



Suzuki Motor Co.

Suzuki motor corporation is a Japanese multinational which in 2014, was ranked as the ninth biggest automaker by production¹. The global company has over 45,000 employees worldwide and about 133 distributors in 192 countries.

Summary

Change in customer perception of Suzuki as a brand and increase in employees' performance with the help of a standardized and effective brand communication.

Overview

Starting in 2013, Suzuki and Torque Corp worked in close partnership to chalk out a detailed program with the aim of:

- I. enhancing brand's image in the mind of the customers and
- II. training the salesforce to be more in sync with the top management as they are the first contact point for customers. It was imperative that everyone involved gave a unified message to the customers

The success criterion was set to be the change in the overall customer service experience.

Torque Corp's and Suzuki's teams worked in close collaboration to devise a plan to first figure out the gap that lied between the top management and the sales teams. For this purpose, meetings were conducted with the owners to get a clear understanding of their viewpoint, expectations and challenges. Then to determine the underlying discrepancies and the root cause of the situation, our team visited every single dealership across the country to record their perspectives and anticipations.

Once a comprehensive understanding was developed, team Torque worked on formulating a harmonized solution that leveraged the best tools for human development. The program had to be applicable, relevant and scalable for nation-wide delivery.

¹ "World motor vehicle production OICA correspondents survey without double counts world ranking of manufacturers year 2011"



Objectives

The objectives identified by team Torque and Suzuki after a thorough consultation by Torque's trainers were:

- Changing the perception of Suzuki as a brand in the mind of the customers
- Standardizing brand communication across all dealerships
- Increasing the level of service provided at dealerships
- Introducing a standard retail model across dealerships

Solutions

This program was conducted through three phases over a period of three years.

Phase 1

Firstly, team Torque figured out the communication dissimilarities which existed between Suzuki's upper management and dealership salesforce. For this purpose, we consulted with the top management about what outcomes they wanted to achieve once the training was rolled out.

Once we had the upper tier's perspective, we had thorough discussions with the dealership owners to figure out their view point and determine the gap which was to be filled.

Meanwhile, to get the customers' perception, Suzuki got mystery shopping done through one of the country's top research companies. Their findings determined the outcomes of existing policies and rewards for the sales force at dealerships.

With a clear understanding of the expectations and challenges of both sides, our master trainers developed a customized program which could be replicated across the country.

Torque's in-depth analysis and thorough evaluation unearthed the core issues which consisted of:

- Sale force's salary increment (which was the key motivational factor) depended solely on the numbers of cars sold. This led to unhappy and unsatisfied employees. To overcome this issue, we developed KPIs to go along with the volume of cars. These included:
 - Number of vehicles sold
 - Number of accessories sold



- FFI (First Free Inspection)² & SFI (Second Free Inspection)³
- Extended Warranty
- Old vehicles exchanged for new ones

- A lot of inconsistencies were identified in the dealership owners' communication. They did not have a unified communication strategy which led to confusion amongst the customers and distorted the brand's perception. Due to lower motivation, salespersons sometimes devalued the brand.

To resolve this, we first categorized Suzuki's vehicles into Classic & Contemporary products with different target markets for both. Distinctive communication plans were drawn for both categories and were incorporated in the training program. This led to a homogenous brand communication across all dealerships.

Our tripartite approach included these models:

- Brand and You
 - Aligning Suzuki's vision and mission with the aspirations of the team
- Customer and You
 - Enhancing customers' overall experience through effective communication and enhanced service
- Dealership and You
 - Developing marketing material for dealerships, standardizing procedures, maintaining quality controls as these are the first customer interaction points

During the first year, the training spanned over 6 weeks with regular intervals during which participants were given workbooks to implement what they had learned and they were quizzed on the same as the sessions resumed.

Phase 2

Next year, Torque ran a refresher program for 2 days with the same content but with a slight change in methodology which included more assignments and quizzes with real-time scoring by their District Managers.

After the successful roll out of phase one, in order to reiterate the learnings and to increase the range & impact, Suzuki engaged Torque to make video tutorials based on the same

² First Free Inspection: How many customers came back to the dealership to get their cars inspected. It showed the kind of relationship built with the customers.

³ Second Free Inspection: How many customers were satisfied with the FFI and decided to return to the dealership



program. These videos were also used by Suzuki on a regular basis to train the new salesforce.

Additionally, by then Suzuki's internal trainers were so well-equipped that they replicated the same model with their teams. Hence, the impact was manifold.

Phase 3

In the third year, to further cement the learnings, Torque conducted a rigorous one-day session which was an amalgamation of role-plays, real-life situations and quizzes.

Methodology

- Group discussions
- Role-plays
- Simulations
- Workbooks
- Post-training assessments

Results

At the end of each phase, all participants were scored on their participation, quizzes and assignments and had a score in their hands of how they performed; it helped them and their managers in identifying areas where they had excelled and where they needed to work more.

Torque also conducted mystery shopping across all dealerships to ensure that Suzuki's policies were being followed without any discrepancies in the expectations of the upper management and dealership owners.

To gauge the results, Suzuki again engaged the same entity to carry out an independent survey along with a mystery shopping exercise which showed an overall **increase of 36% in the customer service experience.**