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Research paper



A Study on the Concept of Employees Customer Orientation and its Impact on Competence Development

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Abstract

It is thought world over that customer orientation of employees needs to corporate success. It constitutes the major element of customer service thrown open by customer oriented service personnel to decide upon the great success of the business firm. Customer oriented service personnel are bestowed with communication, technical, problem solving skills, personality traits and commitment. Anticipating customer wishes and these in advance, and to act accordingly by customer oriented service personnel is a pivotal factor for the progress of an organization. This paper intends to study the concept of operational level employees orientation towards customers and its implication for competence development.

Keywords: *Competence Development; Customer Orientation; Customer Oriented Service, Employees; Implication.*

1. Introduction

Customer orientation is a long drawn plan in a lean business model, encouraging management and employees to keep pace with the changing wants and deeds of its customers. The company vide philosophy should be centered on fulfillment of customer wants and needs and that also should be viewed as the first priority of the company.

The selling companies very well know that customer needs and wants are changing from time to time. To cite an example, it is noticed that in 1990's, the consumers were purchasing desktop computers for their use. However, in 2000's these desktops have been replaced by laptops with the development of technology and in 2010's the same are occupied by tablets, phones and other smaller electronic devices. The retailers are always looking for customers to provide them the latest products as otherwise it would be difficult for retailers to prosper in the business. In the companies following a strategy of high price and facing vigorous competition, the performance of sales associates is best [1].

In the customer orientation field retailers take the lead to satisfy the customers by fulfilling their requirements. Retailers always monitor standards of products and maintain customer relationship to their satisfaction. Orientation of customers amplifies the link between emotive commitment and satisfaction of customers [2]. They always oblige to meet the client's needs and expectations pertaining to the product and services in the business arena. Some, such business strategies that relate to customer orientation include: generating a quality product mostly wanted by customers, immediate response and prompt service are the basic requirement wanted, redressal of consumer complaints and queries on war footing, responding community issues and other delicate matters with sense of responsibility.

2. Review of Literature

Many marketing theorists exist. Among those marketing theorists who focus their attention on customers usually act in a manner that is customer oriented; achieve more desirable results than other companies who do not [3]. Investigation made by [4], [5] support academic prospective of orientation of customers of a company. High level of interaction with customers, impalpable nature of services and integrated orientation of customers is anticipated to depict a vital part for the service companies economic success.

Researchers [6], [7] have surveyed the part played by operational level employees in the direction of quality service. Further, the studies conducted by [3], [8-10], have unmistakably addressed the customer orientation concept of operational level employees. As far as research in quality of service quality research is concerned, it was made known that conduct of employees undermines the discernment of the service. It was further pointed out by the researchers that the customers service quality is influenced by employee related aspects of the service assessment as in the case of [6] in whose research, three out of five service quality dimensions have direct or indirect impact on the conduct of employees (i.e., responsiveness, assurance and empathy).

Researcher [7] has recognized the comfort and personal attention provided to the employees that has required service quality components. Author [8] emphasized that the forefront employees plays an important role for business success of an organization. His research study constructs COSE which includes organizational constructs such as the organizational climate, socialization and personal construction verified as motivational effort and direction.

The author [9] have interpreted course as a tendency of the individual to encounter customer needs in an "on the job context". It covers a dimension that wishes of customers are fulfilled as be-

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lieved by employees. The second factor proposes the stretch to which employee can satisfy the interaction with customer. Researcher [3] based on the findings of [9], has adopted the meaning of customer orientation of service employees. Contradicting [9], they have argued that customer orientation works on five dimensions as "need to pamper" "need to read the customer", "need for personal relationship", "need to deliver" and "need to communicate". The ingenuity of jobs and orientation of customers abates the dissension of role and internal and external role accomplishment of employees [11].

At the end, [10] defined customer orientation of service employees as that of employees behavior in person to person interaction who have suggested three dimensional approach for Customer Orientation of service employees (COSE). During employee consumer interaction the customer needs are identified and accordingly the approach is based on the requirements of the customer needs. The COSE can thus be defined as the behavior of employees in their personal interaction with the customers to meet their needs.

On the part of skills dimensions of COSE, the authors have proposed the employees technical skills and social skills to form a separate part of dimensions of COSE. The social skills concept is focused on service employees capacity to take into consideration consumers perception throughout interaction [12-14]. Their perception visualizes factors such as visually (i.e., employees visual observance and understanding of what the consumer looks at and observes), cognitively (i.e., employee judges his understanding of how the consumer feels) [15]. So, all these facets are required to perceive the needs of customer to fulfill. Here technical skills are ranged separately from social skills to project in the research concept.

3. Objectives of The Study

1. To identify the competencies required for the employees.
2. To find the relationship between competencies and employees customer orientation.
3. To identify the association between demographic factors and their customer orientation

3.1. Research Methodology

The present research paper is an empirical one. Primary and the Secondary data have been collected for this study. The primary data were gathered through questionnaire pertaining to competencies of operational level employees towards customer orientation in Departmental stores. The secondary data was collected through books, journals, articles and internet.

Sample size and techniques: Random sampling method was used to collect the response from the three Departmental stores in Jaipur by the researcher. The sample size of the employees taken was 300 from all the three retail shops.

3.2. Analysis and Discussion

After reviewing National and International literature pertaining to the Competencies of operational level employees and their orientation towards customers the researcher intended to relate the competencies of employees and customer orientation in selected Departmental stores. The researcher revealed that there prevail a parametric association between competencies and customer orientation and demographic factors also play an important role in customer orientation. The data was analysed through SPSS software.

Table 1: Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	299	99.7
	Excluded[a]	1	0.3
	Total	300	100.0

[a]Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.968	0.968	36

Cronbach's Alpha test showed the significant value of 0.968 for all the items taken for the study as shown in the above tables. 1 and 2.

3.3. Demographic frequency distribution tables.

The first column in the table. 3 lists the variables which are assigned 1 for male and 2 for female. The frequency of each score is displayed in the frequency column. This shows that of the 300 employees 201 were men and 99 were women, which constitutes 67% of men and 33% of women.

The first column in the table. 4 lists the variables where the age of employees is less than 20 years (1), 21-30 years (2), 31-40 years (3), 41-50 years (4) and 51-60 years (5). The frequency of each score is displayed in the frequency column. The survey shows that out of the 300 employees first group includes 27 i.e. employees having less than 20 years, 204 belongs to the second group i.e., 21-30 years, 53 belong to third category i.e., 31-40 years, 14 belonged to fourth category i.e., 41-50 years and 2 belonged to the fifth category i.e., 51-60 years employees which constitutes 9%, 68%, 17.7%, 4.7% and 0.7 % of employees respectively.

Table 3: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	201	67.0	67.0	67.0
	2	99	33.0	33.0	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	27	9.0	9.0	9.0
	2	204	68.0	68.0	77.0
	3	53	17.7	17.7	94.7
	4	14	4.7	4.7	99.3
	5	2	0.7	0.7	100.0

The first column in the table. 5 lists the variables where 1 stands for matriculation, 2 stands for intermediate, 3 stands for graduation, 4 stands for post graduation ad 5 stands for others. The frequency of each score is displayed in the frequency column. This shows that of the 300 employees 42 belonged to the first category, 102 belonged to the second category, 140 belonged to the third category, 11 belonged to the fourth category and 5 belonged to the fifth category of employees which constitute 14%, 34%, 46.7%, 3.7% and 1.7% of employees respectively.

Table 5: Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	42	14.0	14.0	14.0
	2	102	34.0	34.0	48.0
	3	140	46.7	46.7	94.7
	4	11	3.7	3.7	98.3
	5	5	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

The first column lists in the table. 6 the variables where 1 stands for less than Rs. 10,000, 2 stands for Rs. 10,001-Rs. 20,000, 3 stands for Rs. 20,001-Rs. 40,000 and 4 stands for Rs.40, 001-Rs 60,000. The frequency of each score is displayed in the frequency column. This depicts that out of the 300 employees 129 belonged to the 1st category (Rs. 10,000), 115 belongs to the 2nd variable (Rs. 10,001-Rs. 20,000), 42 belonged to the 3rd category (Rs. 20,001-Rs. 40,000) , 14 belongs to the 4th variable (Rs.40, 001-Rs 60,000) of employees which constitute 43%, 38.3%, 14% and 4.7% of employees respectively.

Table 6: Monthly Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	129	43.0	43.0	43.0
	2	115	38.3	38.3	81.3
	3	42	14.0	14.0	95.3
	4	14	4.7	4.7	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

The first column lists in the table. 7 the variables where 1 stands for rural, 2 stands for semi-urban and 3 stands for urban. The frequency of each score is displayed in the frequency column. This shows out of 300 employees 64 employees reside in rural areas which constitute 21.3%, 100 employees reside in semi-urban areas which constitute 33.3% and 136 employees reside in urban areas which constitute 45.3%.

Table 7: Residence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	64	21.3	21.3	21.3
	2	100	33.3	33.3	54.7
	3	136	45.3	45.3	99.7
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	100.0

The first column lists in the table. 8 variables where 1 stands for 0-2 years of experience, 2 stands for 2.1- 4 years of experience of employees, 3 stands for 4.1-6 years of employees experience, 4 stands for 6.1-8 years of employees experience and 5 stands for above 8 years of experience. Out of 300 employees 111 employees have experience between 0-2 years which represents 37%, 70 employees have experience up to 4 years that represents 23.3%, 51 employees have experience up to 6 years of experience which represents 17%, 22 employees have experience up to 8 years of experience which represents 7.3% and finally 46 employees have a total experience of above 8 years which represents 15.3%.

Table 8: Total Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	111	37.0	37.0	37.0
	2	70	23.3	23.3	60.3
	3	51	17.0	17.0	77.3
	4	22	7.3	7.3	84.7
	5	46	15.3	15.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: Experience in Present Retail Store

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	183	61.0	61.0	61.0
	2	68	22.7	22.7	83.7
	3	12	4.0	4.0	87.7
	4	9	3.0	3.0	90.7
	5	28	9.3	9.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

The first column lists in the table. 9 variables where 1 stands for 0-2 years of experience, 2 stands for 2.1- 4 years of experience of employees, 3 stands for 4.1-6 years of employees experience, 4 stands for 6.1-8 years of employees experience and 5 stands for above 8 years of experience. Out of 300 employees 183 employees have experience between 0-2 years which represents 61%, 68 employees have experience up to 4 years that represents 22.7%, 12 employees have experience up to 6 years of experience which represents 4%, 9 employees have experience up to 8 years of experience which represents 3% and finally 28 employees have a total experience of above 8 years which represents 9.3%.

Table. 10 represent the outcomes of the descriptive statistics for mean and standard deviations of all the factors used. Most of the employees agree that they are active and good listeners as per the Mean but Standard Deviation shows that the results are a little wide spread when compared to others. Remaining Q 2, 3, 4 agree that employees are fluent in language, create friendly environment and clarifies the doubts of customers and as seen from the table standard deviation does not deflect much from mean. This survey depicts that there is relationship between employees communication skills and customer orientation.

Table 10: Mean and Standard Deviation of Communication

Dimensions	Mean	Standard deviation
Communication		
Q 1	4.05	1.02
Q2	4.25	0.84
Q3	4.01	0.87
Q4	4.00	0.80

Table. 11 represent the outcomes of the descriptive statistics for mean and standard deviation for all the factors used. Most of the employees in Q 5, 6, 7, 8 agree that they can demonstrate required skills, troubleshoots problem easily, update their technical skills and agree that training is helpful in encouraging best talent as per the mean and standard deviation shows that the results are not much deflected from mean. This shows that there is relationship between employees technical skills and customer orientation in Departmental stores.

Table 11: Mean and Standard Deviation of Technical Skills

Technical skills	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q5	4.00	0.90
Q6	4.07	0.89
Q7	4.01	0.93
Q8	4.06	0.88

Table. 12 represent the outcomes of the descriptive statistics for mean and standard deviation for all the factors used. Most of the employees agree that they are good at identifying problems in a timely manner, take steps to conflict situations, analyze the problems and make sound decisions according to mean except for Q12 and Q13. This shows that there is relationship between employees problem solving skills and customer orientation.

Table 12: Mean and Standard Deviation of Problem Solving

Problem solving	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q9	4.06	0.88
Q10	4.03	0.94
Q11	3.98	0.97
Q12	4.02	0.93

Table 13: Mean and Standard Deviation of Personality

Personality	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q13	4.14	0.87
Q14	4.06	0.82
Q15	4.11	0.87
Q16	4.07	0.95
Q17	4.06	0.92

Table. 13 represent the outcomes of the descriptive statistics for mean and standard deviation for all the factors used. Most of the employees agree that they are well organized in terms of dress code and appearance, energetic, confident and trustworthy, flexible, self developing as per the mean but standard deviation show slight deviation from mean in Q17 and Q18. This shows that there is relation between employees personality and orientation of customer.

Table. 14 represent the outcomes of the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation for all the factors used. Most of the employees agree that they inspire, motivate, are concerned about the opinion of customer and takes action without being asked as per the mean but standard deviation is much deflected when compared to others. This shows that there is less employees commitment towards customer orientation.

Table 14: Mean and Standard Deviation of Commitment

Commitment	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q18	4.07	0.95
Q19	3.98	0.92
Q20	3.91	1.11
Q21	3.89	1.04

3.4. T-Test for Gender

The results of T test shown in table 15, that the difference of means with their respective standard deviations for male and female on orientation of customers are significant. It shows that there are difference of opinions between male and female found in the following statements. The p value is less than 0.005 for question numbers Q4, Q14, Q19, Q20 and Q22. That is the means are significantly different. For the remaining questions the p value is more than 0.05 which is, the means are not significantly different.

3.5. ANOVA test for experience of employees

The table 16 shown below is the test result of ANOVA. The test results shows that there are differences in the perception of employees at different level of experiences in the process orientation of customers. The employees of fourth category i.e., 6.1 to 8 years' experience are showing more commitment to customers when compared to other categories. Therefore the degree of orientation as seen from the table is on high side. The mean values indicate that employees strongly agree that communication, technical, problem solving, personality and commitment plays and important role in satisfying the customers. Significance value is showing differences in Q2, Q3, Q4, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q12, Q14, Q17, Q18, Q20 and Q21. The more experience gained by employees the more would be orientation towards customers.

4. Conclusion

Customer orientation is an essential requirement for every organization to adopt for well-being of an organization and to meet the demands of customers by providing proper interaction with dedicated service employees. It is also defined as knowledge management. The service employees are bestowed with personal skills and technical skills which will help them to interact with customers that might ultimately leads to customer satisfaction [16-18]. Performance of small organizations is influenced by orientation of customers with an increase in creativity, chance taking and right set of circumstances [19].The organizations and firms would flourish well by implementing customer orientation devices in the business to catch the mights of customers, who often wants that their requirements are met with positive behavioral attitude of service employees. The output of encouraging efforts through incentives and job assessment is pivotal for employees orientation of customers [20].

Customer oriented organization keep the customer satisfaction on top priority to sustain in the present day competitive market. The latest up gradation of technology combined with delivery of quality products to the customers and well-mannered behavior of service employees can take the organization to the high level of economic success. The development of enterprise is related to innovative product only with the compatibility of orientation of customers which in return has a direct influence on company's achievement and new product [21].

The findings of this paper states that out of 300 respondents, operational level employees with regard to orientation of customers is an important driver for satisfaction of customers within the Departmental stores. Factors of employees orientation towards customer namely communication, technical skills, problem solving, personality and commitment, illustrate that especially the employees communication, technical, problem solving, personality develop a stable relationship with customers as it exhibits a strong impact on satisfaction and commitment[16], [19]. It was found that commitment of employees service is less when compared to other dimensions. Demographic factors such as age, gender, education, experience play an important role in customer satisfaction. Basis of corporate competence development is integrated customer-orientation where management of core competencies and development of competencies becomes essential for both internal and external business processes. The findings suggest that the level of commitment can be increased by a change in the policies, compensation and working conditions by the management.

5. Scope for future research

The study covers only departmental stores of Jaipur city and analysis was limited to T-test and ANOVA. It is recommended that broad study can be conducted in entire Rajasthan State with more tests like correlation and regression.

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Table 15: T-TEST: Group Statistics

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Active and good listener	Male	200	4.07	1.003	0.071	0.122	298	0.903
	Female	100	4.05	1.009	0.101	0.122	197.078	0.903
Fluency in language to communicate with customers	Male	200	4.29	0.804	0.057	0.749	298	0.455
	Female	100	4.21	0.844	0.084	0.737	189.778	0.462
Create friendly environment with customers	Male	199	4.00	0.865	0.061	-0.471	297	0.638
	Female	100	4.05	0.869	0.087	-0.470	197.554	0.639
Clarifies the doubts of customers	Male	200	3.97	0.850	0.060	-1.022	298	0.308
	Female	100	4.07	0.685	0.069	-1.097	239.404	0.274
Demonstrates the required skills	Male	200	3.97	0.937	0.066	-1.140	298	0.255
	Female	100	4.09	0.805	0.081	-1.199	226.753	0.232
Trouble shoots the problems easily	Male	200	4.03	0.921	0.065	-1.333	298	0.183
	Female	100	4.17	0.817	0.082	-1.388	220.493	0.167
Update technical skills	Male	200	4.01	0.943	0.067	-0.400	298	0.690
	Female	100	4.05	0.869	0.087	-0.411	213.173	0.682
Determining the training need helps in encouraging	Male	200	4.06	0.903	0.064	-0.326	298	0.744
	Female	100	4.09	0.818	0.082	-0.337	216.579	0.736
Well organized	Male	200	4.13	0.847	0.060	-0.472	298	0.638
	Female	100	4.18	0.903	0.090	-0.461	187.117	0.645
Energetic and always presentable	Male	200	4.05	0.873	0.062	-2.208	298	0.028
	Female	100	4.27	0.679	0.068	-2.397	246.258	0.017
Confident and trustworthy	Male	200	4.12	0.858	0.061	-0.335	298	0.738
	Female	100	4.15	0.845	0.085	-0.336	200.663	0.737
Flexibility to adjust as over the needs of client	Male	200	4.01	0.982	0.069	-1.648	298	0.100
	Female	100	4.20	0.853	0.085	-1.728	224.699	0.085
Invest time and energy	Male	200	3.99	0.899	0.064	-2.277	298	0.024
	Female	100	4.24	0.944	0.094	-2.240	189.781	0.026
Good at identifying problems in a timely manner	Male	200	4.00	0.862	0.061	-1.966	298	0.050
	Female	100	4.21	0.891	0.089	-1.945	192.463	0.053
Takes steps to resolve conflict situations	Male	200	4.00	0.943	0.067	-1.000	298	0.318
	Female	100	4.11	0.931	0.093	-1.004	200.425	0.316
Assure for quantity and availability	Male	200	3.99	0.938	0.066	-2.032	298	0.043
	Female	100	4.21	0.832	0.083	-2.114	220.351	0.036
Keep organizational goals and benefits in mind while selling	Male	200	3.97	0.979	0.069	-1.527	298	0.128

	Female	100	4.14	0.841	0.084	-1.606	226.791	0.110
Make sound, well informed decisions	Male	200	3.90	0.989	0.070	-2.539	298	0.012
	Female	100	4.19	0.861	0.086	-2.659	224.249	0.008
Analyze and describe a problem	Male	200	4.00	0.975	0.069	-0.748	298	0.455
	Female	100	4.08	0.825	0.082	-0.791	229.738	0.430
Take action without being asked	Male	200	3.88	1.147	0.081	-0.626	298	0.531
	Female	100	3.96	1.024	0.102	-0.651	219.244	0.516
Is proactive	Male	200	4.05	0.953	0.067	-1.342	298	0.181
	Female	100	4.19	0.720	0.072	-1.470	251.951	0.143
Achieves goals beyond job requirements	Male	200	3.84	1.072	0.076	-1.175	298	0.241
	Female	100	3.99	0.980	0.098	-1.211	214.841	0.227

Table 16: ANOVA-TEST: Group Statistics

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Active and good listener	Between Groups	18.001	4	4.5	4.692	0.001
	Within Groups	282.919	295	0.959		
	Total	300.92	299			
Fluency in language to communicate with customers	Between Groups	1.72	4	0.43	0.641	0.634
	Within Groups	198	295	0.671		
	Total	199.72	299			
Create friendly environment with customers	Between Groups	3.03	4	0.757	1.013	0.401
	Within Groups	219.886	294	0.748		
	Total	222.916	298			
Clarifies the doubts of customers	Between Groups	2.477	4	0.619	0.969	0.425
	Within Groups	188.519	295	0.639		
	Total	190.997	299			
Demonstrates the required skills	Between Groups	8.203	4	2.051	2.61	0.036
	Within Groups	231.784	295	0.786		
	Total	239.987	299			
Trouble shoots the problems easily	Between Groups	3.235	4	0.809	1.023	0.395
	Within Groups	233.151	295	0.79		
	Total	236.387	299			
Update technical skills	Between Groups	6.886	4	1.722	2.073	0.084
	Within Groups	244.994	295	0.83		
	Total	251.88	299			
Determining the training need helps in encouraging	Between Groups	6.353	4	1.588	2.108	0.08
	Within Groups	222.314	295	0.754		
	Total	228.667	299			
Well organized	Between Groups	6.163	4	1.541	2.091	0.082
	Within Groups	217.384	295	0.737		
	Total	223.547	299			
Energetic and always presentable	Between Groups	2.68	4	0.67	0.999	0.408
	Within Groups	197.757	295	0.67		
	Total	200.437	299			
Confident and trustworthy	Between Groups	9.865	4	2.466	3.509	0.008
	Within Groups	207.321	295	0.703		
	Total	217.187	299			
Flexibility to adjust as over the needs of client	Between Groups	3.873	4	0.968	1.088	0.363
	Within Groups	262.513	295	0.89		
	Total	266.387	299			
Invest time and energy	Between Groups	14.19	4	3.548	4.373	0.002
	Within Groups	239.34	295	0.811		
	Total	253.53	299			
Good at identifying problems in a timely manner	Between Groups	1.772	4	0.443	0.574	0.682
	Within Groups	227.758	295	0.772		
	Total	229.53	299			
Takes steps to resolve conflict situations	Between Groups	10.399	4	2.6	3.028	0.018
	Within Groups	253.268	295	0.859		
	Total	263.667	299			
Assure for quantity and availability	Between Groups	7.676	4	1.919	2.366	0.053
	Within Groups	239.244	295	0.811		
	Total	246.92	299			
Keep organizational goals and benefits in mind while selling	Between Groups	4.473	4	1.118	1.277	0.279
	Within Groups	258.363	295	0.876		

	Total	262.837	299			
Make sound, well informed decisions	Between Groups	4.856	4	1.214	1.331	0.259
	Within Groups	269.131	295	0.912		
	Total	273.987	299			
Analyze and describe a problem	Between Groups	7.951	4	1.988	2.356	0.054
	Within Groups	248.885	295	0.844		
	Total	256.837	299			
Take action without being asked	Between Groups	5.788	4	1.447	1.184	0.318
	Within Groups	360.408	295	1.222		
	Total	366.197	299			
Is proactive	Between Groups	1.887	4	0.472	0.601	0.662
	Within Groups	231.499	295	0.785		
	Total	233.387	299			
Achieves goals beyond job requirements	Between Groups	3.083	4	0.771	0.705	0.589
	Within Groups	322.287	295	1.092		
	Total	325.37	299			