

Name and Surname _____

30 minutes

Task 1. Reading Comprehension (5 points)

Read the following article and mark the statements as *True* or *False*

I can not be the only person to have noticed that customer satisfaction surveys have become a modern-day plague. Market researchers phone us, write to us, e-mail us or stop us in the street to ask us about products or services we have used. When we are online, questionnaires pop up asking us about the usefulness and effectiveness of websites we are visiting. There is no escape even within the workplace where we are quizzed about our satisfaction with the staff canteen, the IT department help desk and our working conditions generally.

One good thing about customer satisfaction surveys is that they make us feel important, giving us the opportunity not just to hand out plaudits or brickbats but, seemingly, to have them brought to the attention of the right people. This is a refreshing change from the experience with which most of us are familiar.

But why are most companies hopeless at providing good customer service? Patrick Barwise of London Business School says one reason is that it goes against human nature. Placing someone else's needs above your own just does not make sense unless it helps perpetuate your genes. From this, we may deduce that employees are rarely predisposed to give any customers good service unless they fancy them. Another big reason, says Prof Barwise, is that everyone lies to their boss (at least a bit, even in good companies), but bosses always underestimate the extent of the deceit; so when problems emerge, they tend to be hidden instead of being reported and solved. Look at it this way: if you are responsible for dealing with customers every day, and your customers are intensely dissatisfied, are you going to risk getting the blame by telling the management?

This, I surmise, explains the mania for customer satisfaction surveys; instead of asking your employees to report customer dissatisfaction, you ask the customers themselves. But identifying problems is not the same as solving them. And I am not sure that customer surveys are even very good at identification.

Above all, though, my criticism of these surveys is that they are a sign of failure. Good companies with good products or services do not need to pester people with questionnaires; their measure of customer satisfaction is rapidly rising revenues and profits. Do Amazon or Starbucks assail their customers with questionnaires? I doubt it. Interestingly, they do not advertise much, either. So many companies spend colossal sums on advertising and branding, yet destroy the value potentially created by delivering poor quality products or services. The intelligent response, perhaps, would be to demote the marketing director and create a customer satisfaction director instead.

1. One reason why most companies are hopeless at providing good customer service is that most human beings place the needs of other people above their own T F
2. Prof Barwise believes that people never tell their bosses the truth. T F
3. Employees prefer to hide problems rather than telling their bosses about them. T F
4. Hidden problems do not get solved. T F
5. People who deal with customers every day always tell the management if their customers are angry with them T F

Task 2 . Fill the gaps in the following text with only *one* word in each space (15 points)

What is This Thing Called Love?

If you put a group of people who don't know (0) *each* other in a room together and ask them to pair up, they (1)_____ naturally gravitate towards others of similar family background, social class and upbringing. We are all looking for something familiar, (2)_____ we may not be aware of exactly (3)_____ it is. Facial attractiveness is a big influence (4)_____ our choice of partners, too. People tend to seek out and (5)_____ long-lasting relationships with others of a similar level of attractiveness. Several studies have confirmed (6)_____. Researchers took a selection of wedding photos and cut them (7)_____ to separate the bride and groom. They then asked people to rate how attractive each person's face was. When the researchers put the photos back into their original pairs, they found that most of the couple had (8)_____ rated at similar levels. Not only (9)_____ we rate others, but each of us carries a rough estimate in our heads of how facially attractive we (10)_____ be. We realise subconsciously that if we approach someone who is significantly higher up the scale (11)_____ we are, we run the risk of (12)_____ rejected. But (13)_____ the explanation for how and why we fall in love, one thing is clear. Nature has made the whole process (14)_____ blissful and addictive as possible (15)_____ the purpose of bringing and keeping couples together.