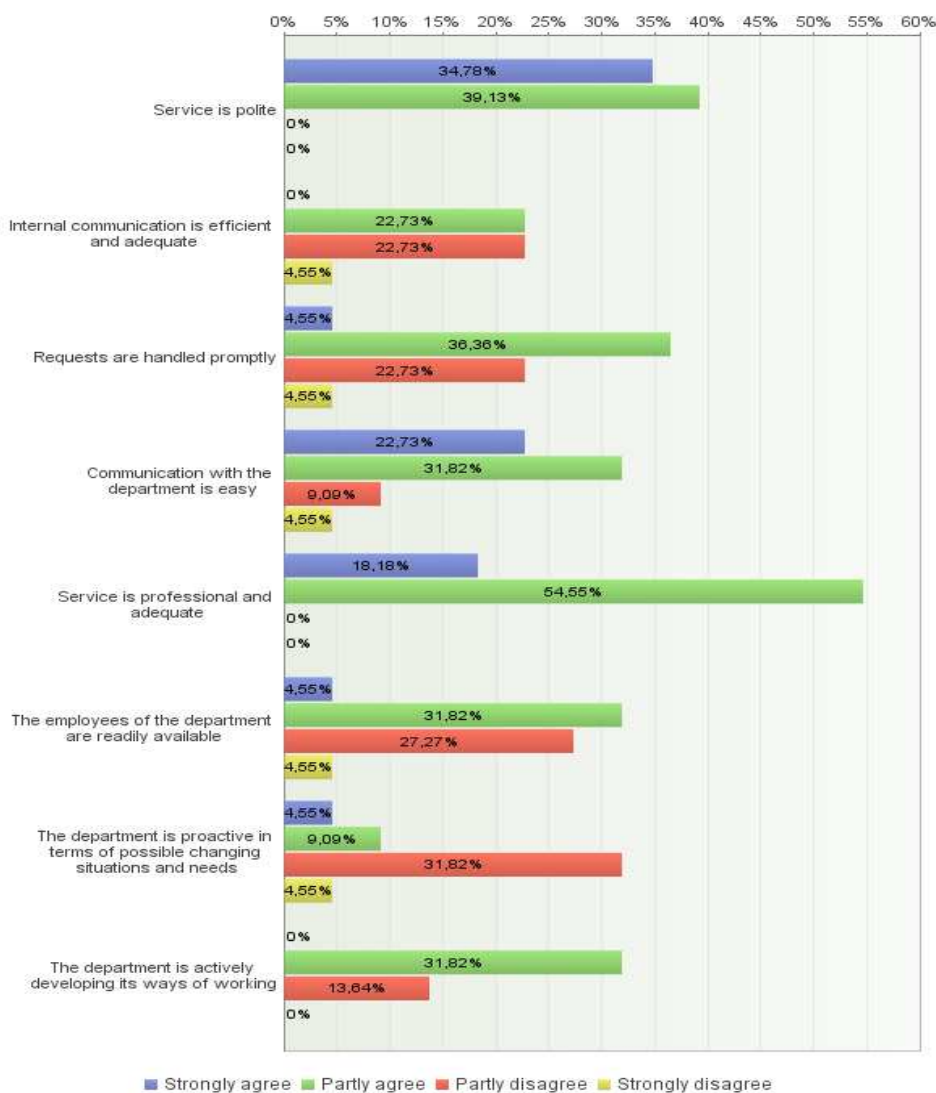
#### 4.9 Network Solutions

The service of Network solutions is clearly positive in the opinion of respondents as well as service is also professional and adequate. Both statements got only positive feedback. Communication with the department is also easy as 55% of respondents agree with the statement and about 14% disagrees. Internal communication is efficient and adequate in the opinion of about 23% respondents whereas about 27% disagrees with the statement. Requests are mainly handled promptly as per 41% of respondents, 27% disagrees. Positive and negative feedback on the availability of Network Solutions employees is quite equal, about 36% feels that the personnel is readily available, but about 32% disagrees. The Network Solution is not felt to be proactive department as about 36% disagrees with the statement and only about 13% feels Network Solutions is proactive in terms of changing situations and needs. However, about 32% of respondents agree that this department is actively developing its ways of working and about 14% disagrees. Estimating proactivity and activity in developing ways of working has once again many "No opinion" answers.

The Network Solutions provides several customer solutions and therefore the customer support is spread into several smaller units per solution. The feedback in open questions, especially on question "What could Network Solutions improve in their internal customer service?" tells that too many things are in the hands of few persons that are not easily available or one person has the know-how but cannot be reached easily. Also it was pointed out that there is a lack of resources and not enough support

for certain solution. One feedback pointed out that the customer cases are not actively followed till the end because of a lack of resources. One of these units received positive feedback in open questions of answering clearly in customer cases. From the results, it is difficult to recognize which exact solution areas need more focus and resources as there are several smaller customer support units in the Network Solutions organization. Therefore it would be useful to measure customer satisfaction within Network Solution per each customer solution unit or team.

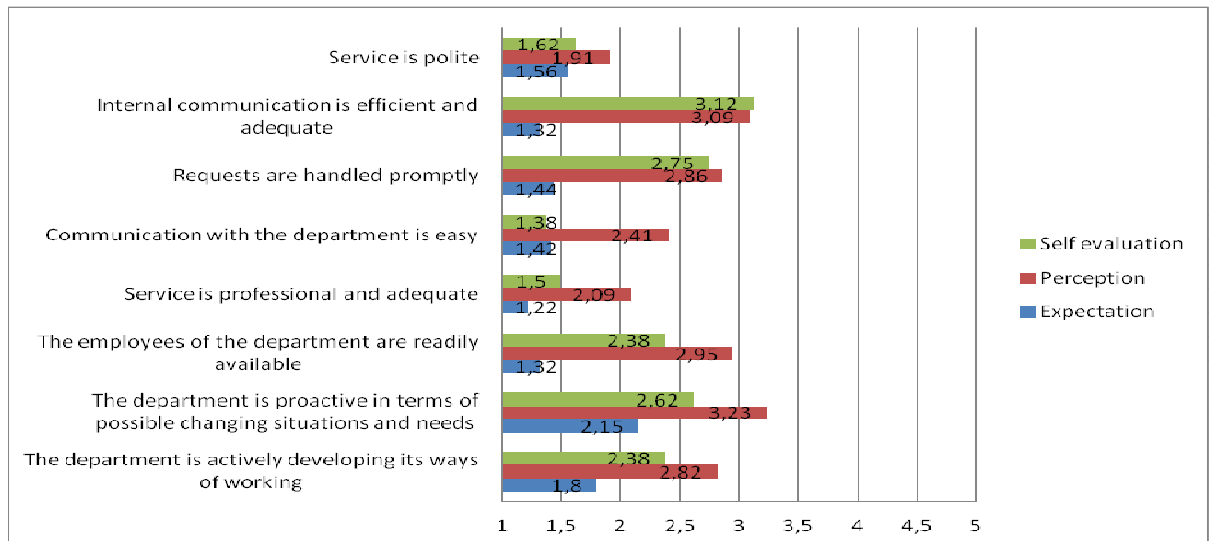
In the Figure 19 are presented the results of Network Solutions on each statement.



**Figure 19.** Service delivery results of Network Solutions

In Figure 20 the average scores per each statement are given in three categories. The perception average in red is the average score of evaluation received from the

respondents, the expectation average in blue is the average scores of the importance of the each statement, and the self evaluation average in green is the average scores of Network Solutions respondents evaluating themselves their department's performance. The evaluation of service i.e. perception and self evaluation was carried out with statements that was answered by using the scale from 1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. The expectation was evaluated by using the scale from 1 = important to 5 = not important. The lower the score, the better the perception or higher expectation. For identifying a possible gap in service quality the perception and expectation scores are compared by decreasing the perception scores from expectation scores. If the result is negative and the difference equals to or is more than one unit of measure, then there exists a gap in that service quality attribute.



**Figure 20.** Expectation versus perception scores of Network Solutions

The service delivery of Network Solutions is quite close to ideal only what comes to the politeness of service. In addition to this, the difference between expectation and perception is less than one unit of measure in the statement: “Service is professional and adequate” and barely in the statement: “Communication with the department is easy”. In all other statements the difference between expectation and perception is one or more that one unit of measure and shows gaps in service quality.

Self evaluation was made by eight respondents from Network Solutions department. When the self evaluation average scores are compared to perception average scores, it can be concluded that in all questions the self evaluation has been more positive than

the perception. In some questions the self evaluation is more align with perception but in the statement: “Communication with the department it easy” the self evaluation has been more positive that the perception, the difference being one unit of measure.

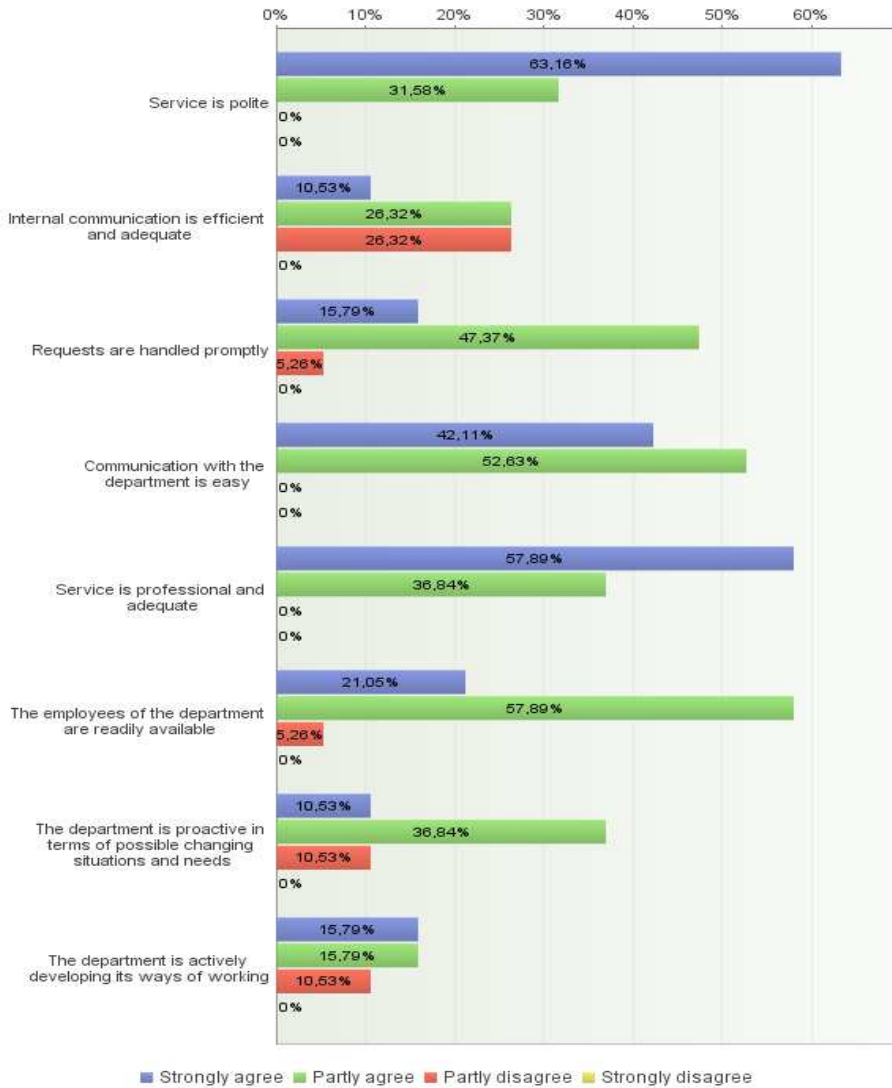
In the open question in self evaluation part positive feedback was given on professionalism and easy approachability. However, it was stated that resources do not match the need, personnel is too busy to answer emails and because of the rush the answers are not precise enough. Also the communication between the teams is weak and getting answers take too much time.

#### 4.10 Door Control

In the statements “Service is polite”, “Communication with the department is easy” and “Service is professional and adequate” the feedback was only positive. Also the feedback for the availability of personnel was in majority positive. About 79% of the respondents agreed that the personnel is easily available. About 37% of respondents felt that the internal communication of Door Control is efficient and adequate, but about 26% disagreed in turn. The requests are handled mainly well as about 63% of the feedback was positive and about 5% negative. Even though there is quite evenly negative and positive answers received to the proactivity of the department, the overall feedback is positive. While 32% of the respondents agreed, 11% disagreed on the statement “The department is proactive in terms of possible changing situations and needs”. In the opinion of 32% or respondents, Door Control is actively developing its ways of working, while 11% disagreed.

The answers in open questions support the feedback on easy communication with the department and professionalism of the technical support personnel. Improvement to the internal communication was requested.

The Figure 20 presents the results of service delivery of Door Control.

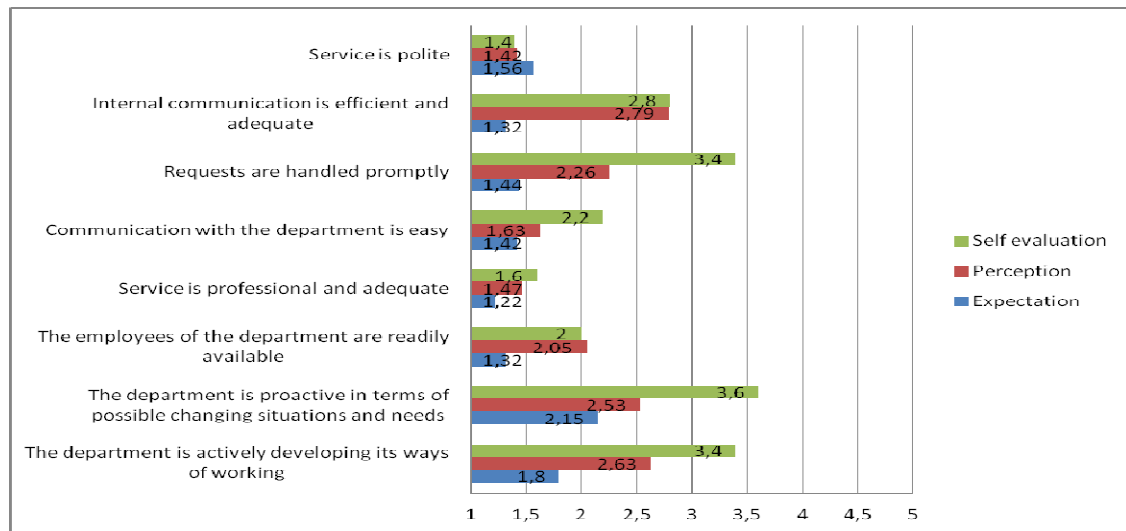


**Figure 21.** Service delivery results of Door Control

In Figure 22 the average scores per each statement are given in three categories. The perception average in red is the average score of evaluation received from the respondents, the expectation average in blue is the average scores of the importance of the each statement, and the self evaluation average in green is the average scores of Door Control respondents evaluating themselves their department’s performance. The evaluation of service i.e. perception and self evaluation was carried out with statements that was answered by using the scale from 1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. The expectation was evaluated by using the scale from 1 = important to 5 = not important. The lower the score, the better the perception or higher expectation. For identifying a possible gap in service quality the perception and expectation scores are compared by decreasing the perception scores from expectation scores. If the result is



negative and the difference equals to or is more than one unit of measure, then there exists a gap in that service quality attribute.



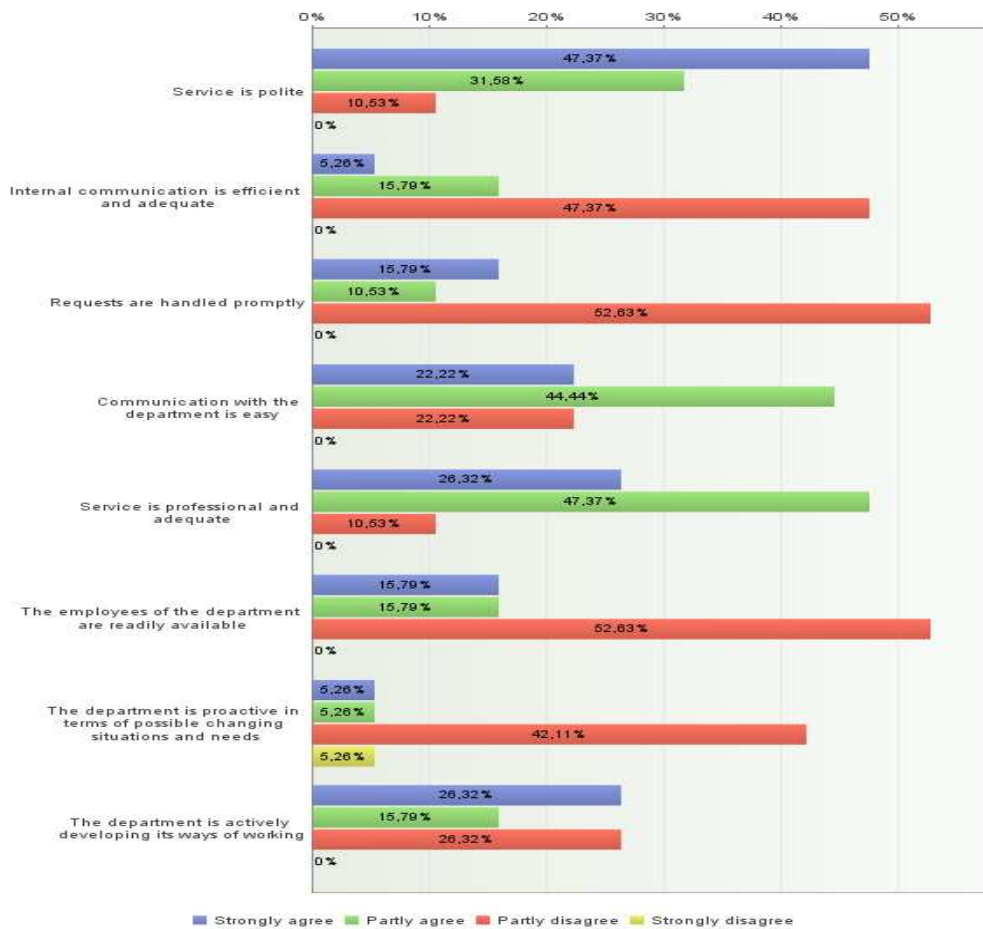
**Figure 22.** Expectation versus perception scores of Door Control

The service of Door Control is clearly polite, professional and adequate as can be conducted from the results above. The communication is easy with the department and the department is considered proactive in terms of changing situations and needs. The difference between expectation and perception in prompt handling of requests and department's activity is still within one unit of measure and therefore no gap exists at the moment when concerning these attributes in the service quality. The difference between expectation and perception is greater than one unit of measure in the statements: "Internal communication is efficient and adequate" and "The employees of the department are readily available" and these are the gaps in the service quality of Door Control.

The self evaluation was made by 2 respondents from Door Control. In general the self evaluation was slightly negative when compared to the average perception scores received from other respondents. In open questions it was pointed out that Door Control has time and willingness to handle the requests professionally. Hurry at work was mentioned as a disadvantage on the department's performance. This causes that some things has to be done too fast or sometimes handling request delay because of the rush.

#### 4.11 Architectural Hardware

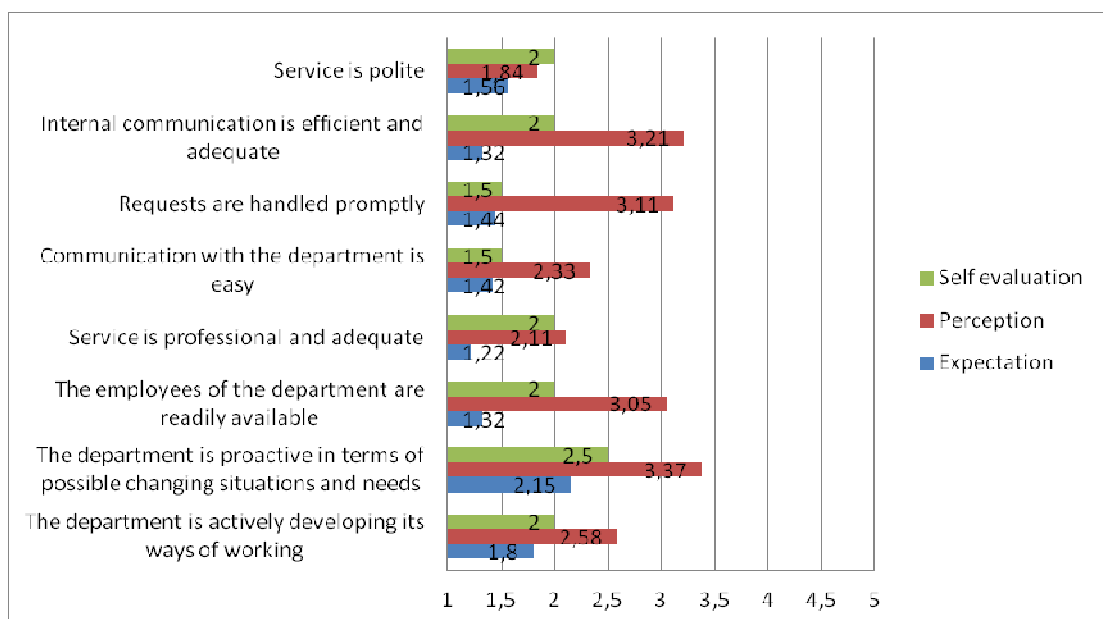
For Architectural Hardware the feedback for each statement is clearly either positive or negative. Clearly positive feedback was given on polite service, i.e. 79% of respondents agreed with the statement, and ease of communication, i.e. 67% and professional adequate service, i.e. 74%. Clearly negative feedback was given on the efficiency and adequateness of internal communication, prompt handling of requests and availability of the personnel. Each of these areas clearly needs some focus and improvements from Architectural Hardware in the future in order to satisfy the internal customers. Also, the department is not considered as proactive in terms of possible changing situations and needs. However, 42% of respondents regarded the department active in developing its ways of working, while 26% of the respondents were not yet convinced but disagreed. The results of Architectural Hardware in service delivery are presented in the Figure 23.



**Figure 23.** Service delivery results of Architectural Hardware

It can be conducted from the feedback received in the open questions, that the reason for getting negative feedback in the four statements may be the new situation of the department and lack of resources. The department has been moved from other city to Joensuu and it has been starting its operation at the beginning of year 2011 with new ways of working and with partly new personnel. This could be one reason for the negative feedback received.

In Figure 24 the average scores per each statement are given in three categories. The perception average in red is the average score of evaluation received from the respondents, the expectation average in blue is the average scores of the importance of the each statement, and the self evaluation average in green is the average scores of Architectural Hardware respondents evaluating themselves their department's performance. The evaluation of service i.e. perception and self evaluation was carried out with statements that was answered by using the scale from 1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. The expectation was evaluated by using the scale from 1 = important to 5 = not important. The lower the score, the better the perception or higher expectation. For identifying a possible gap in service quality the perception and expectation scores are compared by decreasing the perception scores from expectation scores. If the result is negative and the difference equals to or is more than one unit of measure, then there exists a gap in that service quality attribute.



**Figure 24.** Expectation versus perception scores of Architectural Hardware

The service quality of Architectural Hardware is close to expectation only in service's politeness. In the statements: "Internal communication is efficient and adequate", "Requests are handled promptly", and "The employees of the department are readily available" and "The department is proactive in terms of possible changing situations and needs" the difference between expectation and perception is greater than one unit of measure and a gap exists. In rest of the statements there is a difference as well, but within one unit of measure.

The self evaluation was made by only 2 persons from Architectural Hardware and the results of that seem to be in some cases almost too positive when compared to perception. For example in statements: "Internal communication is efficient and adequate" and "Requests are handled promptly" the self evaluation almost equals with the ideal situation i.e. expectation, but the perception is over one unit of measure different from the self evaluation and expectation scores.

#### 4.12 Feedback on obstacles and improvement areas in internal customer service

The last two questions in the questionnaire were designed in order to get information from the employees in general on the internal customer service delivery at Abloy Oy. The first of these questions were: "What is the biggest challenge or obstacle that you face when trying to deliver high-quality internal customer service". The feedback received to this question is discussed next.

The most common obstacle in the answers was rush. Altogether 15 answers pointed out that the rush and lack of time was the biggest obstacles in delivering the quality internal customer service. In the rush it is not possible to handle requests as good as one would hope and the answer given in rush might seem very impolite. There is no time to concentrate issues as there are many simultaneous tasks to be done at the same time. Also because of the rush it is not possible to develop the ways of working. Two persons had answered that own capability to give quality service it the biggest obstacle at the moment because of the short working time in the organization so far. It was also mentioned that insufficient knowledge on other debarment's ways of working can be an obstacle as the knowledge would give better understanding of the background issues

and this knowledge would help also when serving external customers. One person had commented that waiting for business decisions is taking long time and the decisions made may change. Internally the discontinuations of products should be informed earlier than externally. Also products are launched too early when either the products are not technically ready or material for them is not ready to be published. The efficiency of internal communication was criticised. No systematic development of communication is done in order to maintain the communication on a good level or develop it further. One person claimed that the surprise tasks and tasks that belong to somebody else but he has to do them are prohibiting from doing the normal work tasks. Also, indifference and not reacting to message and requests was mentioned as an obstacle.

The second open question at the end of the questionnaire was designed in order to collect information for improving internal customer service in general. The question was: "If you were the president of this company for one day with the power and ability to make only one decision to improve the unit's internal customer service, what decision would you make?" The feedback provided many concrete ideas to develop and improve the customer service. The next paragraph discusses the feedback received to this open question.

One suggestion was to combine all the customer service departments into one organization where everyone would still concentrate on their own department, but could gain comprehensive knowledge or products. One person would combine the technical customer service of Industrial Locking and Mechanical Lock Cases whereas one person would combine Exports and Domestic sales customer services into one unit. One person mentioned that one person would be needed to coordinate the technical customer services' service outward so that the performance to external customers could be standardized. Altogether nine respondents suggested that hiring more resources would improve the customer service. Six answers highlighted that the importance of customer focus and especially the equal importance of internal customer compared to external customer should be trained to the personnel better. Two respondents suggested that the collectivism and Abloy –spirit should be promoted somehow, either by training or by asking each department to develop a plan how the spirit could be improved. One suggestion was made to change the roles and responsibilities for a week between customer service personnel in order to gain understanding of other department's way of

working. One concrete answer suggested that there should be a faster way of sending messages between personnel than email. It was also pointed out that it is CEO's task to motivate people to better performance. One respondent wanted to train the products and its characteristics to personnel first well before putting them into customer service. Another respondent was concerned of launching products only when the whole package is ready to be launched, i.e. when both technical and marketing material is ready. Personnel should visit external customers and get understanding of their processes in order to get the understanding that the customers cannot wait for the service if something goes wrong in the product launches.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter the conclusions of the conducted research are presented and the research process evaluated. At the end of the chapter, the recommendations for future research are presented.

### 5.1 Conclusions

The main objective of this study was to assess the service quality and customer satisfaction in internal customer service at Abloy Oy customer service departments. The empirical results did provide information for the process development purpose in the way that each department can see their areas of strength and weakness and the areas for improvement. The literature review revealed the correlation between personnel's work satisfaction and customer satisfaction. The more satisfied and motivated the personnel are the more satisfied the customers are in return and this has an effect on internal and external customer service. The personnel's work satisfaction and motivation correlate with improved work performance and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the literature review dealt with the dependency of customer expectation and perception in service quality and the possible causes to the discrepancy between these two aspects and for possible decline in service quality.

The results indicate that holistically Abloy Oy seems to have been successful in employing the correct persons into its customer services. The results for each customer service departments in the study show that respondents found the service to be polite and personnel professional in each of the departments. In other areas the results varied per department. One common gap in service quality for most of the department was the efficiency and adequateness of internal communication. Exports was the only departments which did not have clear gaps in their service delivery, but the efficiency and adequateness of internal communication was close to being a gap. The departments' proactivity and activity on developing ways of working seemed to be difficult to evaluate. In general the feedback was positive on these statements and no department received crushing feedback on this. However, many respondents ignored this question. It is possible that department's proactivity and activity in developing ways of working is

easier to estimate when you are working in that very department. They might be features that are not so well visible for other personnel.

The uneven participation per department to the study caused that for not all departments the self evaluation provided enough information. However, especially Exports were active in self evaluation and the results provide information on Exports personnel's work satisfaction.

One repeating feedback received to the question of possible challenges or obstacles prohibiting quality customer service was lack of resources and common rush, i.e. not having time to do the work as efficiently as one would want to do. This is something that reflects the spirit of the time and can be heard almost every time when personnel of any company are interviewed in the news on work performance. Better results are needed with lesser resources. As the productivity of customer service is something difficult to measure with financial key performance indicators it is difficult to convince management of the need of more resources.

In general the two open questions at the end of the questionnaire provided useful information on the obstacles in service delivery and provided good suggestions for how to improve customer service. The suggestions should be openly evaluated by the managements of customer service departments at Abloy Oy. In the theory part I explained the ways in which to take customer service measurement results into use with the help of e.g. cross-functional teams. This could be one solution to the open feedback on technical customer service departments needing a common coordinator. A cross-functional team could be also used for communicating the results of this study to the organizations. The formed cross-functional team could be responsible for creating and realizing the improvements into internal customer service based on the results of this study. The team could also continue carrying out the measurements of internal customer satisfaction regularly

## 5.2 Evaluation and considerations

The questionnaire designed for this study can be used in the future for collecting



quantitative data for measuring the performance of the customer service departments as it is now or with some changes made in it. Further, the results should be evaluated in statistical software in order to find out whether the differences in customer perceptions and expectations are statistically significant. For this purpose, the questions designed for measuring the importance of the statement should be changed into same format than statements used for evaluating the performance of each department. In addition, Abloy Oy should define their service quality standards against which they want to measure the internal service quality. The service quality standards in this research were set by respondents when estimating the importance of service quality attributes, which were then referred as expectation scores and in the study. The results of each department for service quality of each attributes were compared to the expectation scores. It was mentioned in the methodology chapter that the use of this kind of twin scale may cause too high service standards and expectation. Abloy Oy needs to decide whether this is the suitable way to specify service quality standards for their internal customer service.

Although the questionnaire could be used in measuring service quality as it is now, it could be considered whether to shorten the questionnaire and not to measure all seven departments at the same questionnaire at the same time. Answering the questionnaire takes now about 15 – 20 minutes and sometimes this is too long for the respondents. Because of the length of the questionnaire the respondents might lose their concentration towards the end of the questionnaire. Therefore, the departments to be evaluated at the end of the questionnaire might not receive as precise feedback as the departments who are evaluated at the beginning of the questionnaire. Also, for the sake of clarity self evaluation could be left out from this questionnaire. It would make the questionnaire clearer for the respondents to answer, and the results are easier to be analyzed as the self evaluation is not mixed into the other responses.

However, good questionnaires and clear results do not suffice if they cause no actions. Therefore, each department management needs to decide how to benefit from the results. Studies can be carried out and recommendations given but it is management's dedication and commitment that are vital for the process development and carrying out successfully changes in the organizations. Lastly, the management also decides the performance target levels for their personnel.

### 5.3 Suggestions for future research

The results showed clear gaps in service quality for some departments in some of the service quality dimensions. Obviously, departments have to take some actions to improve their service in these areas. If no clear cause for the gaps is found by studying the gap model presented in literature review, or from the answers to the open questions concerning challenges in internal customer service, and therefore no corrective actions can be implemented, then further studies should be carried out. With the help of a further study, it can be researched which of the providers gaps from one to four might be the cause for not meeting internal customer expectations.

Another suggestion for further study, which would bring value added to this customer satisfaction study, would be a study of the components of internal service quality. Hallowell, Schelsinger & Zornitsky (1996, 23) have collected a list of so called components of internal service quality from the literature of several authors. These components are; tools, policies and procedures, teamwork, management support, goal alignment, effective training, communication and rewards and recognition. These components affect the job satisfaction and the capability of personnel to perform at their work. By studying these components, managers may be able to determine which actions are required in order to improve customer service.

Thirdly, I suggest employee satisfaction measurement to be carried out. As mentioned earlier in the introduction chapter, employee satisfaction correlates to customer satisfaction. A satisfied customer serves internal and external customers better. If employee satisfaction can be improved, the service quality in customer service improves at the same time.

Still, before realizing any further studies on this subject, the main and first task is to communicate the results of this study to the personnel and middle-management and consider whether the results cause some actions in the organization. The questionnaire designed for this study is useful as it is for continuous measuring of the service quality level and therefore no obstacles for measuring service quality exist. However, the questionnaire could be developed further as suggested in the earlier sub-chapter, but is not necessary in order to start continuously following the internal customer service quality.

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QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH:

Name of the questionnaire: Internal customer service

**Which department do you work in? \***

- Choises:     Exports
- Marketing
- Industrial Locking
- Construction Locking
- Network Solutions
- Electromechanical Lock Cases
- Door Control
- Architectural Hardware

**How important do you find the following statements in terms of internal customer service:**

Polite service

Efficient and adequate internal communication

Prompt handling of requests

Ease of communication

Professional and adequate service

Easy availability of customer service personnel

Proactive preparation to variable changing situations and needs

Active development of working practices

*The scale used: Important = 1, Quite important =2, No opinion = 3, Slightly important = 2, Not important = 5*

**How important do you find the following customer service departments for your work performance:**

In this question please do not evaluate your own department where you are working in (leave the line empty).

Exports

Marketing

Industrial Locking

Construction Locking

Electromechanical Lock Cases

Network Solutions

Door Control

Architectural Hardware

*The scale used: Important = 1, Quite important = 2, No opinion = 3, Slightly important = 4, Not important = 5*

*[The following questions were presented for each department in the own section per department in the questionnaire:]*

**Please evaluate the performance of [Department] technical support and R&D in the following statements from the point of view of your own work.**

If you work in this department, please answer the questions and evaluate the operation of your own department in the statements from your own point of view (self-evaluation).

If you do not deal with this department in your work, you can move forward in the questionnaire by clicking the Next button at the bottom of the page.

Service is polite

Internal communication is efficient and adequate

Requests are handled promptly

Communication with the department is easy

Service is professional and adequate

The employees of the department are readily available

The department is proactive in terms of possible changing situations and needs

The department is actively developing its ways of working

*The scale used: Strongly agree = 1, Partly agree = 2, No opinion = 3, Partly disagree = 4, Strongly disagree = 5*

**What is good in the internal customer service of [Department]?**

**What could [Department] improve in their internal customer service?**

*[End of the page. Above questions were repeated per department on the own page]*

*[At the end of the questionnaire the following open questions were asked:]*

**What is the biggest challenge or obstacle that you face when trying to deliver high-quality internal customer service?**

**If you were the president of this company for one day with the power and ability to make only one decision to improve the unit's internal customer service, what decision would you make?**

QUESTIONS IN FINNISH:

Name of the questionnaire: Sisäinen asiakaspalvelu

**Millä osastolla työskentelet? \***

Vienti

Markkinointi

Laitelukitus

Rakennuslukitus

Network Solutions

Sähkömekaaniset lukkorungot

Door Control

Rakennushelat

**Arvioi kuinka tärkeänä koet seuraavat väittämät sisäisen asiakaspalvelun osalta:**

Ystävällinen palvelu

Tehokas ja riittävä sisäinen tiedottaminen

Nopea asioidenkäsittely

Vuorovaikutuksen helppous

Asiantunteva ja oikeellinen palvelu

Asiakaspalvelun helppo tavoitettavuus

Varautuminen tilanteisiin ja tarpeisiin ennalta

Toimintatapojen aktiivinen kehittäminen

*The scale used; Tärkeä = 1, Jokseenkin tärkeä = 2, En osaa sanoa = 3, Hieman tärkeä = 4, Ei tärkeä = 5*

**Arvioi kuinka tärkeitä seuraavat asiakaspalveluosastot ovat oman työsi kannalta:**

Tässä kysymyksessä jätä vastaamatta oman osastosi kohdalla.

Vienti

Markkinointi

Laitelukitus

Rakennuslukitus

Sähkömekaaniset lukkorungot

Network Solutions

Door Control

Rakennushelat

*The scale used: Tärkeä = 1, Jokseenkin tärkeä = 2, En osaa sanoa = 3, Hieman tärkeä = 4, Ei tärkeä = 5*

*[The following questions were presented for each department in the own section per department in the questionnaire:]*

**Arvioi seuraavien väittämien kohdalla [Department] teknistä tukea sekä tuotekehitystä sisäisen asiakaspalvelun näkökulmasta.**

Jos itse työskentelet kyseisellä osastolla, vastaa ja arvioi oman osastosi toimintaa omasta näkökulmastasi.

Jos et ole kyseisen osaston kanssa tekemisissä, voit siirtyä kyselyssä eteenpäin sivun alalaidassa olevasta Seuraava - painikkeesta.

Palvelu on ystävällistä

Sisäinen tiedottaminen on tehokasta ja riittävää

Asioiden käsittely on nopeaa

Kommunikointi osaston kanssa on helppoa

Palvelu on asiantuntevaa ja oikeellista

Osaston työntekijät ovat helposti tavoitettavissa

Osasto ennakoi ja varautuu hyvin mahdollisiin muuttuviin tilanteisiin ja tarpeisiin

Osasto kehittää aktiivisesti toimintatapojaan



*The scale used: Täysin samaa mieltä = 1, Jokseenkin samaa mieltä = 2, En osaa sanoa = 3, Hieman eri mieltä = 4, Täysin eri mieltä = 5*

**Mikä [Department] sisäisessä asiakaspalvelussa on hyvää?**

**Mitä [Department] voisi tehdä paremmin sisäisessä asiakaspalvelussa?**

*[End of one page. Above questions were repeated per department on the own page]*

*[At the end of the questionnaire the following open questions were asked:]*

**Minkä asian koet asiakaspalvelutyössäsi eniten haittaavan tai estävän tekemästä laadukasta sisäistä asiakaspalvelua?**

**Jos olisit Abloyn toimitusjohtaja yhden päivän ja voisit tehdä yhden päätöksen koskien sisäistä asiakaspalvelua, mikä se olisi?**