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## Customer engagement in the supply chain drives ongoing improvement

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Customer engagement is an under-valued tool in the supply chain which if carried out consistently and systematically can help drive a process of continuing improvement, according to water and wastewater treatment specialists HUBER Technology UK.

Customer engagement in the water sector is frequently talked about in the context of the relationship water companies have with consumers.

However, companies in the water sector's supply chain that regularly contact their customers, irrespective of the size of purchase, can make a significant contribution to operational performance and in the process give themselves a significant competitive advantage.

Steve Morris, Managing Director at HUBER is in no doubt of the benefits derived from the process - he explained:

*"At HUBER Technology we invest considerable time and effort in Customer Satisfaction Surveys because we can see real value in them. They give us really important information about whether or not our customers are happy or satisfied with our products and services. We welcome positive and negative feedback and if there are any outstanding issues that have not been resolved, we move swiftly to sort them out."*

The results of the surveys are always seen by Steve Morris and HUBER's Operations Director Dave Thompson and discussed in regular team projects meetings.

Dave Thompson commented:

*"Good feedback is great and demonstrates to us that we are running these projects well, and to a good standard."*

*"Good positive feedback is also great for the projects team, boosts staff morale and shows that all the departments are working well together."*

However, Steve Morris also flagged up the corresponding importance of listening to negative feedback and taking a proactive approach to deal with potential problems.

Negative or poor feedback is raised immediately and gives the HUBER projects teams a chance to react and sort out the outstanding issues, discuss why there were issues and how they can be prevented on future projects.

Rachael Harvey, Marketing coordinator has been carrying out the surveys as part of her role for the last 5 years. During that time she has noticed that people definitely have less time on their hands to complete them, making it a real challenge to engage them quickly so that they complete them.

*"I now just try to emphasise how important they are to us and a good check for us that there are no outstanding issues on that project."*

And HUBER works hard at the process - during the last couple of weeks alone the firm has carried out 24 surveys.

Rachel Harvey said that results had steadily improved over the period with a year on year improvement. The latest surveys have delivered the best-ever results, including:

- Did the equipment supplied meet your requirements?  
87.5% excellent
- Were you kept adequately informed of progress?  
25% Good, 75% Excellent
- Was technical information and documentation provided in a timely manner?  
45% Good 45% Excellent
- Were HUBER staff professional and courteous throughout the project  
100% Yes
- Was the project carried out in an acceptable timescale  
41% Good, 54% excellent
- Has your equipment been satisfactorily commissioned?



100% Yes

- Would you be happy to use or recommend HUBER equipment on another project

100% Yes

Steve Morris believes that the results speak for themselves, demonstrating that they both flagged up awareness amongst the workforce that the company was objectively benchmarking its performance and ensuring that staff were highly motivated to raise their game. Customers likewise were aware how the supplier worked on an ongoing basis to ensure that problems and issues were quickly resolved and dealt with.

Steve Morris commented:

*"It's all about communication and taking a proactive approach. We don't want to wait for customers to come to us we want them to know that we're focussed on doing our very best to deliver. We recognise that although the latest results are encouraging, there is always room for improvement and we can never afford to be complacent", "The day your customers stop talking to you because they don't feel their concerns are being taken seriously is the day they start thinking about voting with their feet."*

*"It's not rocket science. Ultimately, it's all about doing the best we possibly can in order to help them to do the best they can in their own organisation".*

**One recent customer, Iain Graham, Engineering Project Manager for Baxters Food Group gave very positive feedback** *"We are very pleased with the equipment's quality and efficiency and also the expertise and helpfulness of your commissioning engineers. Once we get the final few issues resolved and receive the maintenance manual we will be in a position to order spares from your recommended list. Thank you again, it's refreshing to buy quality and have excellent service – a rarity these days!"*



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