Factors influencing performance

of call centre agents:

A study of a South African outsourced call centre

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the factors influencing performance of call centre agents in a South African outsourced call centre in the motor industry, specifically in respect of organisational identification, job satisfaction and emotions at work.

The ability to compete in the global economy will become increasingly reliant on the ability of organisations to satisfy the needs of customers. As organisations outsource the call centre element of their businesses to dedicated call centre providers, these call centre providers will need to become even more competitive. This ability to compete relies on their ability to increase productivity for financial control, whilst increasing their ability to satisfy the customers of organisations they represent. This cannot be done without correctly identifying the factors that drive work performance in call centre agents.

The data were collected via a self-completed questionnaire based survey conducted among agents of a South African outsourced customer service centre, which interacts with the customers of a large motor manufacturer.

The findings indicate that work performance is not directly correlated with organisational identification, job satisfaction or emotions at work, but these factors remain essential to the competitiveness of the organisation in respect of retention of the highest performers, and cannot be ignored. Positive emotions of call centre agents require further investigation as a driver of work performance, in respect of inherent positive well-being of workers and external factors that might influence positive well-being.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.   I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

………………………………………….

Fiona Bettesworth

11 November 2009

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1.1 Introduction to Research Problem

According to Abraham (2008), the call centre industry is one of the most rapidly growing areas of work globally. This is supported by Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli (2003) who claim that about two thirds of customer interactions take place through call centres and Batt and Moynihan (2002), who highlight a significant tendency for companies to establish their relationships with clients through call centres.

This trend is particularly relevant to business in South Africa in view of the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) which targets increased employment. According to the Gauteng Economic Development Agency, GEDA (2008), government put in place a R110 million incentive scheme for investors to bring their Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) business into South Africa, and Telkom has agreed to provide reduced pricing for call centre businesses in rural and semi-rural areas. In order to be comparative and competitive with the major BPO countries, such as India, the quality of service provided by South African call centres must be world-class. This is possible only if sustainable high performance can be achieved.

Many South African companies have outsourced their call centre

functions to dedicated call centre companies, whether local or international. Examples of these outsource companies in South Africa include, amongst others, Sykes, Didata and iChoices. According to the researcher, from experience in the motor industry, most original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) in the motor industry outsource the Roadside Assistance component of their warranty service to dedicated emergency roadside service organisations.

Outsourcing has major implications in respect of the customer experience. The customer's service experience is now in the hands of a person who is not necessarily employed by the company, (Keiningham, Aksoy, Andreassen, Cooil and Wahren, 2006). This increases the pressure on the company to ensure that the call centre consistently provides a great customer experience to its customers.

A fair amount of literature exists in respect of motivation and organisational identification, job satisfaction, the effect of moods and emotions, and hygiene factors in call centres, often linked to the subject of staff turnover. Some of this literature will be discussed in the literature review. The researcher found few articles where these factors were specifically linked to performance. It is therefore the purpose of this research to demonstrate a correlation between performance and these factors to enable the call centre industry to improve performance and competitiveness in the BPO industry.

1.2   Objective of the research

This research is undertaken in order to establish whether the work performance of call centre agents can be influenced by organisational identification, job satisfaction and positive emotions at work. If work performance is not influenced by these factors, it suggests that call centre agents can excel even if they do not identify with their organisation, do not experience job satisfaction and experience negative emotions at work.

Assumptions:

It is assumed that all agents have the necessary skills to perform their function effectively, that outsourcing of call centres is common practice, and that the results of this research will, with further validation, be useful in improving performance of all agents within the call centre industry.

Terminology used

ASGISA – Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa, which aims to halve unemployment by 2014.
BPO – Business Process Outsourcing, which is the growing practice of outsourcing business processes such as call centres, IT, financial services etc. Sometimes referred to as BPO&O in respect of off-shoring this work to other countries globally.

Call Centre – Taylor and Bain (1999) and again Holman (2003) describe a call centre as a work environment in which the main business is mediated by computer and telephone-based technologies that enable the efficient distribution of incoming calls (or allocation of outgoing calls) to available staff, and permit customer-employee interaction to occur simultaneously with use of display screen equipment and the instant access to, and inputting of, information.

Call centre agent – a call centre employee, also referred to as a Customer Service Representative (CSR).

OEM – Original Equipment Manufacturer, which in this document specifically refers to the motor manufacturing industry.

2.1   Theory and literature summary

2.1.1   Introduction

The researcher has conducted a literature review of a number of articles relating to work performance and its contributing factors. Most relevant are the theories of motivation and work performance and how work performance is, or is not, influenced by organisational identification, job satisfaction and emotions of call centre agents. Some of the salient points are outlined in the literature review, which provides understanding which is essential for the interpretation of the empirical data of the research.

2.1.2   Theory of Motivation and Work Performance

Motivation theory dates back to the middle of the twentieth century, and is still being taught in business schools today. Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) cite Maslow in 1954, and Hertzberg, Vroom, Alderfelder, McClelland and Locke in 1981. Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) indicate that much of the research originated in the 1960s and 1970s when the focus turned to influencing employee behaviour, and that much of the recent work is focused on the psychological with theories covering expectancy, equity, goal setting and reinforcement theories.   Their research was to validate Hertzberg's two-factor

theory, which proposed that two factors influenced motivation at work:

1. That hygiene factors (such as company policy and administration, technical and interpersonal supervision, financial reward and working conditions) acted as motivators when appropriate, but could only motivate to a certain point – and demotivated employees when they were inappropriate, and

2. That motivators to sustain effort went beyond hygiene factors, such as a sense of achievement, recognition, the work itself, the opportunity to take responsibility and prospects for advancement. The proposed research suggests that motivation alone does not ensure that the motivated employee will perform well. This research intends delving deeper than identifying motivators to link them to actual performance data for the research respondents.

According to Robinson and Morley (2006), call centres are characterised by telephone and visual display unit technologies, along with interactive voice response (IVR). Calls are automatically distributed to agents and sophisticated telephony systems provide a vast array of statistics, which form the basis of call centre metrics and individual work performance measures. Work performance measures include number of calls handled by each agent, adherence to schedule, time taken to wrap up after calls. There is a concern that call centre managers are managing productivity over service quality because of the readily available system data.

2.1.3   Organisational identification / organisational commitment

A study by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) found that organisational commitment reflects an employee's identification and involvement with a particular organisation – specifically "(a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organisation's goals and values; (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation; and (c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organisation".

Wegge, van Dick, Fisher, Wecking and Moltzen (2006a) state that organisational identification seems to be even more important than work motivation for reducing turnover intentions or feelings of depersonalisation. They also suggest that some call centres should provide challenging work and constant opportunities for training, learning and development.

Emery and Barker (2007) quote John Smith, former CEO of Marriot Corporation as having said that "you can't have happy customers served by unhappy employees". Based on the understanding that customer satisfaction depends to a large degree on customer contact employees, Emery and Barker (2007) conducted research which identified the link between transformational leadership and higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment of customer contact employees. They demonstrated that employees in routine jobs responded best to transformational leaders with charisma, who used regular positive reinforcement, and least to management by

exception, where they were largely ignored unless they did something wrong. Emery and Barker (2007) also highlight the work of Schneider & Bowen as well as Marshall which indicate that service cultures with the highest organisational commitment report the highest levels of customer satisfaction.

If the proposed research indicates a correlation between work performance and organisational commitment, then it suggests that managers can focus on recruitment of team leaders with transformational leadership styles or charisma, conduct training that emphasises positive reinforcement and reduce management by exception to improve employees' loyalty, identification and commitment in order to improve performance.

Huang and Hsiao (2007) discuss the reciprocal relationship between job satisfaction and organisational commitment, with job characteristics being the most important determinant of commitment. They suggest that the most important mechanism for managers to increase employees' commitment to the organisation is to redesign the job content and change in management strategy (involving increasing the level of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback from the job).

If the proposed research indicates a correlation between work performance and organisational commitment, then it suggests that managers could implement job redesign to improve employees'

loyalty, identification and commitment in order to improve performance.

2.1.4   Job satisfaction

Christen, Iyer, and Soberman (2006) postulate that a complete understanding of job satisfaction and work relationships must be based on a theory of how effort affects job satisfaction and, in turn, how that effort affects the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction.

Emery and Barker (2007) also refer to research by Morris, which identified employee job satisfaction as a critical factor in delivering satisfaction to customers. This is in line with the proposed research to link performance with job satisfaction. Taylor and Bain (1999) are well-known for their description of a call centre as an "assembly line in the head", where the call centre agent always feels under pressure and is constantly aware that the completion of one task is immediately followed by another. According to Gorjup, Valverde and Ryan (2008) call centre jobs have been extensively criticised for their low quality and Tayloristic principles, where workers have to abandon all initiative, perform their tasks in a controlled and prescribed manner and work close to their physical limit. Dormann and Zeijltra (2003) suggest that call centre jobs represent a new form of organisation of work in the service sector, and Holman (2003) suggests that opportunities for promotion exist despite reduced "job ladders".

Lawler III, Hackman and Kaufman (1973) suggest "job enlargement", whereby four core dimensions of a job are adjusted, namely autonomy, task identity (having a whole piece of work to do), variety and feedback. This is intended to increase job satisfaction, but all four of the core dimensions need to be adjusted for job satisfaction to increase.

Sieben and de Grip (2004) also suggest that the high turnover in call centres means that employees do not stay with the organisation long enough to be promoted, although agents who follow firm-specific training demonstrate less inclination to quit for work in another call centre. This is an important factor to be considered if high performance is linked to job satisfaction, because it suggests that there should be a focus on increasing job satisfaction and training to retain high performing agents in the call centre.

Robinson and Morley (2006) also raise the concern of many researchers of the consequential cost impact of the high rate of staff turnover in call centres. Direct costs relate to recruitment, induction and training, and indirect costs include erosion of customer service. Kinnie, Hutchinson and Purcell (2000) describe a high commitment management strategy, which supports attraction and retention of highly committed and flexible staff.

This is contrary to the "sacrificial HR strategy" referred to by Wallace, Eagleson and Waldersee (2000), who discuss the deliberate and

planned turnover of frontline call centre staff to provide enthusiastic, motivated customer service at low cost to the organisation. This strategy would only be useful if there is no link between work performance and job satisfaction.

Hutchinson, Purcell and Kinnie (2000) cite the work of Peccei and Rosenthal, Schneider and Bowen, and Schlesinger and Heskett, who highlight the likelihood of a direct connection between levels of employee performance, especially commitment, with standards of customer service. Hutchinson *et al* (2000) suggest that the difficulty in undertaking research in the service sector is the lack of performance data. The proposed research is undertaken with the performance data of the agents participating in the survey, which is available for measurement of correlation between performance and job satisfaction.

Keiningham *et al* (2006) examine call centre satisfaction where callers are organisation members of the primary brand, serviced by "decoupled" call centres, whether co-branded or not. This is relevant to the practice of OEMs outsourcing their customer service call centres to third party suppliers, which forms the basis of the proposed research. In this research, the selected sample will represent the primary brand (OEM), whilst being employed by the third party call centre service provider under limited term employment contract with the recruitment provider. The main issue is that the customer holds the primary brand responsible for all interactions, making it very

important for the customer experience to be as good as if the customer had interacted directly with the primary brand. This aspect also relates to the importance of organisational identification of call centre agents with the primary brand. If work performance is linked to organisational identification, then it would be important to focus interventions that increase identification of the customer service agents with the primary brand.

Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006) highlight role clarity as an element of job satisfaction that is critical to ensure the perceptions of frontline staff in respect of service quality. Call centre agents are the principal interface between the service provider and the customer, and Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006) indicate the link between poor customer satisfaction ratings with the absence of role clarity of call centre agents. They also demonstrate how the objectives of call centres to service at low cost clash with the joint objective to be customer orientated, therefore the role of the call centre agent to "go the extra mile" needs to be clarified. Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006) further quote Korczynski, expressing concern that low levels of role clarity among call centre employees could have negative effects on job satisfaction, organisational commitment and service quality – important if linked to work performance.

2.1.5 **Positive emotions and Affective Events Theory (AET)**

The idea that happy workers have an advantage over their less happy peers was researched by Lyubomirsky, King and Diener (2005). They found that individuals that are high in subjective well-being are more likely to show superior performance and productivity. This subjective well-being is described by Barsade and Gibson (2007) as affective process, commonly known as emotions, which create and sustain work motivation.

Wegge, van Dick, Fisher, West and Dawson (2006b) in their article "A test of basic assumptions of Affective Events Theory (AET) in call centre work", deal with the proposition that call centre work is linked with various forms of emotion, which can either be positive or negative. They cite the work of several researchers who conducted in-depth analyses of the causes and consequences of specific emotions and moods at work, which resulted in AET (a theory developed by Weiss and Cropanzano) being presented as a new framework for studying emotions, moods and job satisfaction at work. In the research by Wegge *et al* (2006b) factors eliciting positive and negative emotions in the work of CSRs were examined, with specific focus on the different consequences of emotions at work. This research was important because AET had not previously been tested on call centre work. They found that positive emotions at work correlate with high job satisfaction, although job features should be more strongly related to job satisfaction than to affective experiences

at work. Their recommendations for further research included an investigation in more detail into how moods and emotions at work are related to performance. This will be tested in the proposed research.

According to Briner (1999) the role of emotion at work has begun to be considered seriously as an important phenomenon. However, he cautions against isolating emotion as a new and separate phenomenon from behaviour and cognition at work. He recommends integrating emotion with existing research and practice in every aspect of work behaviour to prevent it from becoming marginalised. This is supported by Barsade and Gibson (2007), who state "the evidence is overwhelming that experiencing positive emotions and moods tends to enhance performance at individual, group and organisational levels".

CHAPTER 3

3.1   Research questions/aims

The purpose of the research is to identify correlations between work performance and organisational identification, job satisfaction and emotions at work. The research sets out to test a number of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1

It is anticipated that work performance is correlated with organisational commitment in that those agents who feel most engaged and have a sense of belonging will have higher scores. It is anticipated that the converse will be true of those agents feeling disengaged.

> *Hypothesis 1: There is a correlation between work performance and organisational identification.*

Hypothesis 2

It is anticipated that work performance is correlated with job satisfaction in that those agents who enjoy high job satisfaction will have higher scores. It is anticipated that the converse will be true of

those agents feeling disengaged.

Hypothesis 2: There is a correlation between work performance and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3

It is anticipated that work performance is correlated with emotions at work in that those agents who experience positive emotions at work will have higher scores, and that those who experience negative emotions at work will have lower scores.

Hypothesis 3: There is a correlation between work performance and positive emotions.

4.1 Proposed research methodology and design

4.1.1 Research Design

It is apparent that sufficient secondary material exists in the form of substantial academic literature on motivation and organisational commitment, as well as job satisfaction and hygiene factors, in call centres to eliminate the need for exploratory research on these constructs. Qualitative research methods will therefore not be used.

The researcher intends using descriptive research methods by administering a quantitative survey in the form of a 7-point Likert scale. Beal and Dawson (2007) recommend the use of response formats with a large number of options, such as 7 points or 9 points if Likert scales are to be used.

According to Zikmund (2003), the Likert scale is a measure of attitudes designed to allow respondents to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with carefully constructed statements that range from very positive to very negative towards an attitudinal object. The questions will be weighted for each of the possible responses. The questionnaire will be paper-based and administered during working hours in small groups of about five, with the researcher present to facilitate each session and answer any questions posed. The

researcher will remain neutral to avoid bias. Questions will be structured to facilitate data collection and processing. The questionnaire will be pre-tested to refine the questions and format prior to proceeding with the survey. Once data have been collected, actual performance scores for participants according to their quarterly performance reviews will be linked to the results of the survey in order to identify any correlation as proposed in the research questions. Permission has been obtained (by means of a consent form) from participating employees to use their performance scores, and from the organisations involved. Association will be measured by means of a simple correlation analysis.

In order to reduce response error, anonymity has been promised in the final research report, although it will be necessary during data collection to identify specific respondents in order to link their responses with the results of their performance data. It has also been necessary to ensure confidentiality in respect of the OEM providing access to their information, as well as to the recruitment provider and the call centre outsourcing provider.

Although names will be required during the data collection process to link survey results with performance scores, anonymity has been assured in the final research document submitted. Confidentiality has also been assured to the three organisations involved in the call centre.

The decision to conduct a survey and distribute it in person is justified

Firstly, by distributing the questionnaire in person, the researcher will be able to explain clearly and concisely why the researcher wants the respondent to complete the survey. Any queries can be addressed immediately.

Secondly, by requesting the respondents to complete the questionnaire immediately, the response rate will increase. As Cobanoglu, Warde & Moreo (2001) state, "high response rates in questionnaires generally increase the confidence that the sample accurately reflects the true population and that the findings can be generalised to other contexts, settings and groups of interest."

According to Bator (2002) "the best technique, or combination thereof, to use depends on two primary factors." The first purpose is to gather feedback and the second factor is the budget available for the research. In order to ensure that the first factor was met, the survey will be distributed and completed by the respondents at the same time. The budget for the research is limited and the delivery of surveys by hand will help to reduce the costs of the survey. There is no need to provide return envelopes and stamps.

The questionnaire is designed to extract relevant information about motivation and organisational commitment, as well as job satisfaction and hygiene factors in call centres. In order to ensure a high

response rate, the advice of certain authorities on the subject was followed. For example, Goldman (2000) suggested, "the survey be well-written, concise and easy to respond to".

The theoretical basis for the content of the questions in the questionnaire was provided by literature by several different researchers, the main ones being De Cremer (2005) for organisational identification, Hackman and Oldman (1974) for job satisfaction, and Briner (1999) for emotions at work. Some questions were used as is, but most were modified to suit the purposes of this research.

4.1.2   Population and Sampling

This research was conducted specifically in relation to the performance of call centre agents representing a South African OEM in the motor industry, where the call centre is outsourced to a call centre outsourcing company, with call centre agents sourced on contract through a separate staffing solutions provider. The call centre is based at the OEM's premises. The focus of the research is on those factors that influence call centre agents to deliver a high standard of performance. It was proposed that the level of the agent's organisational identification with the OEM, job satisfaction and positive emotions would have a direct impact on good performance.

The population consisted of all 54 call centre agents within the customer service contact centre. The survey was designed to include all agents within this environment (the entire population), providing a sample of approximately 42 agents who had given consent to participate in the survey, and who had participated in a performance review. This sample was based on convenience due to ease of access and permission from the OEM concerned. Participation in the survey was voluntary, as explained in the letter requesting consent, and it was anticipated that a representative sample would complete the final survey. Permission was obtained to administer the questionnaire during working hours.

4.1.3 Limitations, delimitations and assumptions

Limitations

There was a risk of agency influence in view of the researcher's position as manager within the call centre researched. This was minimised by limiting the questionnaire to generic questions, and by a clear explanation of the purpose of the research, but this should still be considered in reviewing the findings. The researcher took care to remain impartial to reduce bias.

There was also a risk that the respondents would resist the use of their performance data and could refuse to participate. This risk was minimised by obtaining consent in advance of administering the

questionnaire, but participation remained voluntary. In the event of insufficient participants to provide a statistically significant sample, it was envisaged that the researcher would obtain permission from the call centre provider to approach one of their other client companies to conduct the research amongst the call centre provider's employees representing other companies.

There was a risk that only respondents who performed well would be willing to participate, thereby negatively affecting the response rate.

Delimitations

The research was limited to a single call centre, within the BPO environment.

Due to the small sample, it was anticipated that this research might not be representative of all industries and call centres, and that further research will be required to establish if findings can be extrapolated to other call centres.

Assumptions

It was assumed that respondents would provide honest and correct responses, thereby ensuring valid and reliable responses. It was also assumed that the researcher would remain unbiased, that agency bias would be avoided, and that a minimum of 30 respondents would participate to provide a statistically significant sample.

The researcher acknowledges the Schwab (2005) statement that "surveys and field studies are generally vulnerable to the same internal validity threats that distress experiments and quasi-experiments". An example that Schwab (2005) provides is that although field studies may not be as intrusive as an experiment or quasi-experiment, human participants still know that they are participating in a research study and so the demands on the participants remain. It was assumed that the questionnaire was relevant and valid and that the responses would provide the necessary detail and accuracy for research to be conducted.

Another threat that Schwab (2005) notes, is the effect that the researcher has on surveys and field studies. Even though researchers do not intentionally manipulate the findings, there is an increased chance of manipulation if there is greater involvement between researchers and participants. This was particularly valid in this research because the researcher was a manager within the researched call centre and the questionnaires were administered to the respondents directly. Every effort was made by the researcher to remain as neutral and unbiased as possible during the distribution and collection of the questionnaire. The assumption was made that the respondents were in a position to answer the questionnaire correctly and would do so honestly. As stated, this could not be proven but it was assumed. Therefore, the final assumption was that the responses were valid and reliable.

5.1   Results

A summary of the results obtained from the research is presented in Chapter 5. Details are provided of the administration and response rate of the survey, in addition to details of the actual responses to the questionnaire and a statistical analysis of the results.

A pre-test was conducted with managers, supervisors and agents who were not eligible to participate in the final survey.   Agents participating in the pre-test were not eligible to participate in the final survey due to being learners or not having worked in the call centre long enough to have participated in a performance review. This pre-test did not identify any concerns with the wording of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered, with a total of 33 completed by agents who had participated in a performance review. Of the 33 agents, 15 were from the Roadside Assistance department and 18 from Customer Care. This was a valid sample, being 78.6% of the eligible call centre population of 42 agents. The completed questionnaires were recorded and linked with performance scores.

For the purpose of statistical analysis, positively worded questions were transposed to ensure that all positive responses had higher scores. Two groups were formed to identify low performing agents and high performing agents. Agents with a rating of 1, 2, 2.5 and 3

were grouped together as low performing agents, with agents with a rating of 3.5 and 4 grouped as high performing agents.

The same was done for the Likert scale results. Responses of 1 to 3 were grouped together as positive responses, 4 as a separate group without strong opinion, and 5-7 grouped as negative responses. The results were then tested for differences between groups. The non-parametric Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test was used because the low performing group is small and normality cannot be assumed.

A Fisher's Exact Test was conducted to test for a relationship between work performance and organisational identification for each of the three organisations. The organisations are identified as follows:

Organisation 1: Call centre service provider

Organisation 2: Recruitment company

Organisation 3: Motor manufacturer (OEM)

Table 1 below indicates means, standard deviations and Wilkoxin Rank Sum Test P-Values for the dependant variables. *The P-value of 0.0390 for Organisation 2 shows a significant difference between high and low performers on organisational identification with this organisation. The results indicate that the high performing agents tend to identify less with Organisation 2 than the low performers.

Table 1: Mean Performance Scores and Wilcoxon P-Values

Criteria	Score 1-3		Score 3.5-4		Wilcoxon
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	P-Value
Org 1	4.34	1.30	4.03	1.40	0.4867
Org 2	4.59	1.82	2.95	1.68	0.0390*
Org 3	5.31	1.21	4.54	1.11	0.1582
Job Sat	5.02	0.82	4.74	0.86	0.4620
Emotions	4.25	0.89	4.48	0.97	0.7205

5.1.1 Work Performance

The independent variable, work performance, was based on the actual performance review results of call centre agents for one period of three months.

Agents are scored on a percentage, which is then converted to a rating scale. Rating scales for agents range from 1 to 4, with 1 to 2.5 indicating low performance, 3 indicating that the agent has complied with all requirements of the job, and a 3.5 or 4 indicating high performance. Details of score per agent are outlined in Figure 1 below.

Overall, 75.76% of agents are in the high performing category, with 36% having a rating of 4 and 39% a rating of 3.5, and 18.18% in the low performing category.

Figure 1: Work performance score per agent
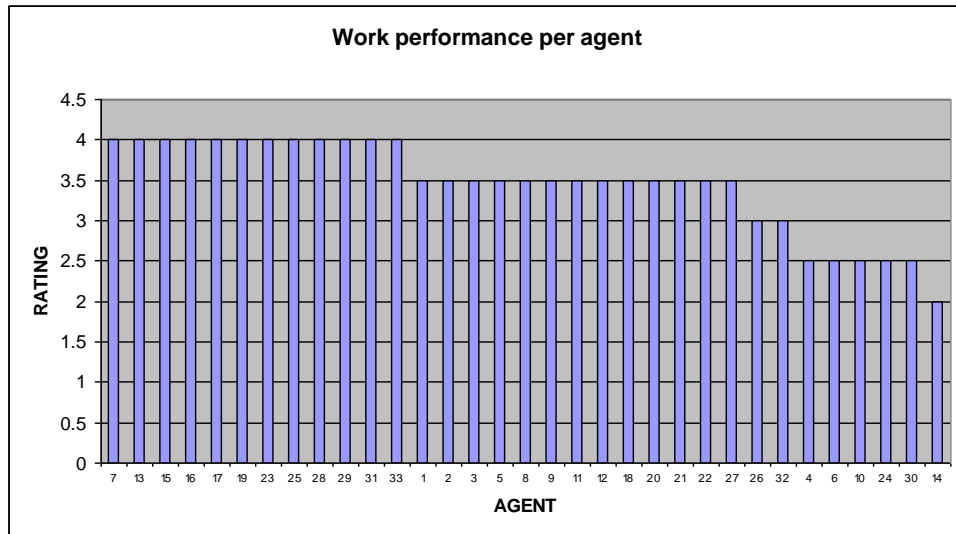
Table 2 below shows the percentages converted to ratings, as well as

the frequency and percentage frequency of each rating.

Table 2: Frequency of ratings

Percentage	Rating	Frequency	Frequency %
79% and below	1	0	0
80-89%	2	1	3.03
90-99%	2.5	5	15.15
100%	3	2	6.06
101-110%	3.5	13	39.39
111% and over	4	12	36.36

The following section indicates the split of ratings between the two areas of the call centre, namely Roadside Assistance and Customer Care.

Table 3: Frequency of ratings per department

Rating	Roadside Assistance	Customer Care	Total
4	3	9	12
3.5	8	5	13
3	0	2	2
2.5	3	2	5
2	1	0	1
Total agents	15	18	33

Figure 2: Frequency of ratings by department
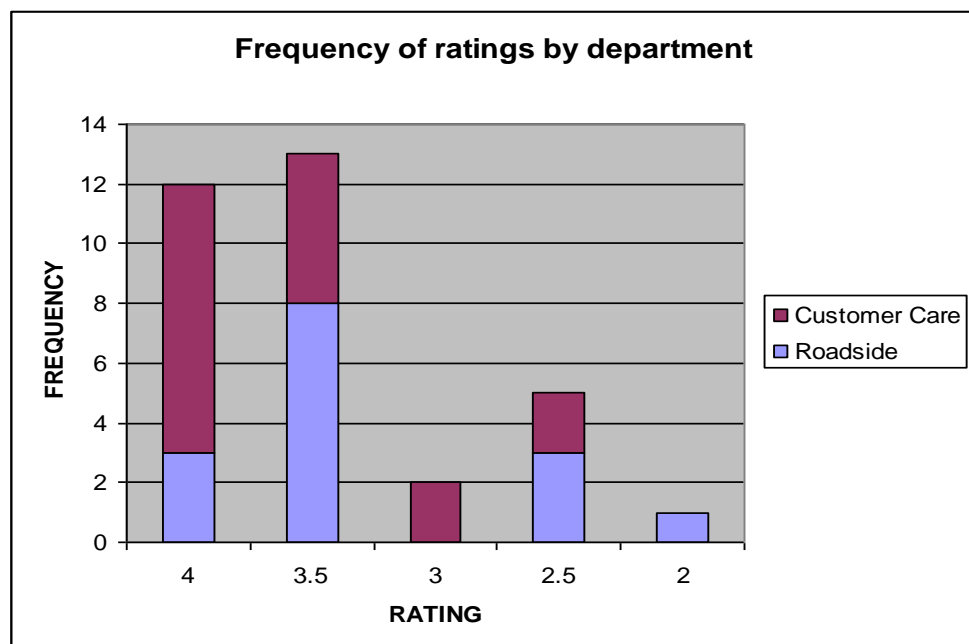
An almost equal number of agents achieved high performance scores, with 12 agents achieving a rating of 4, and 13 agents achieving a rating of 3.5. The split between 3.5 and 4 scores between departments is not the same, as outlined in the percentage frequency results below.

Figure 3: Percentage frequency of ratings by department
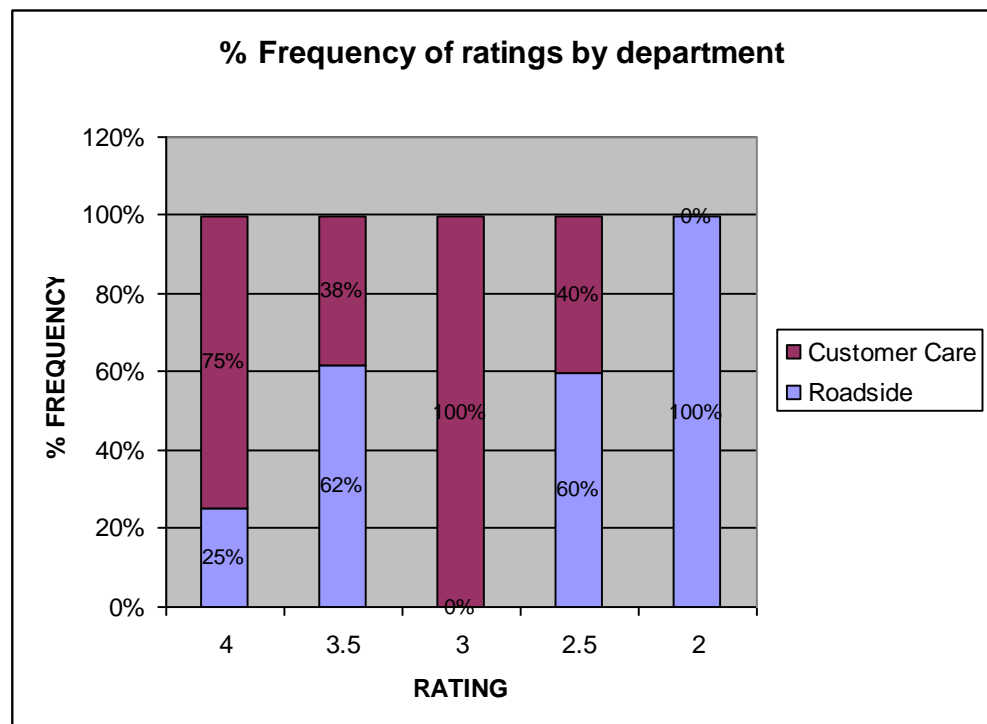
Of the 13 agents achieving a performance rating of 3.5, 62% were from the Roadside Assistance call centre and 38% from Customer Care. The converse is true of the 12 agents achieving a rating of 4, where 75% were from Customer Care and only 25% from Roadside Assistance.

5.1.2   Organisational Identification

Hypothesis 1: There is a correlation between work performance and organisational identification.

Overall, the majority of agents identified most with Organisation 3 (the OEM) at 55%, and least with Organisation 2 (the recruitment provider), with only 27% having high organisational identification, as can be seen in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Q1, Q2 and Q3 – "I identify most with …"

Organisational Identification Combined Scores

	High org ID	Ave org ID	Low org ID
Org 1	36%	33%	30%
Org 2	27%	30%	42%
Org 3	55%	18%	27%
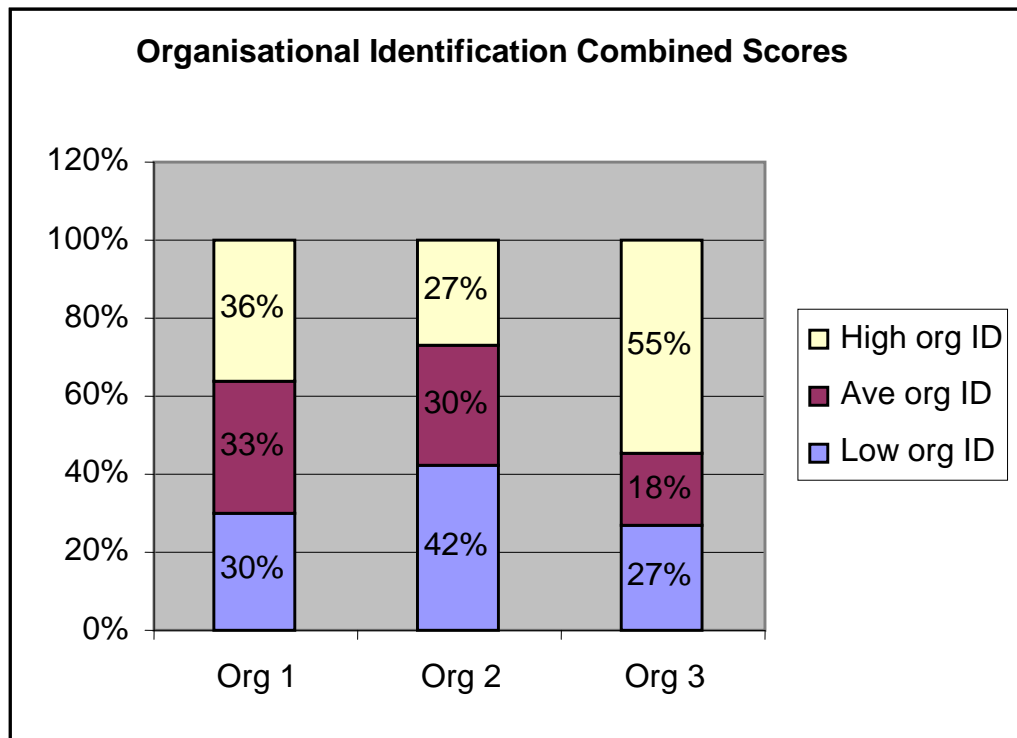
Figure 5: Organisational Identification High vs Low Performers
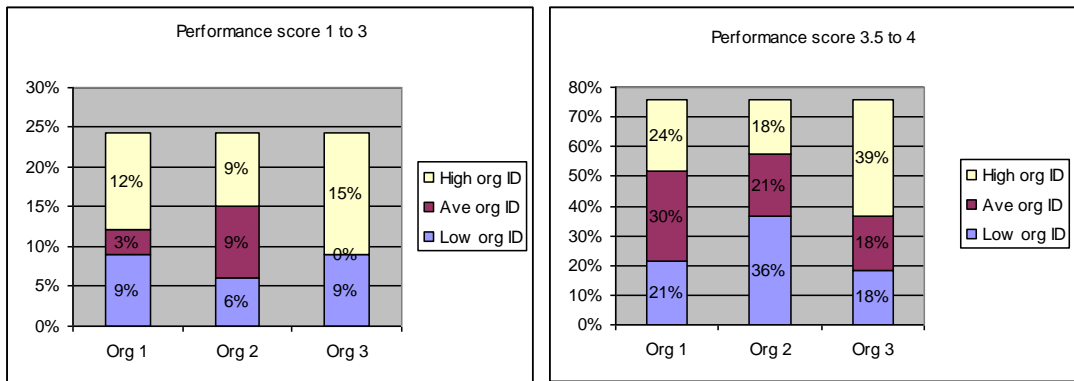
Although the number of low performing agents was only 24% of the total sample, Figure 2 compares organisational identification between both high and low performing agents, indicating that a similar pattern exists for high performing and low performing agents.

As can be seen in Figure 6 below, 88% of all agents felt proud to be associated with Organisation 3 (the OEM), compared with 52% with Organisation 1 (the call centre provider) and 33% with Organisation 2 (the recruitment provider). 93% of agents in the Roadside Assistance call centre felt proud to be associated with Organisation 3, compared to 83% of Customer Care agents. Organisations 1 and 2 were equal in the Roadside Assistance call centre, with 47% of agents feeling proud to be associated with them. There was a stronger bias towards Organisation 1 amongst Customer Care agents, with 55% feeling proud to be associated with Organisation 1 against 22% for Organisation 2.

Figure 6: Q4, Q8 and Q12

"I feel proud to be associated with the company"

I feel proud to be associated with the company
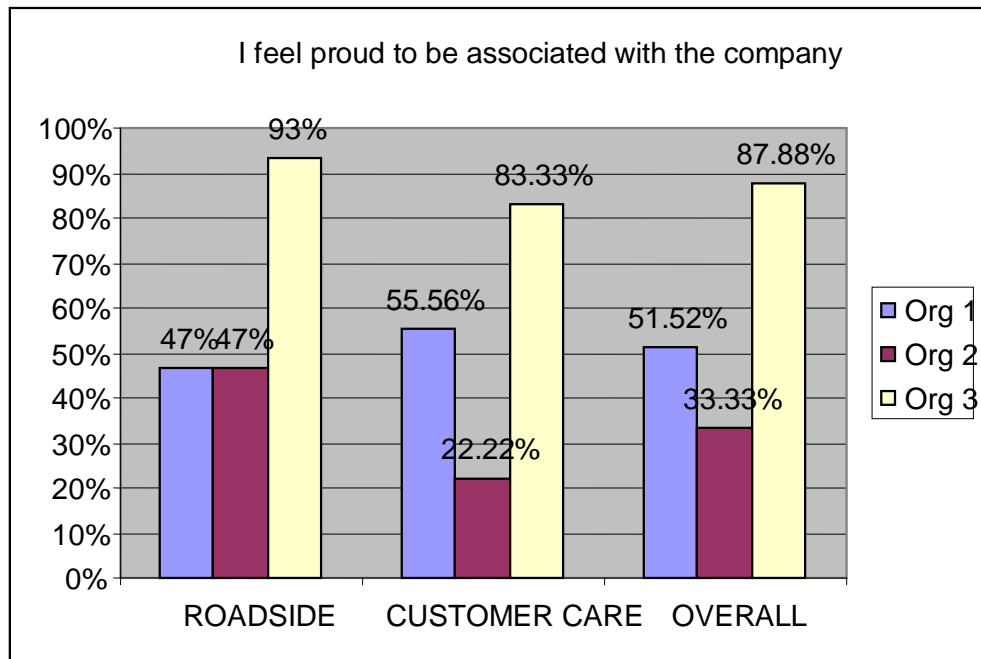
Figure 7 below reflects a strong bias towards Organisation 3 for questions 6, 10 and 14 in answer to the statement "I feel personally insulted if someone criticises the company". In total, 57% of agents feel personally insulted if someone criticises Organisation 3, compared to 27% for Organisation 1 and 24% for Organisation 2.

Between Organisations 1 and 2, there is a stronger leaning towards Organisation 2 in Roadside Assistance, with 20% versus 27% and a stronger leaning towards Organisation 1 in Customer Care at 33% versus 22%.

Figure 7: ~~Q8, Q10 and Q14~~

"I feel personally insulted if someone criticises the company"
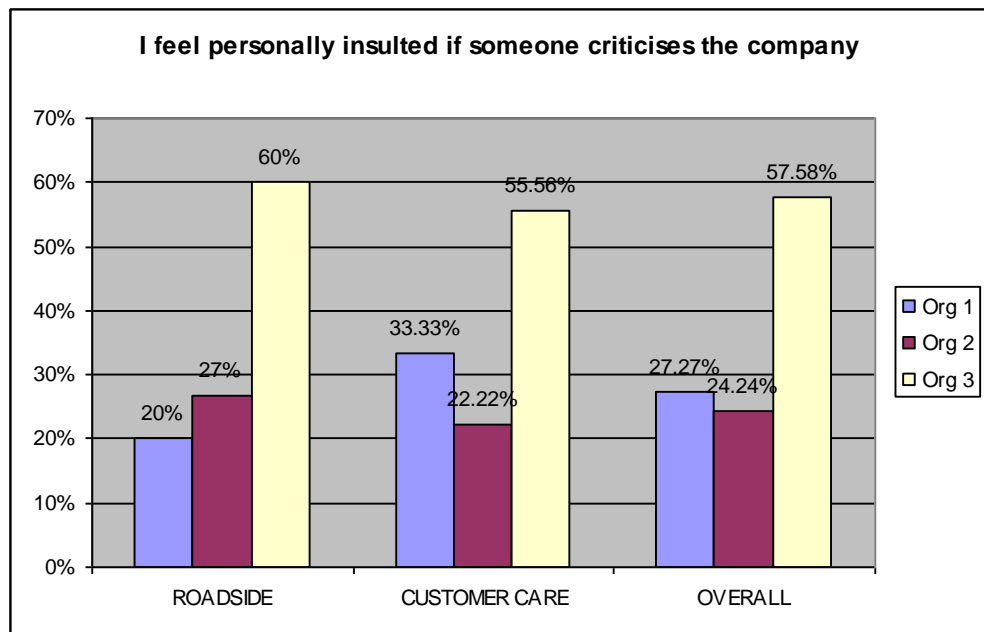
Positive responses to questions 5, 9 and 13 "I feel part of the company" and questions 7, 11 and 15 "I feel strong ties with the company" were well below 50%, as indicated below:

Question number	Org 1	Org 2	Org 3
Questions 5, 9 and 13	42%	27%	33%
Questions 7, 11 and 15	24%	21%	36%

A statistical comparison between the organisations is outlined below to test for relationship between organisational identification and work performance.

Organisation 1

Fisher's Exact Test

Pr <= P   0.3588

For Organisation 1, the P-value of 0.3588 is higher than 0.05, which is not significant, so the Ho cannot be rejected.

Organisation 2

Fisher's Exact Test

Pr <= P   0.5930

For Organisation 2, the P-value of 0.5930 is higher than 0.05, which is not significant, so the Ho cannot be rejected.

Organisation 3

Fisher's Exact Test

Pr <= P   0.4070

For Organisation 3, the P-value of 0.4070 is greater than 0.05, which is not significant, so the Ho cannot be rejected.

Result: The Ho indicated no relationship between organisational identification and actual work performance for any of the organisations.

5.1.3   Job Satisfaction

In measuring job satisfaction in the two departments of the customer service centre, both positively and negatively worded questions were used.   Distinctly different responses were received from Roadside Assistance agents compared to Customer Care agents.

Hypothesis 2: There is a correlation between work performance and job satisfaction.

Figure 8: Negatively worded questions: responses by dept

Negatively worded questions
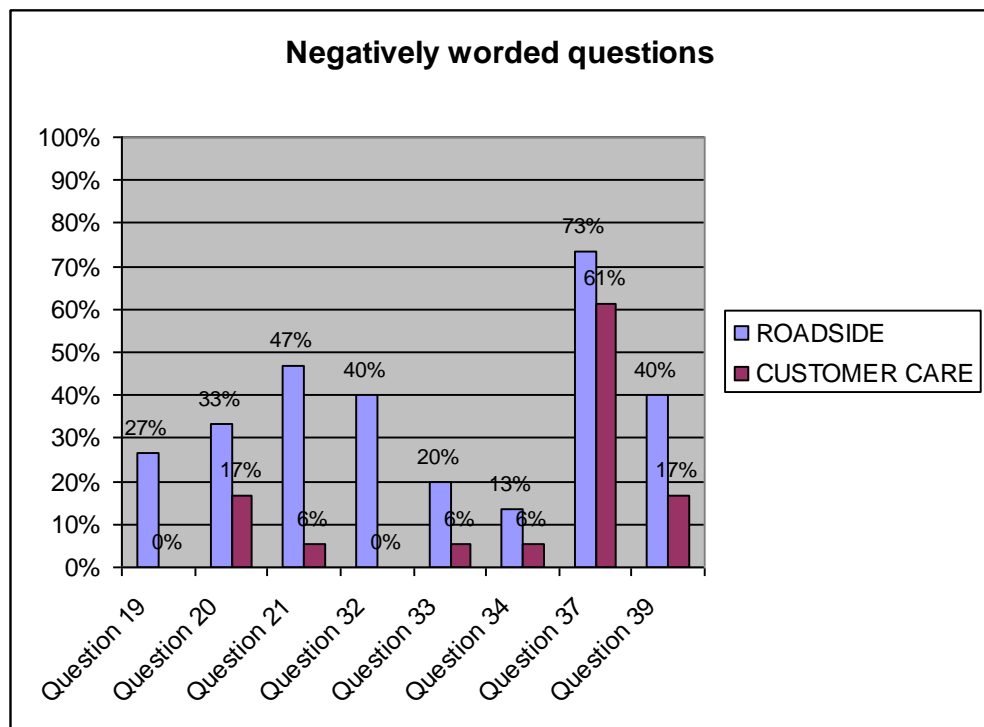
Question 19 – I feel bored - 27% of Roadside Assistance agents agreed with the statement, whilst none of the Customer Care agents agreed with the statement.

Question 20 – I feel overworked – 33% of Roadside Assistance agents agreed with the statement, versus 17% of Customer Care agents.

Question 21 – I feel my job interferes with my family life – 47% of Roadside Assistance agents agreed with the statement, versus 6% of Customer Care agents.

Question 32 – I don't want to get up in the morning – 40% of Roadside Assistance agents agreed with the statement, whilst none of the Customer Care agents agreed with the statement.

Question 34 – I don't have enough information to do my job – 13% of Roadside Assistance agents agreed with the statement, versus 6% of Customer Care agents.

Question 37 – I feel that management is too quick to criticise poor performance – 73% of Roadside Assistance agents agreed with the statement, versus 61% of Customer Care agents.

Question 39 – I don't really know what my supervisor thinks of me – 40% of Roadside Assistance agents agreed with the statement, versus 17% of Customer Care agents.

Figure 9: Positively worded questions: motivation / enjoyment

Positively worded questions - control/motivation/enjoyment
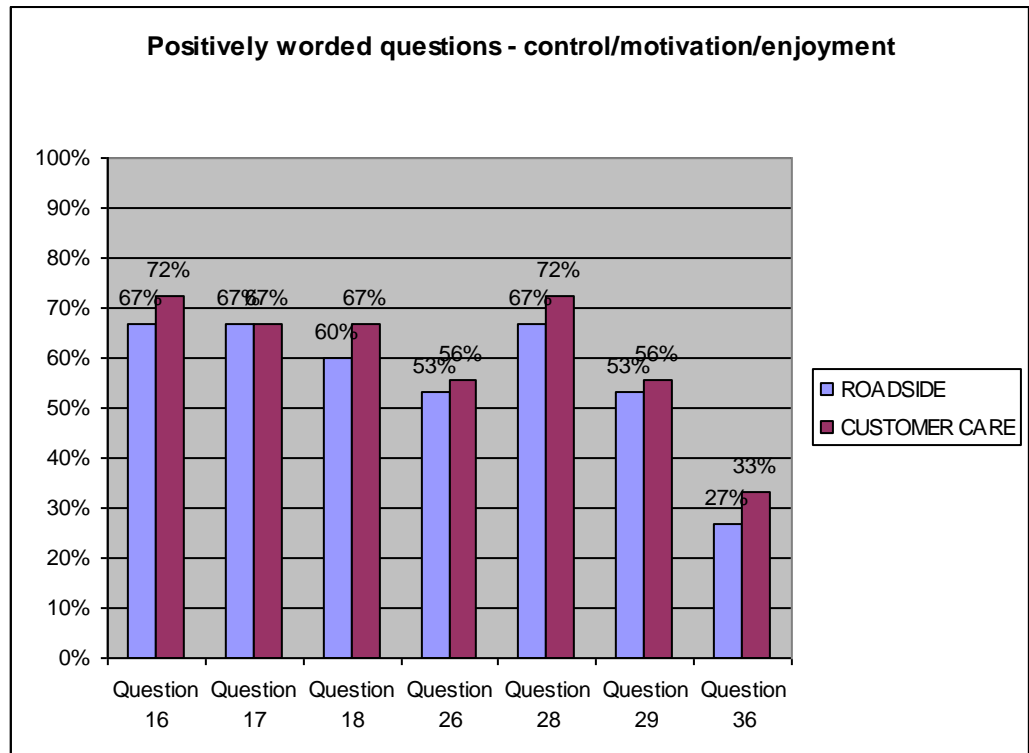
Question	Description
Question 16	At the end of my shift I feel as though I have accomplished something
Question 17	I find my work challenging
Question 18	I find my work exciting
Question 26	I feel motivated to do well
Question 28	I feel equipped to make decisions as part of my job
Question 29	I have had enough training to do my job well
Question 36	The people I work with are proud to be here

Similar responses were received from Roadside Assistance and Customer Care to questions 16, 17, 18, 26, 28, 29 and 36.

Questions 16, 17, 18 and 28 received positive response rates of between 64% and 70% in regard to a sense of accomplishment, finding work challenging and exciting, and feeling equipped to make

decisions.

Questions 26 and 36 received lower positive responses, with an average of 55% of agents feeling motivated to do well and having had enough training to do their jobs well, and 30% of agents believing that the people they work with are proud to be there.

Figure 10: Positively worded questions: management
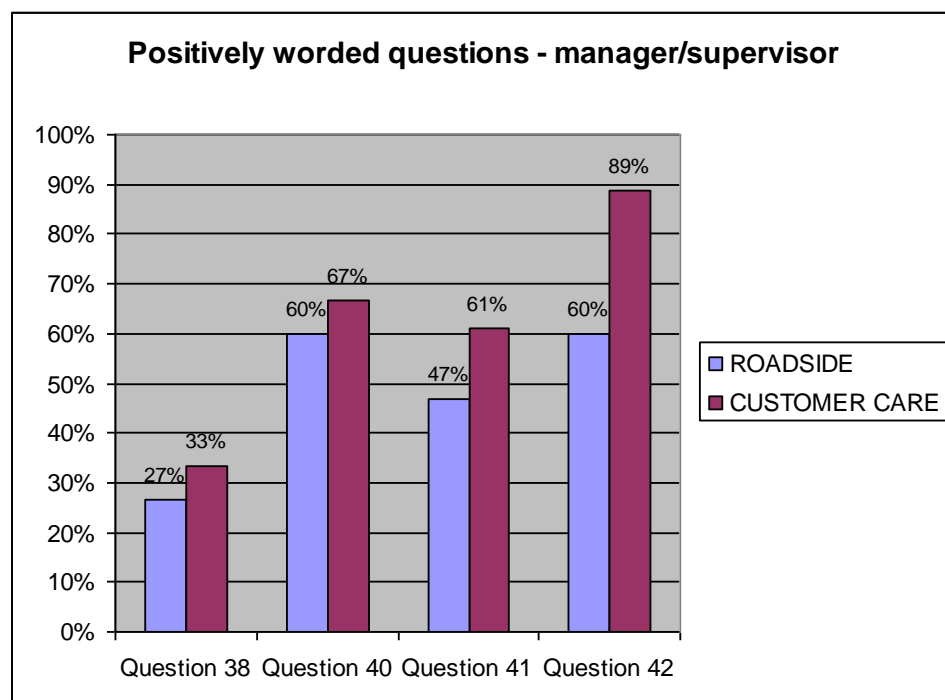
Question 38 – I feel that management praises good work – 27% of Roadside Assistance agents versus 33% of Customer Care agents agreed with this statement.

Question 40 – I feel free to speak to my supervisor if I don't agree with policies – 60% and 67% positive responses from Roadside Assistance and Customer Care agents respectively.

Question 41 – I feel free to offer suggestions about improving policies and procedures – 47% of Roadside Assistance agents agreed with this statement, whilst 61% of Customer Care agents agreed.

Question 42 – I feel that my supervisor treats me with respect – a 29% variance exists between the results from Roadside Assistance agents, of whom 60% agreed with the statement, and Customer Care agents, of whom 89% agreed with the statement.

Figure 11: Positively worded questions – agent
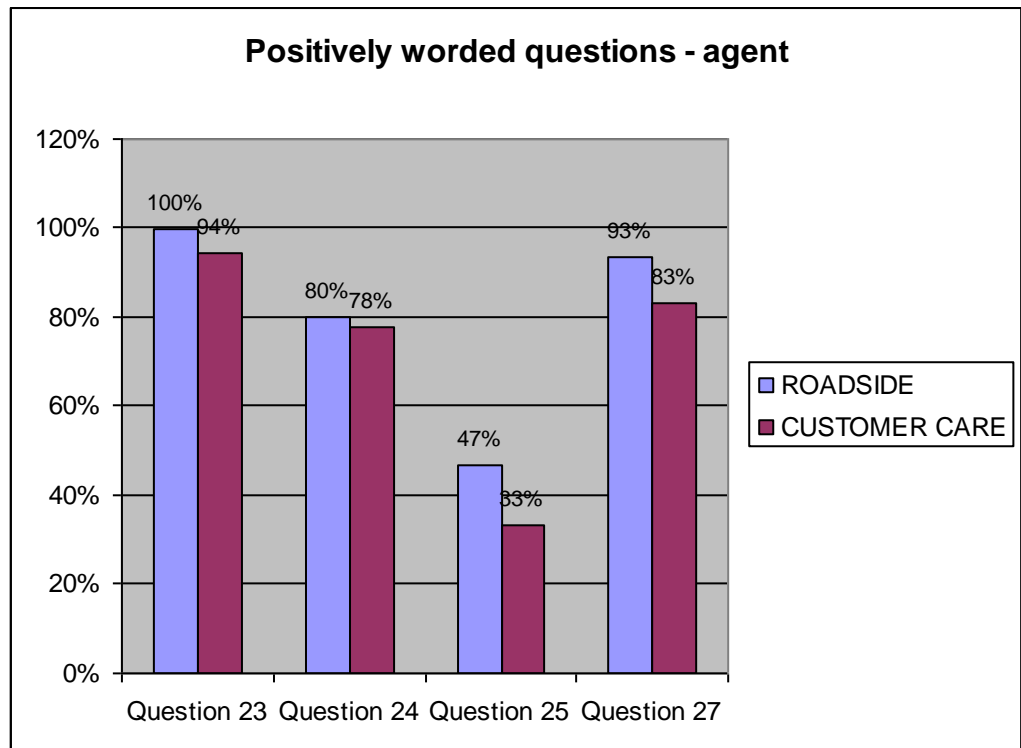
Question 23   I take responsibility for my work

Question 24   I assume responsibility without being asked

Question 25   I work overtime when necessary

Question 27   I can cope with the pressure of the job

Questions 23, 24 and 27 - Highly positive responses were received from all agents relating to taking responsibility for their job, assuming responsibility without being asked and coping with the pressure of the job. Average results ranged between 79% and 97% for these questions.

Question 25 – I work overtime when necessary – resulted in 47% of Roadside Assistance agents agreeing and 33% of Customer Care agents.

Figure 12: Positively worded questions – disparate responses

Positively worded questions - disparate responses between departments
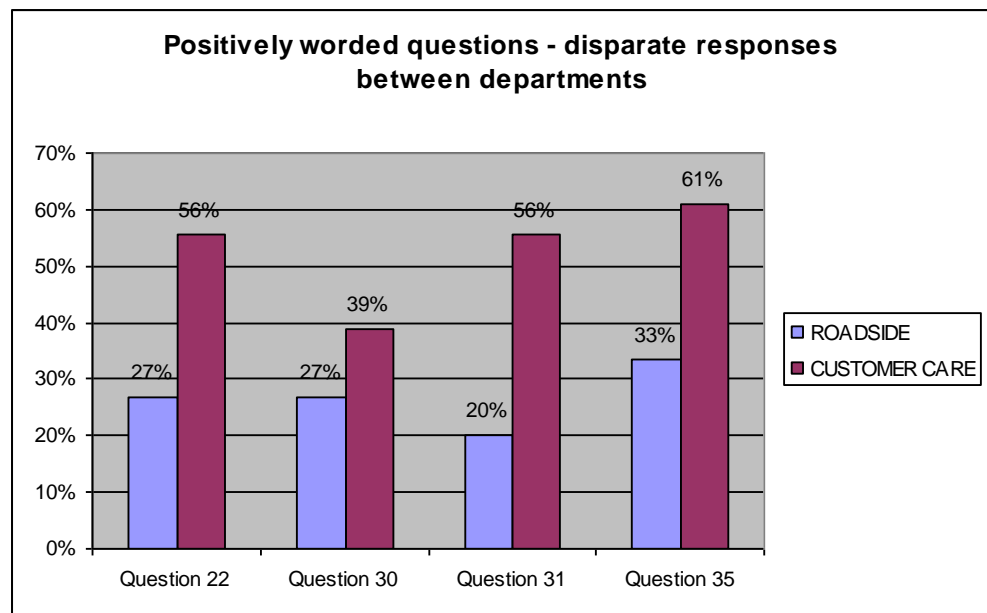
Question 22	I feel I have a lot of say in how to do my job
Question 30	I feel satisfied with my general work situation
Question 31	I feel happy to recommend this work to a friend
Question 35	I feel a part of the family when I am at work

As indicated in Table 1, the means between the work performance scores of high performing agents at 4.74 and low performing agents at 5.02 in terms of job satisfaction were very close. The Wilcoxon Rank Sum Mean Scores for the low performing agents were higher at 19.25, indicating that they were marginally more satisfied with their jobs than the high performing agents at 16.28. This clearly shows that there is no correlation between job satisfaction and work performance.

Wilcoxon Scores (Rank Sums) for Variable jobsat

Classified by Variable group

group	N	Sum of Scores	Expected Under H0	Std Dev Under H0	Mean Score
3.5-4	25	407.0	425.0	23.788844	16.280
1-3	8	154.0	136.0	23.788844	19.250

Average scores were used for ties.

Wilcoxon Two-Sample Test

Statistic	154.0000

Normal Approximation

Z	0.7356

Wilcoxon Two-Sample Test	
One-Sided Pr > Z	0.2310
Two-Sided Pr > |Z|	0.4620

5.1.4   Emotions

Hypothesis 3: There is a correlation between work performance and positive emotions.

Only six questions were asked relating to agents' emotions at work. Questions 43-45 related to positive emotions of pride, happiness and pleasure, and questions 46-48 related to negative emotions of frustration, anger and embarrassment.

Question 43 – I feel proud of the work I do – received a 64% positive response rate, made up of 53% Roadside Assistance and 72% Customer Care.

Question 44 – I feel happy to come to work every day – received a 55% positive response rate, made up of 47% Roadside Assistance and 61% Customer Care.

Question 45 – I feel pleased when I am thanked by a customer - received a 97% positive response from the respondents, made up of

93% from Roadside Assistance and 100% from Customer Care.

Question 46 – I feel frustrated when systems don't work - 70% of agents agreed with this statement, made up of 80% Roadside Assistance and 61% Customer Care.

Question 47 – I feel embarrassed when I make a mistake - 58% of agents agreed with this statement, made up of 60% Roadside Assistance and 56% Customer Care.

Question 48 – I feel angry when I am criticised - 30% of agents agreed with this statement, made up of 40% Roadside Assistance and 52% Customer Care.

Figure 13: Emotions at work – Questions 43-48
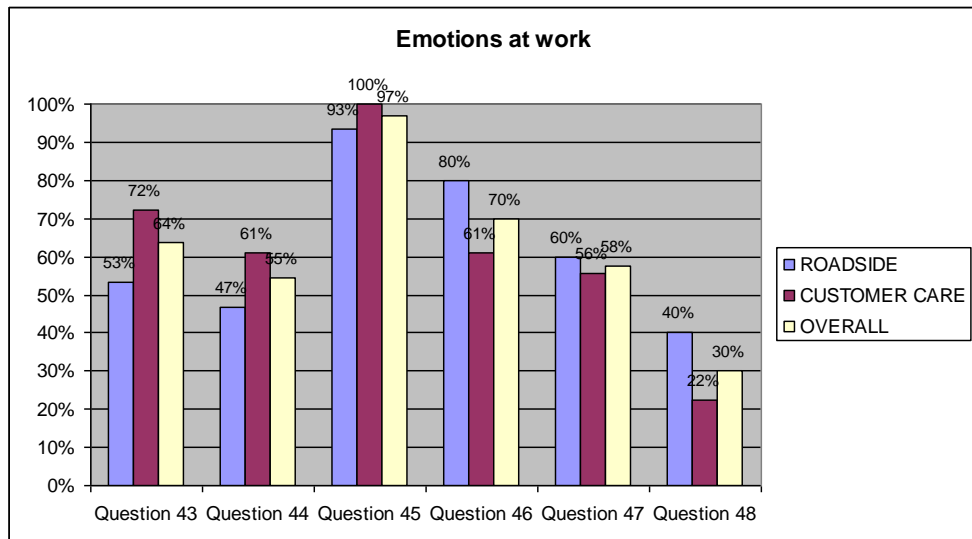
The means between the work performance scores of high performing agents at 4.48 and low performing agents at 4.25 in terms of

emotions were very close. The Wilcoxon Rank Sum Mean Scores for the high performing agents were higher at 17.36, indicating that they experienced marginally more positive emotions at work than the low performing agents at 15.88. The P-value of 0.7205 for emotions suggests that there is a correlation between emotions and work performance, but due to the small size of the low performing group, a clear correlation between emotions and work performance cannot be shown.

Wilcoxon Scores (Rank Sums) for Variable emotion
Classified by Variable group

group	N	Sum of Scores	Expected Under H0	Std Dev Under H0	Mean Score
3.5-4	25	434.0	425.0	23.756977	17.3600
1-3	8	127.0	136.0	23.756977	15.8750

Average scores were used for ties.

Wilcoxon Two-Sample Test

Statistic	127.0000

Normal Approximation

Z	-0.3578
One-Sided Pr < Z	0.3603

Wilcoxon Two-Sample Test

Two-Sided Pr > |Z| 0.7205

6.1 Discussion of Results

This chapter evaluates the research findings presented in the previous chapter. A critical analysis was undertaken to establish consistency or difference from literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and interpreted in line with hypotheses described in Chapter 3.

6.1.1 Work Performance

The scores of agents are skewed towards high performance. Whilst this could be an accurate reflection of agent performance, it is possible that various factors influenced the scores. Some of these factors could include poor design of the performance evaluation measurement tool, incorrect measurement criteria and weights, or leniency on the part of quality assurance assessors and supervisors when analysing voice recordings and data captured in the customer relationship management system. For example:

- o the case notes captured into the customer relationship management system are weighted at 45%, with agents scored on following procedure and capturing accurate notes. This enables most agents to achieve between 100% and 133% for this criterion. With the weighting of 45%, agents easily achieve a 3.5 to 4 score for this performance measure.

- o Voice quality assessments are weighted at 35% of the overall agent score, with measurement criteria heavily skewed to "soft" issues such as greeting the caller, using the caller's name, showing empathy, etc. For this reason, agents regularly achieve high scores on their call assessments to achieve a 100% to 133% rating.

- o In combination, case assessment and voice assessment make up 80% of the total performance score. Therefore, if the agent excels and achieves 133% for either one or both of these criteria, they could quite conceivably achieve a 3.5 or 4 rating for their overall performance review. This explains why few agents achieve average to low (3 or below) scores.

Of the 13 agents achieving a performance rating of 3.5, 62% were from the Roadside Assistance call centre and 38% from Customer Care. The converse is true of the 12 agents achieving a rating of 4, where 75% were from Customer Care and only 25% from Roadside Assistance. This could be attributable to slightly different measurement criteria, different levels of leniency amongst supervisors, or possibly job satisfaction, which is explored in 6.1.3.

Hypothesis 1: There is a correlation between work performance and organisational identification.

The first aim of the research was to establish if work performance is influenced by the extent to which the call centre agent identifies with the organisation. This specifically refers to the employee's buy-in to the organisation's goals and values, willingness to work hard on behalf of the organisation and a real desire to remain a part of the organisation (Mowday *et al,* 1979). The research tested the identification of agents with each of the three organisations involved in the customer service centre of a major motor manufacturer. Organisation 1 was the call centre outsource service provider, Organisation 2 was the recruitment provider which employs the call centre agents under fixed term contract, and Organisation 3 was the motor manufacturer (OEM) whose primary brand was represented by the agents.

Of all agents, 55% identified most with Organisation 3 (the OEM), compared to 36% with Organisation 1 (the call centre provider) and 27% with Organisation 2 (the recruitment provider). 57% of agents feel personally insulted if someone criticises Organisation 3, compared to 27% for Organisation 1 and 24% for Organisation 2. This is a similar pattern to that of organisational identification.

The 55% of agents who identified most with Organisation 3 is made up of 33% of the 15 agents working in the 24/7 Roadside Assistance call centre, compared to 72% of the 18 agents working in the Customer Care call centre, which operates Monday to Friday from 08:00 until 17:00. This difference between the two call centres could be attributed to the closer relationship and daily interaction the Customer Care agents have with the staff and dealer network of Organisation 3, whereas interaction with Organisation 3 is limited for the Roadside Assistance agents. Customer Care agents have a significant amount of interpersonal interaction with the technical regional managers in resolving queries and complaints related to product and dealers from the various regions. A regular weekly meeting is held for face to face interaction in addition to telephonic interaction with dealers and regional managers. In contrast, Roadside Assistance agents only interact with the technicians of dealers who participate in roadside assistance service provision, usually limited to telephonic instructions on dispatching the technicians.

Of all agents, 87% feel proud to be associated with Organisation 3, made up of 93% of Roadside Assistance agents compared to 83% of Customer Care agents. This indicates that, whilst most agents are proud of the association with the quality and prestige of the premium brand of the motor manufacturer, they do not necessarily identify strongly with or feel part of the organisation. This is supported by the low ratings of responses to the statements "I feel a part of the

company' and "I feel strong ties with the company".

The statistical comparison between the organisations tested for correlation between organisational identification and work performance. Despite the low number of agents in the low performing category, a similar pattern exists for high performing and low performing agents. The P-values of Organisations 1, 2 and 3 were either slightly lower than or marginally higher than 0.05, and therefore the null hypothesis could not be proved.

It follows, therefore, that the hypothesis "*There is a correlation between work performance and organisational identification*" could not be proved.

The implications for business are that increased efforts to improve the agent's identification with the organisation would not necessarily lead to significant improvements in work performance. The possibility exists that efforts of managers to focus on recruitment of team leaders with transformational leadership styles or charisma, conduct training that emphasises positive reinforcement and efforts to reduce management by exception to improve employees' loyalty, identification and commitment (Emery and Barker, 2007) might not be relevant in improving work performance. However, Wegge *et al* (2006a) highlight that organisational identification could be very important for reducing turnover intentions or feelings of depersonalisation. This suggests that organisational efforts to

improve employees' identification with the organisation would still be valuable to retain high performing agents, even if they do not directly influence work performance.

In view of organisational identification still being of value to the organisation, Huang and Hsiao (2007) recommend increasing employees' commitment to the organisation through the mechanism of job content redesign and a change in management strategy, which would involve increasing the level of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback from the job. Emery and Barker (2007) also recommend using transformational leaders who focus on reinforcement as opposed to management by exception.

6.1.3   Job Satisfaction

Hypothesis 2:   There is a correlation between work performance and job satisfaction.

The second aim of the research was to establish if work performance is influenced by the extent to which the call centre agents experience job satisfaction. The research tested the job satisfaction of agents within the two departments within the Customer Service Centre of the motor manufacturer (OEM), namely Roadside Assistance and Customer Service.

The strongest negative response received from both departments

related to the statement "I feel that management is too quick to criticise poor performance", with 73% of Roadside Assistance agents and 61% of Customer Care agents agreeing with the statement. This is of concern in a call centre that advocates a high commitment management strategy as described by Kinnie, Hutchinson and Purcell (2000). It also suggests that the managers and supervisors could be using management by exception methods mentioned by Emery and Barker (2007) instead of positive reinforcement.

The response to the statement "I feel bored" also elicited very different responses between the departments, with 27% of Roadside Assistance agents agreeing with the statement and none of the Customer Care agents. This could be attributed to the variance in routine between the two areas, where Roadside Assistance agents follow more rigid processes as outlined by Gorjup, et al (2008) whilst there is greater variation and individual agent control within the Customer Care department, as advocated by Lawler, et al (1973), Dormann and Zeiltra (2003) and Holman (2003). For example, Roadside Assistance processes are rigid in terms of agents needing to follow clearly defined steps, with the use of a decision tree to assist in deciding what type of assistance to dispatch – technician or tow contractor;

Customer Care have greater variation and agent control in deciding how to address individual queries, because many of the complaints handled in this area result in goodwill decisions and agents cannot rely on policies and procedures to resolve these cases.

Forty seven percent of Roadside Assistance agents feel that their job interferes with their family life, compared to only 6% of Customer Care agents. The most likely cause of this difference is the 24/7 nature of the Roadside Assistance service versus the office hours/weekdays only nature of the Customer Care agents. Roadside Assistance agents are scheduled in turns to work shifts to cover day shift from 6am to 2pm, night shift from 2pm to 10pm and the so-called "graveyard" shift between 10pm and 6am. This has an understandably negative effect on their time with their families due to the inconsistent schedule these agents work.

Overall, 33% of Roadside Assistance agents feel overworked versus 17% of Customer Care agents. This difference could be ascribed to the greater focus within Roadside Assistance on call centre productivity measures, in terms of number of calls taken, calls abandoned, time taken to dispatch emergency assistance, time taken to wrap up, post the call and availability. The Customer Care department, on the other hand, has a greater focus on customer satisfaction and agents have more time to focus on the details of the case they are handling instead of only concentrating on speed and productivity. Although Roadside Assistance agents work slightly fewer hours per week than Customer Care agents, the need to render assistance to customers in a short time-span means that they need to make, on average, around 5 calls per assistance in contacting service providers and providing regular updates to the customer. These

customers are usually impatient/angry/frightened to be stuck at the roadside, which leads to stress for the agents.

Responses from Roadside Assistance agents to "I don't want to get up in the morning", "I don't have enough information to do my job", "I don't really know what my supervisor thinks of me" and "I feel that management praises good work" were decidedly more negative than the responses from Customer Care agents. This suggests that there could be a management issue in the Roadside Assistance department, combined with the issues of the shift roster and relatively inflexible processes already mentioned. The management issue was highlighted in an independent audit of the call centre, commissioned by the call centre provider, which identified that the call centre supervisors spent little time in one-on-one feedback sessions with their agents. This might be related to the time spent by the supervisors handling escalated calls and complaint investigations. Responses to the statement "I feel that my supervisor treats me with respect" elicited a 60% positive response rate from Roadside Assistance agents versus an 89% positive response in Customer Care. This further suggests a management concern in Roadside Assistance.

Agents from Roadside Assistance and Customer Care had similar relatively positive responses of between 64% and 70% in regard to a sense of accomplishment, finding work challenging and exciting, and feeling equipped to make decisions. Whilst this appears to be in

contrast to the negative responses regarding management, the positive views could be specifically related to job characteristics.

Just over 50% of agents felt they had received sufficient training to do their job. Induction, soft skills and product training are provided by the call centre provider over a two-week when a new recruit begins work. However, little or no refresher training is provided unless requested by the agent during the performance review process, and limited training is received from the motor manufacturer (OEM) in respect of technical aspects of the work. This is because the call centre provider carries responsibility for all training and some gaps could exist due to them not necessarily being experts in the motor industry. Keiningham et al (2006) suggest that the customer holds the primary brand responsible for all interactions, making it very important for the customer experience to be as good as if the customer had interacted directly with the primary brand. This has implications for the level of training provided to the agents to ensure that they are sufficiently equipped to represent the primary brand.

Highly positive responses were received from all agents relating to taking responsibility for their job, assuming responsibility without being asked and coping with the pressure of the job. Average results ranged between 79% and 97% for these questions. These highly positive results were anticipated due to the self-report nature of these questions on issues linked to integrity. It would not be realistic to expect agents to "admit" that they did not accept responsibility or

cope with pressure, so these responses need to be viewed with caution.

The low number of positive responses to the statement "I work overtime when necessary", 47% of Roadside Assistance agents agreeing and 33% of Customer Care agents, could be attributed to the limited number of occasions when agents are actually asked to work overtime. Overtime is purely voluntary, usually only needed in Roadside Assistance at month-end and holiday peak times, and agents are not coerced into working overtime if they do not wish to do so.

Highly disparate responses between departments were received in regard to the statements "I feel I have a lot of say in how to do my job", "I feel satisfied with my general work situation", "I feel happy to recommend this work to a friend" and "I feel part of the family when I am at work". The Roadside Assistance responses were significantly more negative than those of Customer Care agents. This could be a result of the lower level of autonomy, where processes are clearly defined, with limited room for agents to use their own initiative, and the working hours that agents think their friends might not enjoy. There is also less interaction between agents in Roadside Assistance in comparison with Customer Care, where agents interact with each other and with staff from the motor manufacturer with whom they collaborate to find suitable resolutions for customer queries and complaints.

Statistically, the means between the work performance scores of high performing agents at 4.74 and low performing agents at 5.02 in terms of job satisfaction were very close, indicating that there is no correlation between job satisfaction and work performance.

6.1.4   Emotions

Hypothesis 3: There is a correlation between work performance and positive emotions.

The third aim of the research was to establish if work performance is influenced by the extent to which the call centre agents experience positive or negative emotions at work.   The research tested the emotions of agents within the two departments within the Customer Service Centre of the motor manufacturer (OEM), namely Roadside Assistance and Customer Service.

 In response to the six questions relating to agents' emotions at work, the most positive responses were from the Customer Care agents, with fewer positive and more negative responses received from the Roadside Assistance agents.

As far as taking pride in their work is concerned, 72% of Customer Care agents felt pride in their work against 53% of Roadside Assistance agents, and 61% of Customer Care agents felt happy to

come to work every day against 47% of Roadside Assistance agents. The variance between the two departments could relate to the job design of their work, where Customer Care agents have more flexibility in respect of making their own decisions. The variance between the two departments in respect of happiness to come to work every day could be a factor of the agents' management or could be as simple as the fact that the Roadside Assistance agents are required to work shifts, which fluctuate according to a roster and interfere with their personal time with their families and friends.

The question relating to feelings of pleasure when thanked by a customer resulted in very high positive responses of almost 100%. These results of agents' responses to positive reinforcement could be expected in view of the highly negative work environment in which agents deal mainly with customer complaints or roadside emergencies.

Around 61% of Customer Care agents feel frustration when systems do not work, compared to a very high 80% of Roadside Assistance agents. In view of the fact that all agents work on the same customer relationship management system, this could be attributed to the increased time pressure in Roadside Assistance, where there is a greater sense of urgency to capture details and dispatch assistance to the customer at the roadside. Customer Care agents have a higher pressure for resolution of complaints of angry customers, but do not have the same high pressure on time because many cases do

not require first call resolution. Almost all Roadside Assistance cases are resolved in the first day, unless the agent requires additional information, such as the customer's vehicle odometer reading, from the technician. Customer Care cases are largely resolved in the first day, but a number are not easily resolved and could be open for several days or weeks, depending on the situation. The targets are to have 92% of cases resolved within 5 days and to have no more than 300 cases open at any time.

Of all agents, 56% of Customer Care agents and 60% of Roadside Assistance agents feel embarrassed when they make a mistake. This almost equal distribution between the two departments suggests that this factor could be attributed to personality rather than being specific to the department. In other words, most people would find it embarrassing to make a mistake, regardless of the situation.

Of all agents, 52% of Customer Care agents and 40% of Roadside Assistance agents feel angry when they are criticised. This appears to be at odds with the general flow of the results, but could be a factor of the processes in Roadside Assistance being more prescriptive, leaving less room for agents to make mistakes and be criticised. Customer Care processes are highly flexible due to the fluctuation in the nature of cases the agents handle, and the high number of cases that rely on goodwill as opposed to policy. This leaves more room for agents to make their own decisions, with less support for these decisions. This increases the margin for agent error, which could

lead to agents feeling resentful of criticism when they make a wrong decision.

The means between the work performance scores of high performing agents at 4.48 and low performing agents at 4.25 in terms of emotions were very close. The Wilcoxon Rank Sum Mean Scores for the high performing agents were higher, indicating that they experienced marginally more positive emotions at work than the low performing agents. There is a correlation between emotions and work performance, but due to the small size of the low performing group, a clear correlation between emotions and work performance cannot be shown.

The work of Wegge *et al* (2006b) into the proposition that call centre work is linked with various forms of emotion, which can be positive or negative. Although they found that positive emotions at work correlate with high job satisfaction, they did not demonstrate the link between work performance and emotions at work. They recommended further research to establish this link.

The slight correlation found between the emotions of the Roadside Assistance and Customer Care agents and their work performance is encouraging, but not conclusive due to the small sample size, and more in-depth research will need to be conducted to establish this link more conclusively.

7.1 Conclusion

7.1.1 Introduction

Today's highly competitive work environment means that organisations need to actively seek ways to improve productivity and ensure customer satisfaction in order to compete successfully, both locally and globally. The call centre industry has one of the most rapidly growing areas of work globally. This is particularly relevant to business in South Africa in view of the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) which targets increased employment. In order to be comparative and competitive with the major BPO countries, the quality of service provided by South African call centres must be world-class. This is possible only if sustainable high performance can be achieved.

Outsourcing has major implications in respect of the customer experience. The customer's service experience is now in the hands of a person who is not necessarily employed by the company. This increases the pressure on the company to ensure that the call centre is able to consistently provide a great customer experience to its customers. It is therefore imperative that the drivers of work performance are correctly identified.

This research aims to confirm if work performance of call centre agents can be influenced by increasing organisational identification, job satisfaction and emotions at work.

7.1.2 Main Findings of the Research

The main findings of the research have been summarised as follows:

Work Performance

Most agents are high performers, with very few average and low performers. Measurement criteria include a mix of productivity and quality criteria, but indications are that instruments used to measure performance are not optimal, whether in respect of the measurement criteria, weightings of criteria or methods of measurement.

Organisational Identification

No relationship was found between the extent to which call centre agents identify with the organisation and their actual work performance, although a negative relationship was found between high performing agents and the recruitment provider. Most agents indicated pride in the association with the motor manufacturer, but do not necessarily experience a strong organisational identification or feel part of the organisation.

No relationship was found between agents' job satisfaction and their actual work performance. Findings also indicated that management and supervision of the agents did not necessarily match the high commitment strategy of the call centre provider.

Emotions at Work

A small relationship was found between agents' emotions at work and their actual work performance, although there were insufficient low performing agents in the sample to clearly demonstrate the existence of this relationship.

7.1.3   Recommendations to Stakeholders

Work performance

It is recommended that the call centre provider reviews the work performance measurement criteria to include customer satisfaction scores in addition to the quality criteria already being measured. The reason for this is to ensure that the quality criteria match the needs of the customer.   Although customer satisfaction is currently being measured and agents rewarded by means of an incentive programme, it is done so separately from work performance measurement, which could lead to an agent receiving high

performance scores according to internal measures, but poor scores in terms of customer satisfaction. It is also recommended that targets for performance criteria be reviewed to ensure that true high performers can be identified, where currently the majority of agents are high performers.

Organisational Identification

Organisational identification was not linked to work performance in this research. However, this does not mean that it should be ignored as an important factor in driving the behaviour of call centre agents. Previous research has positively linked organisational identification with turnover intentions. For this reason, it is recommended that the recruitment provider review data from the research to derive a strategy to increase organisational identification, which is complex in the case of this call centre, having three companies involved. It might be necessary to agree on a single organisation for agents to align themselves to, in order to reduce the possibility of conflicting loyalties.

Job satisfaction

Whilst it is apparent from the findings of this research that job satisfaction does not necessarily drive work performance, other research has demonstrated the importance of job satisfaction in driving other very relevant factors, such as retention of high performers. For this reason, the responses from the research should

be examined for inclusion in the recruitment provider's management strategy to address issues causing low job satisfaction, for example:

- o A review of management styles practised by the current call centre management would be useful to confirm if the high commitment management strategy is being employed. The staff satisfaction survey could incorporate additional questions in this regard. Additional focus could also be given to the recruitment of transformational, charismatic leaders in the call centre to ensure positive reinforcement as opposed to focus on negative behaviours of agents. In addition, it is recommended that a time and motion study be conducted with supervisors and management of the call centre for the purpose of identifying time wasters to free them from tasks that keep them from their one-on-one interaction with agents;

- o Boredom in the Roadside Assistance department could be addressed by introducing some variation and individual agent control where feasible. An example could include making agents responsible as mentors for students enrolled on the call centre learnership programme, with high performing agents being elevated to mentor their peers and handle escalated calls. This would have a dual benefit of reducing the time call centre supervisors spend handling call escalations;

- o Family life conflict in the Roadside Assistance department could

be addressed by reviewing the roster to accommodate agents who prefer to work fixed schedules, within operational requirements;

o Overwork in the Roadside Assistance department could be a factor of call centre productivity measures, or a mismatch between agent working styles and operational requirements, which might be addressed by personality testing during recruitment. Stress of agents might be reduced by giving agents time off the phone to take part in regular coaching sessions, which have been neglected, to participate in the wellness programme, which is linked to individual staff incentives, and to take part in interactive feedback sessions to guide management on improvements sought by agents;

o Training was highlighted by agents as a concern, which suggests that training gaps exist. It is suggested that a training plan be developed for all agents, which includes motor manufacturer training on technical aspects of the motor vehicles where relevant. This additional training could have a joint benefit of reducing the feelings of overwork and stress experienced by agents.

7.1.4   Recommendations for future research

Further research is recommended to investigate the extent to which positive emotions of workers influence work performance and customer satisfaction. Specific interest is in respect of emotions of high performing call centre agents who report lower levels of job satisfaction. In other words, can an agent who displays high levels of subjective well-being be highly productive even if job satisfaction is low? This would be very useful to human capital management strategies in the call centre industry, where job enlargement is not always feasible. However, care should be taken not to isolate emotions from other aspects of work behaviour.

7.1.5   Concluding Remarks

The ability to compete in the global economy will become increasingly reliant on the ability of organisations to satisfy the needs of customers. As organisations outsource the call centre element of their businesses to dedicated call centre providers, these call centre providers will need to become even more competitive. This competitiveness to compete relies on their ability to increase productivity for financial control, whilst increasing their ability to satisfy the customers of organisations they represent. This cannot be done without correctly identifying the factors that drive work performance in call centre agents.

Whilst organisational identification and job satisfaction might not directly influence work performance, they remain essential to the competitiveness of the organisation in respect of retention of the highest performers, and cannot be ignored.

Positive emotions of call centre agents require further investigation as a driver of work performance, in respect of inherent positive well-being of workers and external factors influencing positive well-being.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research.   Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Please note that I will not be using your name, or the name of the companies in my final research document that I submit for marking, so your input will remain confidential.

I am currently doing my MBA through the University of Pretoria and the Gordon Institute of Business Science, and need to conduct research as part of the final requirements to get my degree. I have chosen to conduct my research in the call centre industry because that is where my interest lies.

This questionnaire asks questions which help me to understand which organisation you identify most with (company names provided), your job satisfaction and your emotions at work. I will then link your responses to your work performance according to your performance development framework (PDF) results. This will help me to understand if work performance is influenced by organisation identification, job satisfaction and emotions, or not.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer freely – and share your **real** feelings. Your individual responses will not be shared with your supervisor or manager, and are not for business use.

Many thanks

Fiona Bettesworth

Researcher

NAME: _____DATE: _____

The statements below ask you about how you feel about the companies you work for, your job satisfaction and your emotions at work. Each statement will have a choice of responses from "all of the time" to "never". **Your REAL feelings are most important and there are no right or wrong answers.**
Please mark your choice with **X** and mark only one box per line.

SECTION 1: ORGANISATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	ORGANISATIONAL IDENTIFICATION	**All of the time**	**Almost always**	**Very often**	**Often**	**Some times**	**Almost never**	**Never**
Q1	I identify most with (Organisation 1 name)							
Q2	I identify most with (Organisation 2 name)							
Q3	I identify most with (Organisation 3 name)							
	Organisation 1: Name:							
Q4	I feel proud to be associated with the company							
Q5	I feel a part of the company							
Q6	I feel personally insulted if someone criticises the company							
Q7	I feel strong ties with the company							

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	ORGANISATIONAL IDENTIFICATION	**All of the time**	**Almost always**	**Very often**	**Often**	**Some times**	**Almost never**	**Never**
	Organisation 2: Name							
Q8	I feel proud to be associated with the company							
Q9	I feel a part of the company							
Q10	I feel personally insulted if someone criticises the company							
Q11	I feel strong ties with the company							
	Organisation 3: Name							
Q12	I feel proud to be associated with the company							
Q13	I feel a part of the company							
Q14	I feel personally insulted if someone criticises the company							
Q15	I feel strong ties with the company							

SECTION 2: JOB SATISFACTION

	JOB SATISFACTION	1 All of the time	2 Almost always	3 Very often	4 Often	5 Some times	6 Almost never	7 Never
Q16	At the end of my shift I feel as though I have accomplished something							
Q17	I find my work challenging							
Q18	I find my work exciting							
Q19	I feel bored							
Q20	I feel overworked							
Q21	I feel my job interferes with my family life							
Q22	I feel I have a lot of say in how to do my job							
Q23	I take responsibility for my work							
Q24	I assume responsibility without being asked							
Q25	I work overtime when necessary							
Q26	I feel motivated to do well							
Q27	I can cope with the pressure of the job							
Q28	I feel equipped to make decisions as part of my job							
Q29	I have had enough training to do my job well							

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	JOB SATISFACTION	**All of the time**	**Almost always**	**Very often**	**Often**	**Some times**	**Almost never**	**Never**
Q30	I feel satisfied with my general work situation							
Q31	I feel happy to recommend this work to a friend							
Q32	I don't want to get up in the mornings to go to work							
Q33	I don't really know what is expected of me							
Q34	I don't have enough information to do my job							
Q35	I feel a part of the family when I am at work							
Q36	The people I work with are proud to be here							
Q37	I feel that management is too quick to criticise poor performance							
Q38	I feel that management praises good work							
Q39	I don't really know what my supervisor thinks of me							
Q40	I feel free to speak to my supervisor if I don't agree with policies and procedures							
Q41	I feel free to offer suggestions about improving policies and procedures							
Q42	I feel that my supervisor treats me with respect							

SECTION 3: EMOTIONS

	EMOTIONS	All of the time	Almost always	Very often	Often	Some times	Almost never	Never
Q43	I feel proud of the work I do							
Q44	I feel happy to come to work every day							
Q45	I feel pleased when I am thanked by a customer							
Q46	I feel frustrated when systems don't work							
Q47	I feel embarrassed when I make a mistake							
Q48	I feel angry when I am criticised							

This concludes the questionnaire. I truly appreciate your willingness to complete this questionnaire, and to assist in this research project.

APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLE OF AGENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Measurable standards to achieve KPA's

	Key Performance Area	Key Result Area	Actual Result	Employee Rating	Line Manager Rating	Agreed Rating	Weight %	Score Max 133%	Total % for KPA	Overall % for KPA
1	Answer Inbound Calls - 15%	Answer inbound calls - Answer inbound calls according to internal criteria	I always make sure that i'm at my desk at all times and i Answer call at a given time	3	2.5	2.5	5%	4%	14%	93%
		Provide client with info - Provide client with information relevant to the call	I give client's clear, accurate, and relevant information and i'm commited to provide client's with quality service	3.5	3	3	5%	5%		
		Resolve queries on first contact/or agreed contact rate relevant to your SLA - Resolve queries on first contact where possible/or agreed contact rate relevant to your SLA	I resolve enquiries at first contact without delegating the case to the line manager especially if its a minor thing	3.5	3	3	5%	5%		
2	Conduct Outbound Calls - 45%	Conduct outbound calls - Conduct outbound calls as and when required to ensure customer satisfaction:• Record all activities on CRM/or relevant system • Follow-up on unresolved queries on a daily basis • Escalate queries that remain unresolved after 48hrs to supervisor/or agreed time relevant to your department • Communicate results to query originator and close queries	i update and record all information on the case	3.5	3	3	45%	45%	45%	100%
3	Attend to administrative requirements - 5%	Take on additional responsibilities supporting others within the organisation, when necessary, to deliver improved customer service	Respect my fellow colleagues and people around me and i'm willing to help other people if they need my help	3	2.5	2.5	5%	4%	4%	80%
4	Quality of service - 35%	Ensure interactions are concluded to QA requirements and all quality criteria are adhered to	from the past QA scores is above 80% its looking good	3.5	3	3	35%	35%	35%	100%
		Ensure relevant script is used at all times, if applicable	i Always make sure that i use the script	3.5	3	3	0%	0%		
		Ensure that the relevant product knowledge is applied to all customer interactions	Provide customers with information that they need	3	3	3	0%	0%		
	Total:						100%	98%		

Rating Scale:

Not yet competent			Increasingly Competent		
1	2	2.5	3	3.5	4
Unacceptable	Below Standard	Below Standard	Standard	Above Standard	Exceptional
Train / manage / performance manage			Salary	Recognition	Reward
		Training			
Steps to correct performance issues			Recognition and reward of above standard performance		

Grade Rating Scale	% of KPA
1	79%
2	80% to 89%
2.5	90% to 99%
3	100% achieved
3.5	101% to 110%
4	over 111%

0 - 30%	33% - 63%	63% to 89%	90% - 100%	100% - 133%
If company target is exceeded only 60% of incentive will be paid			If company target is exceeded and own targets are achieved the full 100% of incentive will be paid.	If company and own targets are exceeded up to 133% of incentive will be paid

APPENDIX 3: CONSISTENCY MATRIX

PROPOSITIONS/QUESTIONS/ HYPOTHESES	LITERATURE REVIEW	DATA COLLECTION TOOL	ANALYSIS
Introduction	Abraham (2008); Bakker *et al* (2003); Batt and Moynihan (2002); Keiningham *et al* (2006); Taylor and Bain (1999); Holman (2003);	Secondary data in the form of literature review	
Literature on motivation	Basset-Jones and Lloyd (2005); Robinson and Morley (2006);	Secondary data in the form of literature review	
1. Is good work performance correlated with organisational identification?	Mowday *et al* (1979); Wegge *et al* (2006a); Emery and Barker (2007); Huang and Hsiao (2007);	Survey combined with actual performance data for each respondent – Likert-scale questionnaire: Questions 1 to 15	Non-parametric statistical procedures due to small sample. Measure of association will be by means of a simple correlation coefficient.
2. Is good work performance correlated with job satisfaction?	Christen *et al* (2006), Emery and Barker (2007); Taylor and Bain (1999); Gorjup *et al* (2008); Dormann and Zeijltra (2003); Holman (2003); Lawler *et al*	Survey combined with actual performance data for each respondent – Likert-scale questionnaire: Questions 16 to 42	Non-parametric statistical procedures due to small sample. Measure of association will be by means of a simple correlation coefficient.

	(1973); Sieben and de Grip (2004); Robinson and Morley (2006); Kinnie *et al* (2000); Wallace *et al* (2000); Hutchinson *et al* (2000); Keiningham *et al* (2006); Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006);		
3. Is good work performance correlated with positive emotions?	Lyobmirsky *et al* (2005) ; Barsade and Gibson (2007 ; Wegge et al (2006 b); Briner (1999)	Survey combined with actual performance data for each respondent – Likert-scale questionnaire: Questions 43 to 48	Non-parametric statistical procedures due to small sample. Measure of association will be by means of a simple correlation coefficient.

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You are guilty of plagiarism when you extract information from a book, article, web page or any other information source without acknowledging the source and pretend that it is your own work. This does not only apply to cases where you quote verbatim, but also when you present someone else's work in a somewhat amended (paraphrased) format, or when you use someone else's arguments or ideas without the necessary acknowledgement. You are also guilty of plagiarism if you copy and paste information directly from an electronic source (e.g. website, e-mail message, electronic journal article, or CD ROM), without paraphrasing it or placing it in quotation marks, even if you acknowledge the source. You are not allowed to submit another student's previous work as your own. You are furthermore not allowed to let anyone copy or use your work with the intention of presenting it as his/her own.

The following declaration must accompany all written work that is submitted for evaluation in this faculty. No work will be accepted unless the declaration has been completed and is included in the particular assignment.

We (full names and surname):	Fiona Bettesworth
Student number:	264 5152

Declare the following:
a)I understand what plagiarism entails and I am aware of the University' policy in this regard.

b)I declare that this assignment is my own, original work. Where someone else's work was used (whether from a printed source, the Internet or any other source) due acknowledgement was given and reference was made according to departmental or faculty requirements.

c)I did not copy and paste any information directly from an electronic source (e.g. a web page, electronic journal article or CD-ROM) into this document.

d)I did not make use of another student's previous work and submitted it as my own.

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g)I state that any company information contained herein that is not already in the public domain has been obtained with the permission of the company, and that the company has given permission for the disclosure of all this information

_____   _____
Signature   Date