



UNDER STRICT EMBARGO

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British Stiff Upper Lip Hinders Good Service

London, 24 November 2006 – British reserve is preventing UK businesses from receiving the customer service they expect and deserve. A YouGov survey conducted for Easynet, the international managed network and hosting company, has found one in three British businesses (29%) do not speak up even when strongly dissatisfied, while almost one third said they would be frustrated but not necessarily act on bad service.

The study of over 1,666 large enterprise managers across seven European countries¹ reveals the British are the most reluctant in Europe to communicate their dissatisfaction directly. This stifles a valuable source of feedback for the supplying companies. Of those surveyed, the British were the least likely to deal with suppliers face to face at only 1% but most likely to tell colleagues about any poor customer service experiences, at 67 percent.

In contrast, across the rest of Europe the Germans are the best at addressing their customer service concerns directly. Over a third (43%) of them will speak their mind to their suppliers and ultimately switch to a new company if the problem isn't dealt with (37%).

A new guide to customer service – A Guide to Getting Good Service, available at www.easynet.com/thecustomerexperience – aims to encourage 'speaking up', giving businesses advice about how to get the most from their suppliers.

Martin Molloy, European customer service management director, Easynet, said: "British reserve can get in the way of good customer service. Unless a company creates an environment that encourages feedback, people are unlikely to raise issues. The British have high expectations, yet we are the least likely in Europe to complain, which helps no-one! So hearing nothing from your customers doesn't mean you're providing a great service. Providing an open forum and encouraging customer feedback not only sorts out problems more quickly, it helps companies improve their services."

The customer service gap across Europe

Bad customer service isn't just a British problem. The message from businesses across Europe is that there is a gap between what customers expect, and what they receive. A significant proportion said being dealt with quickly is their most valued aspect of excellent customer service, but they are as likely to receive bad service as good.

Only 38% of companies reported that they always found it easy to contact suppliers. All countries found being caught in an automated telephone system far more annoying than being overcharged.

When it came to higher levels of customer service the picture was even more damning. Only 35% said they were always treated with respect, only a quarter (25%) said their suppliers understood their market and a mere 24% of suppliers always took the time to build a good relationship.

Lynda King Taylor², director, The Performance Trust commented, "There are clear consistencies across Europe that point to service gaps between what customers say they want, and what they get. This could either be a difference in perception on the part of the customers, or a real difference between what they want and what they receive. In reality this distinction doesn't matter, because it's up to service suppliers to ensure customers get good service and know they get it."

She continued, "A reputation for customer service – good or bad - can materially affect business. Perhaps in the light of these results, companies must consider whether they're really addressing their customers' needs. Failure to do this could at best lessen goodwill towards the supplier, and at worst damage the balance sheet if customers take their custom elsewhere or tell people to do likewise. But a well-matched experience, taking into account customers' concerns and acting on them, could have an equally powerful positive effect."

What do we want?

Across Europe, there was a strong preference for personal customer service, with almost two thirds (62%) of respondents most annoyed by being caught in an automated telephone system. Four countries stated that being kept on hold was the most annoying factor that contributed to bad customer service – as shown below:

Country	%
UK	75
Germany	73
Netherlands	69
Italy	63

47% of respondents rated being kept on hold as a major annoyance. This figure varied per country, with Germany being most annoyed by being put on hold at 73% whereas France were least annoyed by having to wait to speak to a customer service representative .

And what happens if we don't get it....

According to the research, when asked how they react to bad service:

- the Italians and Spanish are most likely to complain to the supplier straight away (51 percent)
- the Dutch are the least likely to complain straight away (22 percent vs. the average of 41%)
- the British are the most likely to feel frustrated but not do anything about it (29 percent vs. 14% average), and the most likely to not pursue compensation (96 percent vs. 84% average).
- Germans are most likely to switch suppliers (37 percent vs. 25% average).
- The French and Spanish are the most likely to stay loyal to suppliers (95 percent).

When asked who they would generally tell about bad service:

- The British are most likely to tell colleagues (67 percent). All other countries would tell the supplier of bad service, rather than colleagues.
- Germans are most likely to tell friends and relatives (27 percent), and to let other customers of the supplier know about their poor experiences (29 percent)
- Belgians are the most likely to say they receive good customer service (71 percent)
- Belgians are also the most likely to say they are satisfied with their service (73% percent)

- Ends -

¹ All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1,666 adults across Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. Fieldwork was undertaken between 4th - 10th October 2006. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been obtained from responses from a sample of business professionals, managers and directors (below Board level).

Notes to Editors

About Easynet

Easynet is an international managed networking and hosting company, delivering superbly managed solutions for businesses and enterprises. Owning extensive national and international network and hosting infrastructure, Easynet sets itself apart through customer service excellence. Easynet's approach is underpinned by professional excellence in understanding, designing, delivering, and management of customer solutions, our ability to work successfully with partners, and our attention to quality. Easynet has operations across Europe.

Easynet works hard to ensure its customers are its best advocates, and include the Ford Motor Company, Kia Motors, Calor, Tchibo and Kellogg's Italia.

Easynet is part of the British Sky Broadcasting group, with a total market capitalisation in excess of £9bn.

For more information visit www.easynet.com

About Lynda King Taylor

Lynda King Taylor is an experienced customer service and brand reputation advisor working with global corporates at board level, including IBM, Hilton Hotels, BT, AT&T, Ford and T-mobile. Scots born Lynda has written a number of influential textbooks and was selected to write two comprehensive books in the Sunday Times Business Skills series on customer service.

Furthermore, Scots born Lynda studied behavioural science and psychology at University and has been a keynote speaker at various high level European conferences including the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals (SOCAP) conference in October 2006

For more information visit www.lyndakingtaylor.com

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