



The Furnishing Service Company Customer Survey 2004

Introduction

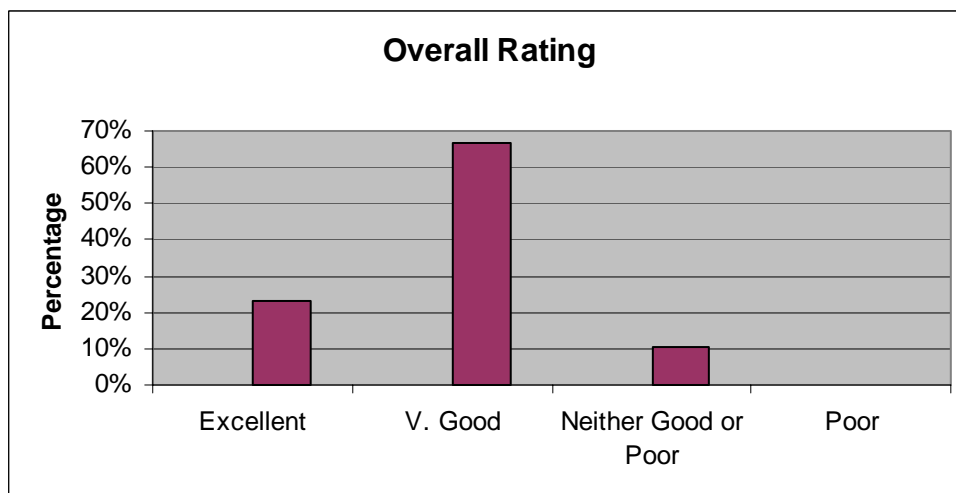
The initial comment to make is 'thank you'. The amazing response to the survey indicates a level of support and interest that we can only be proud of. More importantly, for the first time ever it provides a clear, comprehensive position statement upon which we can build and develop a service that **you** want.

This survey will be an integral part of the service and held on an annual basis to ensure the company continues to progress.

General Performance

As a general indicator customers were asked their overall opinion of the service provided. Figure 1 below indicates almost 90% considered the service to be either very good or excellent. This is extremely encouraging, and it is pleasing to note that no customers consider the service to be poor. An early target is to ensure that those considering the service 'excellent' are increased dramatically from 25%.

Figure 1



This view is endorsed by many respondents who provided quotes such as:

"The service is efficient with excellent ordering/delivery timescales"

and..

"In all the years we have dealt with The Furnishing Service they have always dealt with us in a professional, courteous and very well organised manner. They are a very well run and professional company. Nothing is a problem to them and they are always there to help"

Delivery targets

The survey probed perceptions on how confident customers are regarding agreed delivery targets and whether we actually meet these perceptions.

Figure 2 below confirms most customers (92%) are confident we will meet the agreed delivery targets. This displays a tremendous faith in our service which we must continue to repay.

Figure 2



Figure 3 below backs up this confidence in the service as 95% of respondents confirmed we meet our delivery targets either 'always' (28%) or 'most of the time' (67%). Again, we shall be working hard to exchange these two figures so that 'always' is significantly higher.

Figure 3

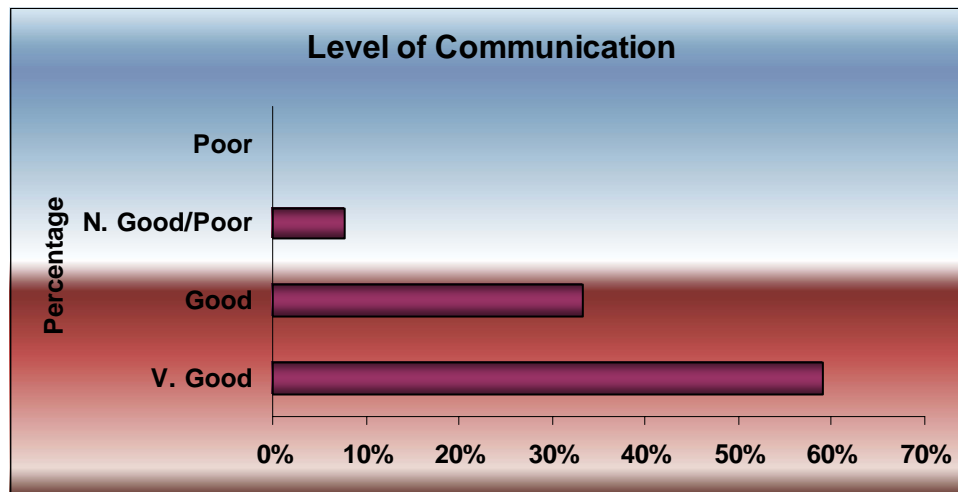


Communication

There is a total commitment to ensure delivery targets are met. If a delivery target is not met there is usually a good reason why. This is where communication and customer relations are pivotal. A missed delivery is taken personally by our team and is seen as 'failure'. We will always inform the customer in advance of the reason why a delivery cannot be made or if problems are experienced on site. Our personal experience of providing a furnishing service in the social housing sector gives us a unique understanding of the importance of communication.

Customers were asked how they rate the level of communication in order to test this priority. No customer thought communication to be poor and the majority (92%) stated it is either good or very good (Figure 4 below). This is welcome confirmation of our commitment to keep in touch at all times.

Figure 4



One customer enthused:

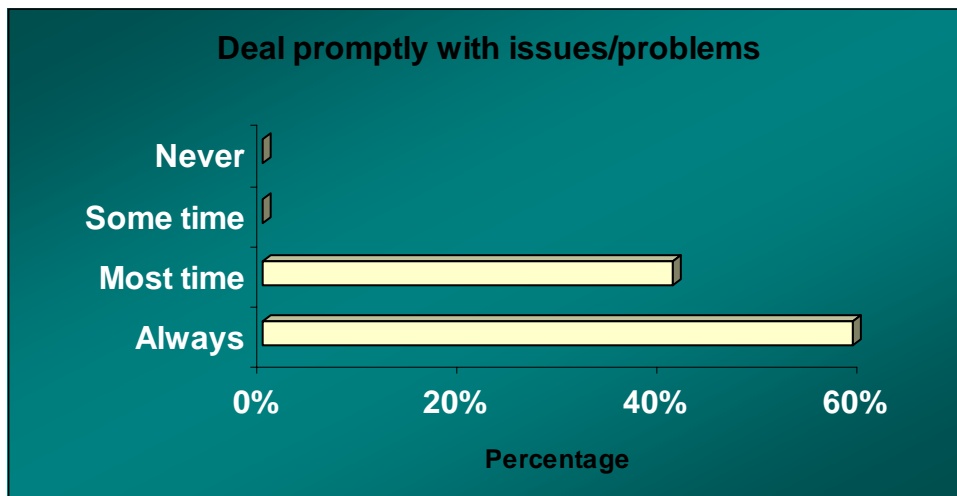
"Calls are always returned promptly. The staff we liaise with in the Glasgow office are always polite, appropriate and very helpful."

another states:

"It is always a pleasure to deal with The Furnishing Service. The level of service and communication we receive is excellent"

If an issue does arise the real test of the service is how we respond. We always aim to deal with difficulties effectively and efficiently and provide a satisfactory solution.

Figure 5

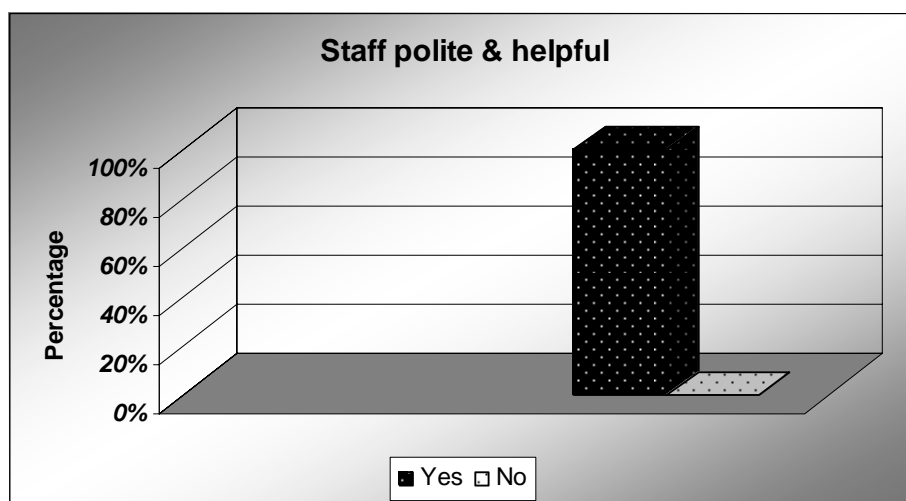


It is satisfying to report in Figure 5 above this service ethic translates into practice, as all of our customers state we deal with problems/issues promptly either always (59%) or most of the time (41%). Customers back this up with comments such as:

“We have found your customer service very helpful and polite. Any problems we have encountered you have dealt with swiftly and professionally”

We pride our service on being friendly as well as efficient. We want you to enjoy working with our staff and realise it is imperative that a rapport exists between staff and customers. This applies to those working in the office and those doing deliveries. Rudeness and poor manners are inexcusable and will (and have) been dealt with immediately. It is therefore very pleasing to see (Figure 6 below) almost 100% of those surveyed believe staff to be polite and helpful.

Figure 6





One customer went as far as to comment:

“In all the years we have worked with The Furnishing Service in East Kilbride they have always dealt with us in a professional, courteous and very well organised manner. Nothing is a problem to them and they are always there to help.”

another says..

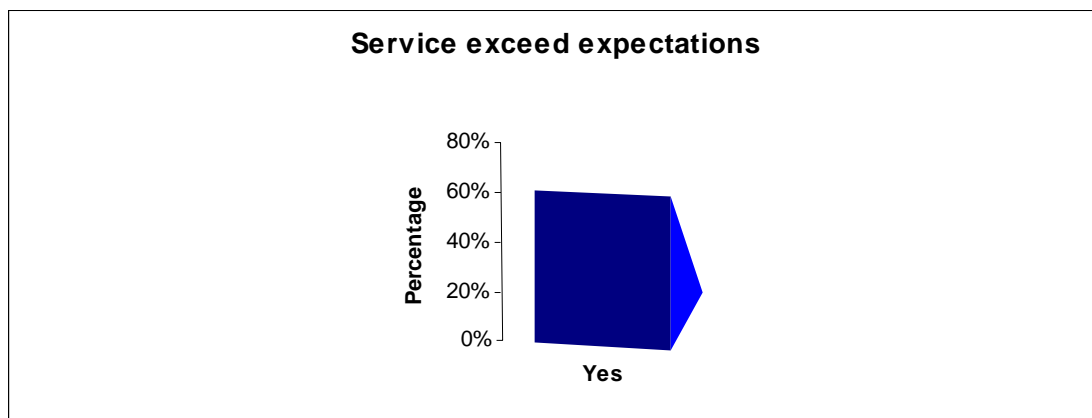
“They always do their utmost to help me and I have never been let down by them. I must also mention the delivery staff who are also very professional”

Exceeding Expectations

There ability to ‘go the extra mile’ or exceed the expectations of customers is the aspect of service delivery that will make us stand out. Customers will not only remember us for going beyond what they expect but also come back time and time again. The highest recommendation we can receive is a customer informing a potential customer that we have a ‘can do’ attitude and we are prepared to do everything and more to get the job done.

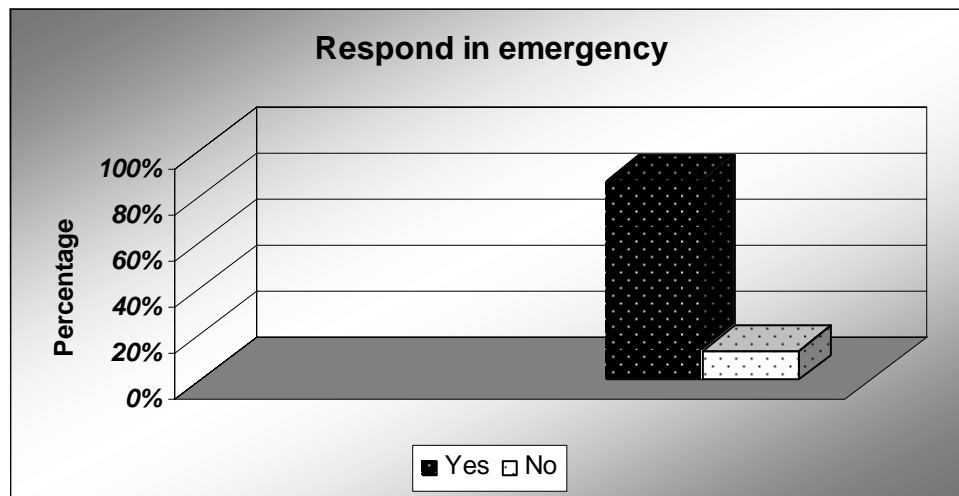
Asking if we exceed expectations is a difficult question to answer because it is very subjective and the expectations of each customer will differ. It is great to report that almost two thirds of respondents felt we exceeded their expectations.

Figure 7



One particular aspect of the service where we try to exceed expectations and provide ‘peace of mind’ is in relation to stockholding. Both divisions have a minimum stock level of core items e.g. beds, settees, white goods, bedroom cabinet etc. (which customers are free inspect at any time). This leaves customers safe in the knowledge that we can respond to an emergency either the same day or within 24 hours.

Figure 8



Our 'can do' attitude (e.g. working late, weekends, bank holidays etc.) and a reliable network of local suppliers with the same service ethic ensure we can guarantee emergency response if required.

Our confidence is mirrored by respondents as 87% believe we can (and have) respond immediately in an emergency situation.

One customer states:

"Excellent service. Staff are always polite and helpful. They are very accommodating and will try and fit in a job if we need it done quickly"

A minority of customers (13%) do not believe we can respond to an emergency straight away. Each of these people will be invited to visit our premises so we can assure them of our emergency response capabilities. We are confident that this, together with the warm welcome they receive will alter their perception.

Conclusion

It is extremely gratifying to note the results of the East Kilbride questionnaire mirror those of Manchester. Overall the response has been very favourable and confirms The Furnishing Service as the premier furnishing and floor covering supplier to local authorities and housing associations across the U.K.

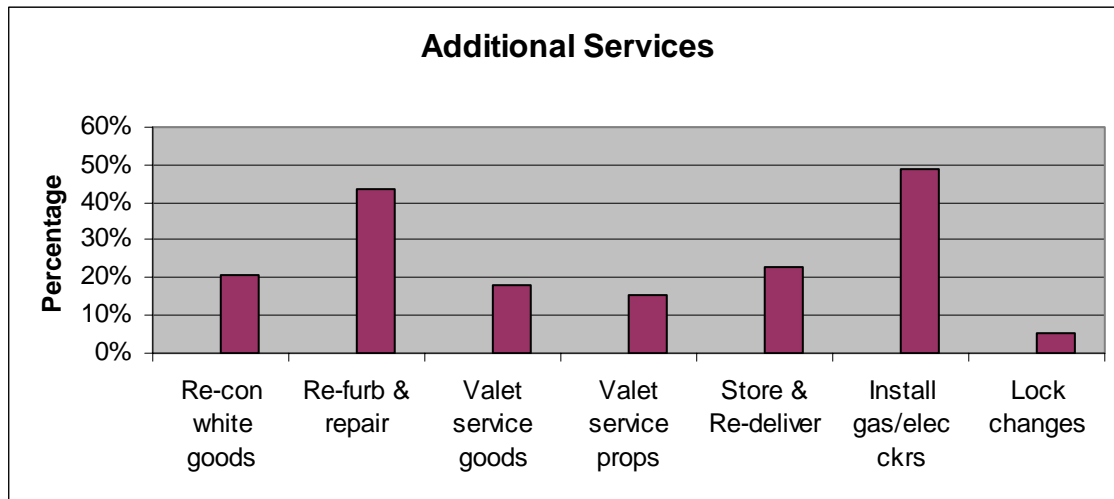
We know from personal experience the housing world is a very 'incestuous' place and the word will soon get round if we under achieve. The survey confirms we currently have an excellent reputation and it is vital we do not let this slip in any way. Moreover, we must build upon this reputation and enhance it.

This can only be done by constant monitoring of service standards and getting feedback from customers. There is no room for complacency and responding to the needs and requirements of customers is pivotal if we are to progress. Hence,



the final question from the survey examined additional services that may be developed. The results in Figure 9 below produce two clear 'winners' which are: the installation of gas and electric cookers and the refurbishment and repair of goods as additional services.

Figure 9



The Furnishing Service is delighted to announce these and all the other services are now available to all customers. The seminar with Manchester customers enabled more detailed discussion regarding these additional services and valeting came out as a key service to be developed.

The honest and candid feedback of this survey highlight particular areas of service provision that need addressing i.e. meeting delivery targets all of the time, responding to emergency situations and raising the general rating of the service as 'excellent' by most customers.

There is no doubt 2004 is going to be a massive year for the company. Some of the key developments for this year are:

- ❑ **Bespoke customer centred website** – This will contain up to date information regarding the company and allow each customer to browse their range of products and order them on-line.
- ❑ **Seminar at City of Manchester Stadium and a 'Scottish venue'** – The success of the Manchester seminar will be copied with customers from East Kilbride.
- ❑ **Attendance at relevant conferences** – We look forward to meeting old and new customers at Harrogate (CIH Annual Conference, Lettings and Homeless Conference), Aberdeen (Scottish CIH annual conference), Birmingham (NHF annual conference) and University of Hertfordshire (NHF Care Conference).
- ❑ **Sponsoring community awards** – We are proud to have been the main sponsor at the recent Pride of Manchester awards



- ❑ **Attainment of a recognised quality mark**
 - Plans are in progress to become ISO 9000 compliant.

The seminar at the City of Manchester stadium was a real success. It was very informal and allowed us to put names to faces, to get to know each other a little better and share information with similar housing practitioners. A full and frank discussion regarding service provision and company development took place and we will replicate the event with our East Kilbride customers later in the year.

We aim for perfection and firmly believe in the sentiments 'you are only as good as last your last job'. We strive to ensure that over 400 times each month we not only meet but exceed your expectations. Our customers are the final arbiters and their views count for everything. Moreover, they are by far the best advert/marketing tool we have.

If we are to continue meeting our social objectives and provide full time employment for over thirty people (many from the communities they serve) we must continue to do everything possible to ensure 100% customer satisfaction.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you would like to discuss this report in more detail or have any queries, the Business Development Manager (Rob Grigorjevs) would be pleased to hear from you by telephone on 0161 220 7722 or by e-mail on rob@the-furnishing-service.co.uk .