

The importance of customer contact

The American computer manufacturer Hewlett-Packard ran a very successful customer visit programme. The idea of the visits to HP customers was not to sell the company's products, but simply to listen and learn.

The visits were conducted by mixed teams who visited between ten and forty customers. These teams included a project engineer from the Research and Development Department, and a person from Marketing who played a part in putting the product on the market. In most cases, a sales rep who was responsible for each customer was also present.

In a questionnaire, 88% of staff involved in the programme said that customer satisfaction was better as a result of the visits. About 90% indicated that the visits gave them ideas for changing the products or services offered to customers.

This programme showed the value of customer contact for all employees in an organization. In so many companies, it is only those who work in Sales, Marketing, Customer Service, or Technical Support who have direct contact with customers.



Working with words | Company structure

1 Read the text and answer the questions.

- 1 What was the aim of the customer visit programme?
- 2 How was it different from other programmes?
- 3 Which departments participated in the visits?
- 4 Was the programme a success? How?

2 Which department in the text in **1** usually

- 1 sells the products? _____
- 2 looks for new markets for new or existing products? _____
- 3 creates new products? _____
- 4 answers technical questions from customers? _____
- 5 answers all other questions from customers? _____

3 Complete the sentences about other departments with words from the list.

finds buys checks ~~arranges~~ maintains deals organizes

- 1 The Logistics Department arranges the transport of products.
- 2 The Training Department _____ courses.
- 3 The Purchasing Department _____ from suppliers.
- 4 The Human Resources Department _____ new staff.
- 5 The IT Department _____ the computer system.
- 6 The Finance Department _____ with all the money.
- 7 The Quality Control Department _____ that the products have no defects.