



HR, Who's Your Customer?

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Over the last 30 years I have worked for many organizations in HR positions with increasing responsibility. Regardless, I had discussions within each of those organizations about the concept of customer satisfaction. In my view, the only customer is those whom we sell our products or services to! They are the same who pay our salaries.



HR staff, were routinely told, that they should view and interact with line managers as HR's customers. In one organization, that I used to work for, the overall performance of the HR group was even scored by line managers. Most of them did not score the performance as "company owners." Rather, they had their HR customer hat on and basically scored our performance on how well we did delivering our services under the presumption, *"I'm the customer and therefore you must do what I want."* Needless to say, the ratings were not always good!

Needless to say, line managers are not the customers of the HR department. After all, what do you think the *"HR rating"* would be, if it were deemed to be best for the company to reduce the number of management layers and line managers were being eliminated?

Our customer is the stockholders (i.e., owners) of the firm.

The HR group is there to provide excellent advice and support that is aligned with the vision – and to craft and oversee HR policies that contribute to the achievement of both the short and longer-term goals of the company as a whole.



So, if you are an HR professional working for an organization and being told that line managers are your customer, sit down with your boss over a coffee and ask them: *"Is this really the best way for us to think about it?"*