



SPEARS, an Inspiration enabler for Employee Empowerment

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Received: 15 Jan. 2015, Revised: 14 Mar. 2015, Accepted: 1 May 2015, Published: 1 March 2016

Abstracts: While discussion of employee empowerment has been prevalent in the popular literature for many years, theoretical research on psychological empowerment has been appearing only recently in scholarly journals. Empowerment is a concept that links individual strengths and competencies. Empowerment is a very important issue to organizations especially those in service industry. This paper is an in dustries inside view of an organization's strategic approach of transforming employee empowerment in to employee excellence and benefiting from the process of transformation in a holistic way. This paper focuces into main aspects of empowerment & employee excellence and details a strategic approach which was inculcated in the organization. The SPEARS methodology explained in this paper was developed by Al Jazeera International Catering LLC (JIC) internally and was based on internal need and understanding. This research paper is on Employee Empowerment at Al Jazeera International LLC: it aims to illustrate it the role of employee empowerment on gaining sustainable competitive advantage. In this paper, the three main dimensions of completive advantage that are employee performance, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction are investigated and examined. The method of data collection is primary sources. The data was collected through an interview schedule. The sample size consisted of all the staff in different locations. The sample size was 200. The study was conducted in two phases. During the first phase individual objectives using SMART criteria was set. In the second phase a resource matrix was constructed to make more calculated and strategic decisions related to training and other material resources. After collecting data, analysis and inference has been done by using simple percentage and weighted average analysis using Al Jazeera's internal portal. Findings showed that implementation of SPEARS methodology made a significant difference and result showed that the dimensions of employee's empowerment are positively affected on gaining sustainable competitive advantage for companies and SPEARS can be generalized as an inspirational tool for competitive advantage.

Keywords: Strategic Empowerment, Employee Excellence, Knowledge management, Organizational Learning.

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Introduction

Catering is a high contact service and a people-oriented business. To survive in such a competitive market, it is crucial that both customers and employees are satisfied with the food, the dining environment and the service provided. Service organizations aim to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty as the ultimate goals. To achieve these goals they rely on their employees to deliver quality service and adopt the kind of customer-oriented mindset that leads to customer loyalty (Horney, 1996). In Heskett's model of the employee–customer–profitability link, the interaction between employee and customer has a positive influence on performance (Heskett et al., 1994). Further, in the interaction between employees and customers, the attitudes and behaviors of service employees affect customers' perceived service (Bitner, 1990). Barsky and Dittmann's study (1990) shows that well-trained, fairly paid employees contribute to a lower employee turnover rate. Satisfied customers result in higher return rates. Dedicated employees are more likely to engage in activities that result in customer satisfaction and profitability. The food service industry is a labor-intensive industry with a relatively high employee turnover. This creates problems in terms of service quality, consistency and team spirit among employees. Therefore, effective human resource management has become a vital component for creating and maintaining a competitive edge in the catering service industry. That is why we need to put people first in the service–profit chain (Heskett et al., 1994).

Employee empowerment has widely been recognized as an essential contributor to organizational success with many authors observing a direct relationship between the level of employee empowerment and employee performance, employee job satisfaction and employee commitment. Empowering employees enables organizations to be more flexible and responsive and can lead to improvements in both individual and organizational performance. Empowerment means encouraging the people to make decisions with least intervention from higher management (Handy, 1993). Employee empowerment is defined as giving the power to employees to make decisions. It is a form of freedom in which an employee takes decisions to ensure maximum satisfaction to customers. There is a widely held view that if employees are not happy with their jobs customers will never be uppermost in their minds (Bates, Bates and Johnston, 2003). Research has shown that employees are a critical prerequisite to the satisfaction of external customers especially in service organizations. Modern organizations due to global competition and dynamic business environment have the need to for quality human capital in order to match the compatibility of organization with existing dynamic changing environment. Empowerment is stimulating of developing work environment (Monavarian, 2007, p192). Employee empowerment is a motivational technique that is designed to improve performance if managed properly through increased levels of employee's participation and self-determination. Employee empowerment is concerned with trust, motivation, decision-making, and breaking the inner boundaries between management and employees as "them" verses us. (Ongori, 2009).

The employee empowerment literature highlights that empowered workforce will lead to achieving a competitive advantage (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Forrester, 2000; Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997). In this era of globalization there is a need for employees' empowerment in organizations so that employees will be in position to make quick decisions and respond quickly to any changes in the environment. Organizations that are committed to employee empowerment are in a position to motivate and retain their employees, although it's a



complex management tool which needs to be nurtured and handled with a lot of care.

In this paper, the three main dimensions of complete advantage namely are employee performance, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction how are investigated and examined. Employee empowerment and engagement has always been inseparable elements of organizational excellence and hence JIC as an organization committed to business excellence, conducted an Internal self-assessment in the year 2010 and found that employee focus was not aligned to the organizations goals/ targets. The engagement results were eye opening for the organization and indicated the priority required for employee empowerment and excellence as detailed in the need of SPEARS Section of this paper. SPEARS can be customized and implemented in any organizations irrespective of size and sec.

Literature Review

Empowerment has been defined in numerous ways, but most authors agree that the core element of empowerment involves giving employees a discretion (or latitude) over certain task related activities (Bowen and Lawler, 1992; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Schuessler and Heskett, 1991). Randolph (1995) defines employee empowerment as "a transfer of power" from the employer to the employees. Blanchard et al. (1996) for instance argued that empowerment is not only having the freedom to act, but also having higher degrees of responsibility and accountability. Empowerment enables the managers to perform and help others working under them to achieve through successful work systems. This requires that management should take more responsibility to lead to ward destiny with the intention to develop internal commitment. An individual's personal reasons and motivation are the factors that make him committed to a particular project, person or program and create internal commitment. In this regard, internal dedication is participatory and very closely linked with empowerment (Tony, 1999). The real empowerment includes decision-making authority over the work content and field of work (Greasly et al, 2007, P41).

Whether managers are functioning with a high or low performing employee is another likely factor which has an effect on the dynamics of authority and dissemination of empowerment to employees. In practical, provision of controls enhances both the speed and excellence of empowered units and perfection in awareness of market strain and improved modernism. Companies have been found capable of decreasing their company level operating cost and through closely controlled inside power processes (Brian et al., 2008). It is the qualitative aspect of concept empowerment which makes it complex for both managers and individuals working under them to introduce it within their organization. Due to this complexity, the number of organizations adopt top down management approach and various empowerment activities (Argyris & Chris, 1998). In this context, empowerment theory suggests fundamental changes concerning organizational formation, centralization of power and establishment of organizational processes (Hofstede, 1991).

Research Model

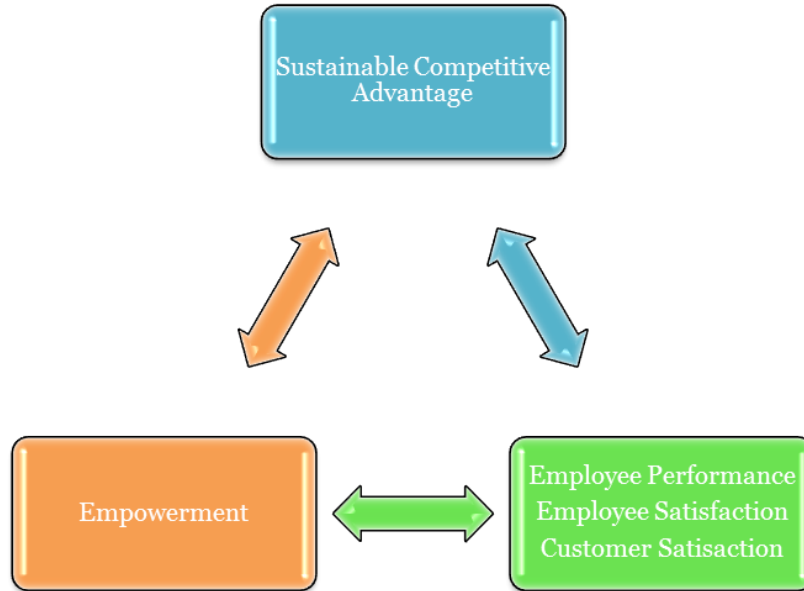


Figure 1

Empowerment

Employee empowerment, which came up in the 1990s, is known as one of the new management concepts (Hanold, 1997; 2002). However, when the relevant literature is analyzed, this concept is understood to have a longer history than previously thought (Nykodym et.al., 1994: 45; Wilkinson, 1998: 42). With its roots Human Rights Movement“ of 1950 and 1960s, empowerment is rather closely related to the various concepts and techniques designed to democratize the work-place (Elmuti, 1997: 233). As a matter of fact empowerment was given place in the publications of Pre-1990 that discussed topics such as work enrichment, participative management, employee motivation, total quality -control, individual development, quality circles and strategic planning. Without any doubt, perceptible increase in the number of articles related to employee empowerment was seen after 1990s (Honold, 1997: 202). Because Empowerment being the important and the core factor in the whole methodology model it should have a unique approach for empowering employees related to industry specific and sector.

To address this, as JIC is a service provider handling about 6000 customers on a daily basis JIC developed a unique matrix for employee empowerment for decision making to ensure .

In general organizations empower employees with the knowledge and encourage them to take decisions to meet and anticipate client requirements but fail to address what kind of decisions and responses need to be taken to ensure effective address of the situation/ problem.

JIC’s decision making matrix outlines various scenarios related to operational, process and customer handling for individual departments / designations to take appropriate decisions



related to ensure effective service recovery and process follow.

Decision making matrix also explains the level of authority of the individual's role in handling the situation / problem.

Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Generally, competitive advantage has been defined as an advantage, one firm has over a competitor or group of competitors in a given market, strategic group or industry (Kay 1993). Fahey (1989) defines competitive advantage as anything that favorably distinguishes a firm or its products from those of its competitors.

From the viewpoint of its customers or end-users, however, the focus here is not merely on the issue of the firm's competitive advantage, but to understand its sustainability over time. Sustainability does not refer to a particular period of calendar time, neither does it imply that advantages persist indefinitely (McGrath et al., 1995) but rather it depends on the possibility and extent of competitive duplication. Conceivably possessing competitive advantage is not the only objective of the firm, but to sustain it is more meaningful and paramount. Kotelnikov (2004) has identified three parts of competitive advantage. The first part is Basic Competitive Advantage (BCA) which is described as a firm's ticket to the global hyper competition game. Second part is Revealed Competitive Advantage (RCA) which is reflected by a firm's market share, and third is Sustainable Competitive Advantage which allows a firm to maintain and improve its competitive position in the market. Hoffman (2000) has summarized the development of the concepts of sustainable competitive advantage until 1999, which have been evolved from as early as 1965. From the summary, the development of SCA contributed by those scholars could be categorized into two major concepts:

- a) Cost and differential advantage concepts–(focused on by an earlier group of scholars from 1960s–early 1980s)
- b) Resource based concept (focused on by a latter group of scholars from mid 1980s)

The contributions of the earlier group of scholars focused on the firms "differential advantage or uniqueness as sources of sustainable competitive advantage, while the latter group of scholars deliberately enhanced the concept by appreciating the importance of skills, assets or a firm's competitive resources as sources of sustainable competitive advantage. However, there are no obvious differences between the two concepts; in fact both concepts are interrelated. An example could be Barney's (1991) concept of "The Resource Based View" which states that strategic resources must have attributes of value, rarity, be imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable. A closer look at these attributes shows that they could be generalized into the firms "resources differentiation/uniqueness", which is quite similar to the concept described by the earlier group of scholars, as sources of sustainable competitive advantage.

Competitive Dimensions

Only little evidence on approaches to include the competitive dimension into foresight activities can be found in the literature. However, by referring to the broader literature on foresight and its tools, we discuss available approaches and broaden the discussion by also discussing strategy literature. The field of competitive intelligence has been connected with foresight before (e.g. Neugarten, 2006; Schwarz, 2007), but these papers have contributed little insights into how to implement competitor foresight approaches. Competitive intelligence

has been perceived as an activity primarily concerned with analyzing the competitors of an organization and as an activity that considers the environments of that corporation (Bernhardt, 1994). In this realm it has been proposed that firms should aim to anticipate the moves of their competitors and that foresight can assist in this activity. In that respect Beal (2000) revealed a positive effect of environmental scanning on the firm's capability

-to align its competitive strategies with the environment. It has also been noted that maintaining a competitive advantage becomes increasingly difficult. There are indications that achieving temporary advantage is more difficult than previously thought and that the erosion of advantage occurs routinely as a result of dynamic and interactive rivalry (Sirmon, Hitt, Arregle, & Campbell, 2010). Also particularly in hypercompetitive industries with escalating levels of competition and reduced periods of competitive advantage, it might be important to act boldly and aggressively to create a competitive advantage (Bogner & Barr, 2000). These competitive dimensions, as we claim, are three: **Employee Performance, Employee Satisfaction and Customer Satisfaction** which are defined and explained in the following sections.

Employee Performance

It has been observed by researchers that there is a positive relationship between HR practices and employee performance (Gould-Williams, 2003; Park et al., 2003; Wright et al., 2003; Tessema and Soeters, 2006) and organizational performance (Qureshi et al., 2010). HR plays its role as a plus which may be a source of competitive advantage (Schuler and MacMillan, 1984; Pfeffer, 1994). Delaney and Huselid (1996) found HR practices impact on the perception of organizational performance. Past studies have acknowledged that HRM practices play a significant role in influencing the performance of employees (Shahzad et al., 2008; Tessema and Soeters, 2006). The management discipline which most often associates itself with the term is in Human Resources, performance management is often associated with the management of the performance of people. However even in the HR field best practice emphasizes the contribution of people to the achievement of organizational performance. Previous research has suggested that how strategic performance management system is used influences business outcomes (Martins and Salerno, 1999). More broadly, firms of all sizes need to continuously attend to their levels of productivity if they are to remain competitive. Their capacity to do so is not fully explained by market forces. Social equity theory advances an explanation of how certain firms may achieve higher than normal levels of productivity. As Buchele and Christiansen (1999, p.91) argue, continuous improvements in productivity depend not on individual efforts but on effective interaction among workers, work groups or departments (coordination), and between management and workers (cooperation).

The Nobel-prize winning economist George A. Akerlof (1982) showed that the productivity of individuals' behavior is determined by the social definition of the situation adopted by the relevant workers. Akerlof focuses on the implicit gift-exchange nature of employment arrangements, where exchange is based on reciprocity and trust and relations are endogenously determined.

Employee Satisfaction

Utilizing from the employees is important for the effectiveness of the firms. This contributes to have competitive advantage; and mostly, human resource management (HRM) deals with this subject in the organizations. There is the 'employee concept' in the center of



HRM. These employees may be working for that firm or have the possibility of working for that firm. Employees are more loyal and productive when they are satisfied (Hunter & Tietjen, 1997), and these satisfied employees affect the customer satisfaction and organizational productivity (Potterfield, 1999). Employee satisfaction is defined as the combination of affective reactions to the differential perceptions of what he/she wants to receive compared with what he/she actually receives (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992). Therefore, the organizations should try to supply the employee expectations in order to approach the employee satisfaction. In addition, emotional state of the employees may also affect their satisfaction. This forces the managers to create and sustain the desired working environments in the organizations. There is no limit for the employees to reach the full satisfaction and it may vary from employee to employee. Sometimes they need to change their behaviors in order to execute their duties more effectively to gain greater job satisfaction (Miller, 2006). Having good relationships with the colleagues, high salary, good working conditions, training and education opportunities, career developments or any other benefits may be related with the increasing of employee satisfaction. When investigating the employee satisfaction, it should be known that; -an employee may be more satisfied by a satisfying item, whereas the other employee may be less satisfied with the same item-. Because of this, analyzing the employee satisfaction from a large perspective will be better. That means; the sum of all satisfying factors composes that employee's satisfaction level. As a general definition, the employee satisfaction may be described as how pleased an employee is with his or her position of employment (Moyes, Shao, & Newsome, 2008). To investigate what the employees are satisfied by and measuring the employee satisfaction in the workplace is critical to the success and increases the profitability of the organization for having competitive advantage (Kelley, 2005).

Appraisal

Performance appraisal is one of the human resource management tools used to evaluate the job performance of employees (Dessler, 2011; Mondy et al.2002; and Tompkins, 1995). The ultimate goal of performance appraisal is to maintain better performance by fostering employees' motivation, which would depend upon the situations in the workplace, such as reward system, rules and regulations. This is pertinent to Herzberg's two-factor theory, which constitutes to variants about motivation. According to Bateman and Snell (2011), the first one focuses on motivators such as the nature of the job, duties and responsibilities, and job satisfaction to determine motivation. The second one known as hygiene factors includes working circumstances, compensation, supervision and the policy of an organization. The theory suggests that these factors should adequately be administered in order to motivate employees, and to serve several human resource management purposes such as promotion or termination. The results of the performance appraisal are measured based on a number of appraisal methods such as categories calling and comparative methods (Mathis and Jackson, 2006). The categories calling facilitates the measurement of performance of employees on a certain form by checking categorically grouped levels such as highest and lowest. The comparative appraisal methods entail the ranking and comparison of performance ratings of employees of a particular work unit.

Recognizing

Encouragement and rewarding is necessary for motivating any process to ensure continuous improvement of the process. JIC defined a rewarding and recognition process

for rewarding its employees, which outlines the various categories and aspects that need to be considered for rewarding and recognizing employees. Some of the core areas where JIC rewards its employees are, welfare activities, performance based rewards, and CSR related performance & participation. Recognition and rewards of JIC is based on its organizations policy and include various ways such as monetary benefits, promotions, career growth & experience based recognitions such as foreign trips, fine dining service etc. Organizations can customize its rewarding program based on their sector requirements and ability.

Sharing Knowledge

Knowledge management being a vital factor in the overall methodology that needs to be addressed to ensure effective usage of the organizations knowledge base. JIC developed a knowledge sharing platform for employees to share their knowledge to other employees irrespective of their expertise and sector. A yearly plan of default knowledge sharing sessions were planned and later the employees were encouraged and enabled to request and nominate for sharing their knowledge through the sharing platforms. JIC also used various other engagement platforms such as art & craft competitions, cooking competitions, cultural competitions & idea generation forums to identify the creativity and ability of individuals to make part of the knowledge management process. Organizations shall customize the engagement platforms to meet their business requirements and knowledge based requirements.

Customer Satisfaction

Over the last four decades, the marketing literature has defined and measured customer satisfaction in many different ways. Oliver (1997) specifies customer satisfaction as pleasurable fulfillment; as such, the consumer views consumption as satisfying some need, desire, goal, etc., in which its fulfillment is pleasurable. In spite of many definitions of customer satisfaction in the literature, a common way to define customer satisfaction is to follow the approach of the expectancy-confirmation disconfirmation paradigm (Anderson 1994; Anderson and Sullivan 1993; Kotler 1991; Oliver 1980; Oliver and DeSarbo 1988; Oliver and Swan 1989; Yi 1991).

In this perspective, customer satisfaction is delineated as the consumer's evaluation that products or services meet or fall to meet the customer's expectations (Oliver and Swan 1989; Yi 1991). Out differently, customer satisfaction consists of post-consumption judgment concerning product or service quality, given pre-consumption expectations (Kotler 1991). From this expectancy-confirmation/disconfirmation point-of-view, customer satisfaction happens in the case of a buyer's post-evaluation of a specific purchase experience (or experiences), contingent upon the buyer's quality perceptions and expectations, and confirmation/disconfirmation—the discrepancy between actual and expected quality (Yi, 1991). Customer satisfaction has generally been suggested to contain two such different dimensions as a transaction-specific evaluation approach and an overall, cumulative evaluation approach. That is, there exist two general conceptualizations of customer satisfaction in the literature (Anderson and Fornell 1993; Boulding et al. 1993; Yi, 1991). Prior research has portrayed customer satisfaction as transaction-specific. Using this framework, customer satisfaction is seen as a post-consumption evaluative judgment of a particular purchase experience or activity (Bearden and Teel 1983; Cronin and Taylor 1992; Oliver 1980, 1993; Oliver and DeSarbo 1988). The theoretical rationale behind this frame work is a variation of the expectancy-confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm (Prakash 1984; Oliver



and Swan 1989). Another formulation to measure customer satisfaction, widely used in recent studies, including studies utilizing the satisfaction metric in the ACSI data, is overall or cumulative satisfaction, which is, in other words, relationship-specific. With this formulation, overall satisfaction can be viewed as a customer's over all satisfaction experiences (Olsen 2002), and is gauged as the cumulative post purchase evaluative judgment of a group of discrete purchase activities or transactions for a particular brand or firm over a duration of time (Fornell et al. 1996; Johnson and Fornell 1991; Oliver 1997; Rust and Oliver 1994).

Of these two formulations of customer satisfaction, overall or cumulative satisfaction has been widely used with regard to the association between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. On one hand, transaction-specific satisfaction conceptualizes customer satisfaction as the outcome of a single transaction. Thus, this transaction-specific satisfaction formulation may be too restrictive—i.e. the transaction-specific satisfaction approach has a very limited predictive power (Anderson and Narus 1990; Fornell et al. 1996; Ganesan 1994). Indeed, firms have invested a great amount of money on this metric, as customer satisfaction investments represent the number one marketing research expenditure item for most firms. Customer satisfaction can be seen as an essential measure used to oversee business outcomes, decide on limited resource allocation, and provide rewards to management (Anderson 1994). For the majority of firms, the pursuit of customer satisfaction is illustrated in their communications, including advertisements, public relations releases, and mission statements (Peterson and Wilson 1992). With regard to this importance, a variety of marketing academics and practitioners have studied customer satisfaction for the past forty years.

Objectives of the Study

- To find out if employee performance influences the sustainable competitive advantage for organization.
- To find out if employee satisfaction influences the sustainable competitive advantage for organization.
- To find out if customer satisfaction influences the sustainable competitive advantage for organization.
- To find out if employee empowerment has a positive impact on sustainable competitive advantage for organization.
- To find out if employee empowerment has a positive impact on employee Performance on sustainable competitive advantage for organization.
- To find out if employee empowerment has a positive impact on employee satisfaction on sustainable competitive advantage for organization.
- To find out if employee empowerment has a positive impact on customer satisfaction on sustainable competitive advantage for organization.

Research Methodology

Research is the process of systematic and in depth study or search of any particular topic, subject or area of investigation, backed by collection, compilation, presentation and Inference of relevant details or data.



SPEARS

JIC SPEARS methodology is a managerial process which was developed to ensure that dissemination of excellence is practiced throughout the organization. It was designed to ensure that all staff in the organization are empowered with proper resources and knowledge for decision making; appropriate to their designations.

SPEARS has been implemented throughout the organization as follow:-

S - Setting Objectives for all functional areas and further disseminated through individual objectives for all employees,

P - Provide resources required by the staff (knowledge & tools) to perform to achieve their objectives and goals,

E - Empower staff to think on their feet and raise any concerns within the organization through the Corrective Action Request mechanism,

A - Appraise performance of individuals on a monthly basis through the Individual Objective monitoring system to ensure transparency in performance management,

R - Review and Recognize performances of individuals as per the company policy,

S - Share knowledge and create various knowledge sharing platforms to motivate creativity and dissemination of knowledge in the process.

SPEARS was developed as a strategic process to address various core areas of the organizations excellence such as employee development, employee alignment & empowerment. These assist the overall organizational development urging it on towards excellence and sustainability in areas of employee performance, customer performance and organizational performance, thus SPEARS acts as an excellence model by itself with set enablers and clear results.

All employees undergo the process of SPEARS for effective empowerment and excellence inculcation.

Need of SPEARS

JIC's engagement results of the year 2010 showed that employee's understanding and perception on objectives / goals of the organization was not aligned clearly. Employee focus was not aligned and was different in comparison to the organizations requirement and strategy, due to which the performance level of the employees were not as per the organizations requirement. Analysis also exhibited that due to lack of alignment and empowerment decision making was delayed and it resulted in customer complaints, results also outlined the organizations gap in addressing the customer demands in a prompt way, which ended in lower customer satisfaction levels. These analysis results were the main need for development of SPEARS by JIC, with a main strategy to align and empower employees for organizational excellence and hence the evolution of SPEARS happened within the organization.

The SPEARS Evolution Journey

The SPEARS journey started as a simple empowerment system for the staff to raise their concern and requirements through the organizations Corrective Action request system (CAR). It later on enabled the staff to request for the required resources for performing their tasks and to achieve their goals, and it slowly evolved to address customer requirements and



needs. This is when JIC management decided to structure a methodology for this process to ensure complete alignment of employees to the organizational requirement inculcating excellence and empowerment. As part of the process development various stakeholders of the organization were involved and engagement sessions were conducted to get inputs on the structure and appropriate methodology, Fresh Eyes one of such engagement session being an Idea Generation forum helped us to structure the methodology, which emphasized the need of Individual objectives, thus Setting objectives and appraising were included as part of the methodology requirements. As part of process verification and review of implementation JIC internal audit team suggested that review and recognition of employee performance on regular basis should be incorporated to ensure effective implementation, thus review and reorganization were made part of the methodology. Initially the methodology was implemented as SPEAR and as part of an informal benchmarking of the methodology JIC management felt the importance of knowledge sharing and revised the SPEAR methodology with sharing knowledge process thus completing the structure as SPEARS.

Research Design

The research used Descriptive Research design. Descriptive Research design means fact finding one. Al Jazeera International Catering LLC (JIC) used SPEARS to find out the fact of respondents attitude and opinion about employee empowerment and their impact on sustainable competitive advantage. Any organization irrespective of their size and sector can implement the SPEARS methodology as per the organization requirement. The following methods were used by JIC for implementation of SPEARS and shall act as implementation guide for organizations wanting to implement SPEARS.

Sampling Size

Sample size denotes the number of sample selected for the study. The sample size for this study is fixed at (200) respondents.

Sampling Method

Probability sampling technique has been used for this study. This Simple random sampling method was adopted for selecting the sample item. The total population of workers in Al Jazeera International Catering is around (300). By adopting simple random method, it is proposed to select (200) respondents from the company.

Setting objectives

Being the first phase of the methodology, setting objectives has a critical and crucial importance to the whole methodology and acts as the basement of the whole process, hence its necessary that the organizations ensure that this phase is addressed with great importance. JIC brainstormed internally and defined a way for addressing this phase, though the organization has job descriptions for individual designations, there was no clear understanding for individuals to perform their job in alignment with the organizations goals/ objectives. Hence JIC developed Individual objectives for all the employees of the organization which were disseminated from the departmental objectives and had direct relationship with the organizations objectives and goals. The objectives were made based on the SMART criteria and explained the specific objectives related to their individual job role, which were defined with measurement is aspects of time, productivity and performance, the objectives were also made in consideration of employee stakeholders to ensure that its easily attainable and realistic, Time frame and targets were clearly defined for the individuals to ensure effective review.

Providing Resources

Second phase of the methodology, resource provision is equally important as the first one, as it's the main component for the individual to have the appropriate resource for them to perform their task in order to accomplish their goals / objectives. JIC created a Resource matrix which outlines the minimum resource requirement for individual designations in aspects of **various resources including training and other material resources**. We also encouraged employees to request for any additional resources if required such as additional trainings, material resources etc. Provision of resources for employees is ensured by the relevant Human Resources process owner as part of the initial joining formalities of the employee.

Statistical tools Applied for the Analysis

Simple percentage method and weighted average method

Data Analysis and Inference

The CAR process as part of employee empowerment has enabled JIC to address non-compliances internally which resulted in achieving 100% compliance scoring from the local statutory authorities (Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority - ADFCA) which have rated JIC's operations as 100% compliant in a surprise audit.

The employee retention rate reduced from 98.52% in the year 2010 to 97.6% in the year 2014.

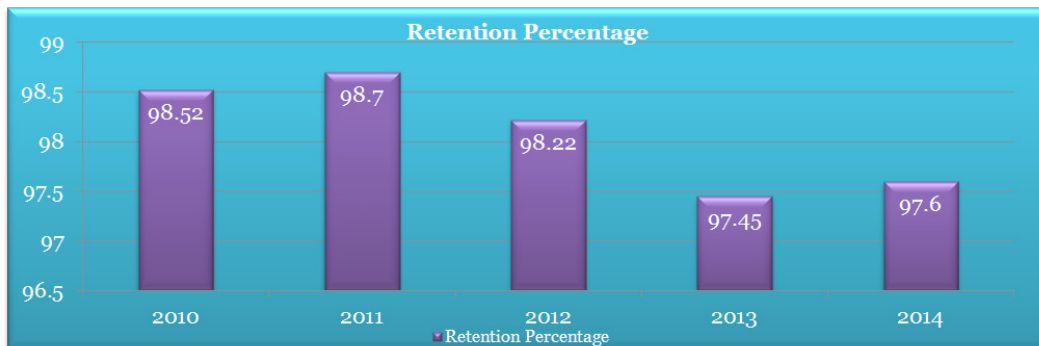


Chart 1

The employee's participation in the welfare activities increased from 55% in the year 2010 to 81% in the year 2014.

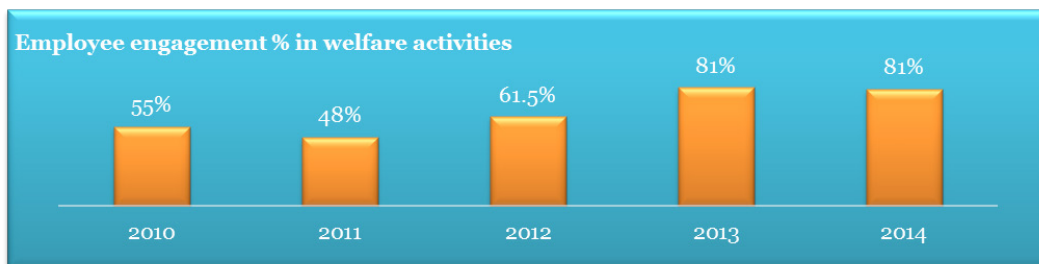


Chart 2



To give more empowerment to the employees Al Jazeera constituted an internal committee in the year (2011) for issues faced by employees. The table indicates the percentage of participation of employees in different committees.

Details of JIC committees & employee composition				
S.no	Committee Name	Total No of employees in Organization	# of staff in committee	Percentage
1	Staff Welfare committee	298	8	3%
2	ERT Team	298	19	6.3%
3	HACCP Team	298	10	3%
4	Excellence Team	298	07	2.3%
	Total	298	44	15%

Table 1

Employee Performance

In 2013 based on an informal benchmarking JIC understood that maximum time period of a person's concentration is on an average of 7- 10 mins, hence JIC revised its Training strategy by reducing its time duration of trainings from 45 mins to 15 mins. The performance level was 72% in the year 2010 and it increased by an overall of 12% in 2014 and reached 83.69%, JIC also reduced the time duration of its custom made videos, effectiveness of the same was visible through the staff performance in their regular work and the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority Exams.

Training Indicators

Training Indicators such as Training man-hours, Training sessions and number of Sessions increased up to as 10 times more when compared to the initial Indicators for the year 2010. This overall resource provision enabled JIC to Achieve a pass % of 99.18% in the exams conducted by Abu Dhabi Food control Authority for Food Handlers on Essential Food safety, where the common industry standard is only 75%.

Annual Training Record			
Year	No of Training Sessions	No of Attendees	Training Man-hours
2010	32	406	1374
2011	256	2244	4845
2012	462	5125	10878
2013	498	6018	10009.5
2014	631	5124	51325
Total	1878	18917	78431.5

Table 2

The number of training attendees increased from 406 in the 2010 to 5124 in the year 2014 as a result of implementation of SPEARS.

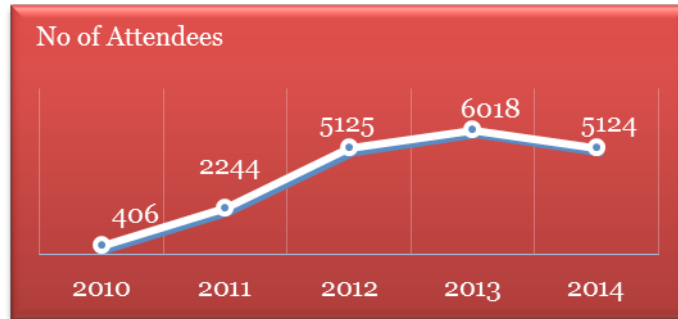


Chart 3

The number of training sessions increased from 32 in the year 2010 to 631 in the year 2014

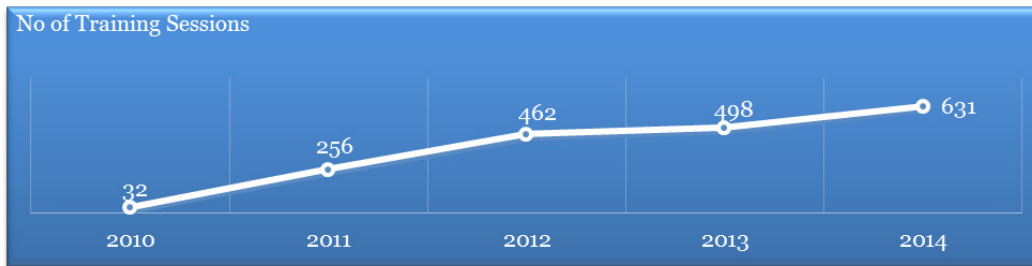


Chart 4

The number of training man hours increased from 1,374 in the year 2010 to 51325 in the year 2014



Chart 5

The budgeted training session in the year 2010 was 30, which increased to 541 in the year 2014 while the actual was 32 in the year 2010 which increased to 631 in the year 2014.



Training Budgeted Vs Actual		
Year	Budgeted	Actual
2010	30	32
2011	253	256
2012	451	462
2013	499	498
2014	541	631

Table 3

The monthly review system helps JIC to identify the extraordinary performers and paves the way for recognition, in 2010 7 employees were recognized as part of the staff excellence award program and the same went up to 90 employees.



Chart 6

Knowledge sharing in JIC operation has been of great success and overall 162 beneficiaries have benefited from the Knowledge sharing sessions.

Month	Pax	Man hours
December	35	22.5
November	35	22.5
September	34	29
May	32	19.5
April	40	29
March	30	20
Total	206	142.5

Table 4

Employee Satisfaction

Structured empowerment enabled JIC to improve the employee satisfaction level to 97% in 2013 (4% increase when compared to the 2010 results). JIC measured staff perceptions based in part through the bi-annual staff satisfaction survey (each survey has 20 questions

that cover topics such as fair treatment, work enjoyment, work appreciation, empowerment, preferred employer etc.). The below results depict the percentage (%) of the results achieved throughout these years.

The Induction and training percentage increased from 99.99% in the year 2010 to 100% in the year 2013

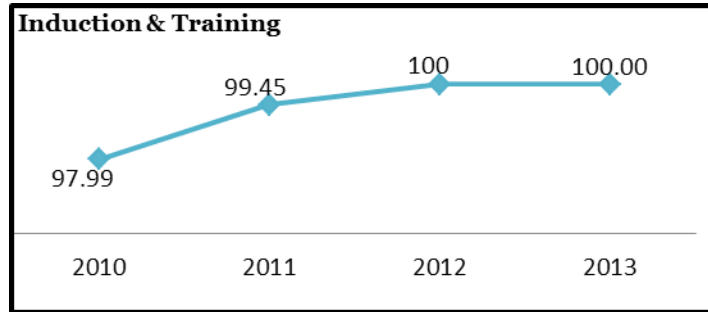


Chart 7

The fair treatment percentage increased from 99.64% in the year 2010 to 99.50% in the year 2013

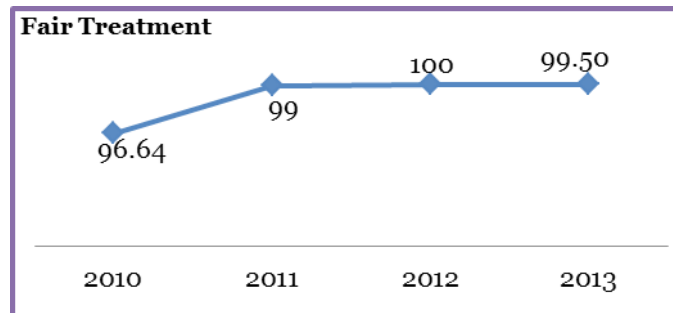


Chart 8

The percentage of employees who enjoyed their work while working in Al Jazeera also increased from 85.23% in the year 2010 to 95% in the year 2013

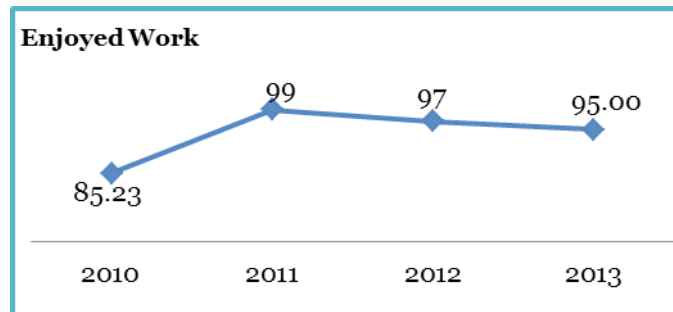


Chart 9



The percentage of employees who think Al Jazeera as their preferred employer also increased from 92.62% in the year 2010 to 99.50% in the year 2013.



Chart 10

The percentage of employees who think that their work has been appreciated by the Al Jazeera Management also increased from 93.29% in the year 2010 to 98.84% in the year 2013.

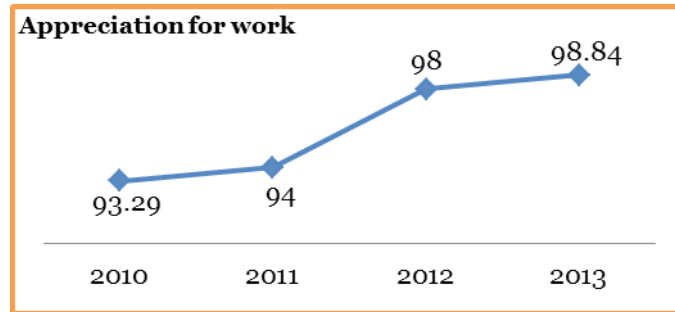


Chart 11

The percentage of employees-management communication increased from 99.33% in the year 2010 to 99.50% in the year 2013

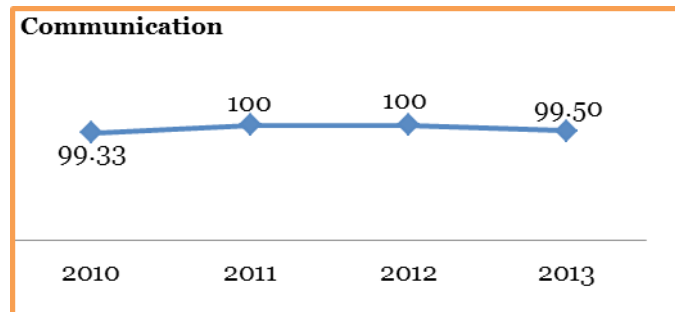


Chart 12

The percentage of employees who think that their learning process has improved after being recruited by Al Jazeera also increased by 91.95% in year 2010 to 96% in the year 2013.

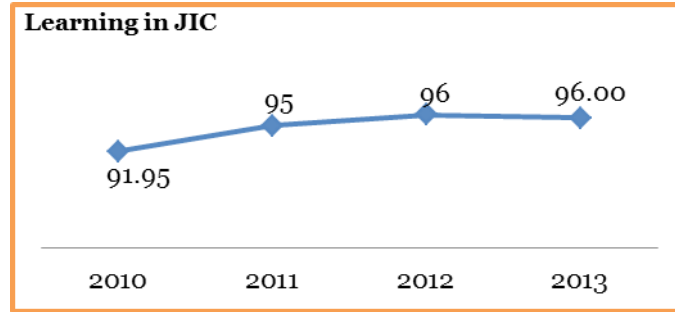


Chart 13

The percentage of employees who think that the working hours of Al Jazeera are best have also increased from 77.18% in the year 2010 to 98.34% in the year 2013

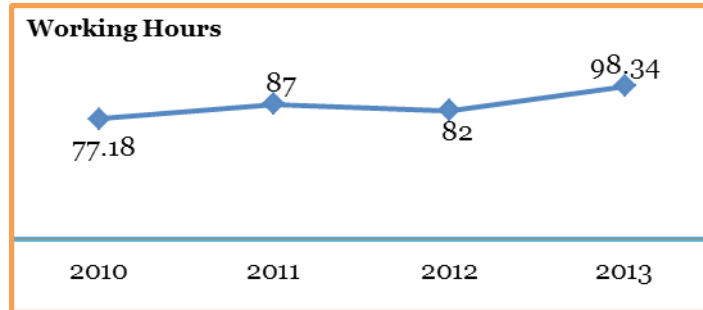


Chart 14

The overall employee satisfaction trend at Al Jazeera increased from 93.09% in the year 2010 to 98.52% in the year 2014

Employee Satisfaction % Trend

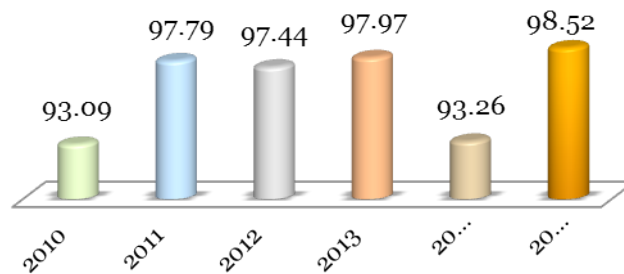


Chart 15

The percentage of employees who think that the facilities provided by Al Jazeera are the best has also increased from 75.84% in the year 2010 to 98.28% in the year 2013.

In 2014 JIC conducted anonymous survey with different set of questions to understand the staff perception in detail and helped JIC management to evaluate the ground reality. Based on the survey results Action items were implemented to improve on the Areas of



concern and a resurvey was conducted by Dec 2014 to measure the effectiveness of the Implemented action items.

Following table outlines the major areas of focus for the year 2014.

Sl. No.	Survey Topics / Questions	Jun-14	Dec-14	Percentage Raise after Action Item Implementation
1	Are you satisfied working with JIC?	87.28%	98.63%	11.35%
2	How supportive are your colleagues?	92.81%	99.04%	6.23%
3	Staff Meal Facilities	93.36%	94.79%	1.43%
4	Staff Accommodation Facilities	87.41%	100.00%	12.59%
5	Staff welfare Activities	93.36%	99.45%	6.09%
6	Medical facilities provided by JIC	91.56%	98.90%	7.34%

Table 5

The staff promotion percentage went up from 2% in the year 2010 to 10% in the year 2014

Year	No of Staff Promoted	Total Staff	Total Promoted Staff
2010	3	182	2%
2011	57	297	19%
2012	129	498	26%
2013	47	415	11%
2014	29	303	10%

Table 6

Customer Satisfaction

The customer satisfaction level increased from 86.54% in the year 2010 to 97.51% in the year 2014 (overall increase by 10% when compared to 2010). In the year 2012 JIC operations were widened in the western region and most of the feedback had concerns with regards to consistency in the food taste, and the satisfaction levels dropped down by 2% and hence JIC implemented the standard recipe system to address this issue and overcame with increased in the customer satisfaction in the consecutive years.

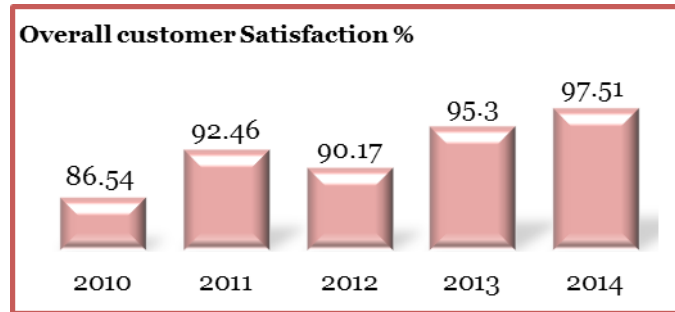


Chart 16

JIC monitors and improves on the overall Customer satisfaction, by analyzing the customer feedback on monthly basis and monitoring the performance on company wise basis (per customer category).

The overall catering satisfaction percentage increased from 75% in the year 2010 to 94.9% in the year 2014.

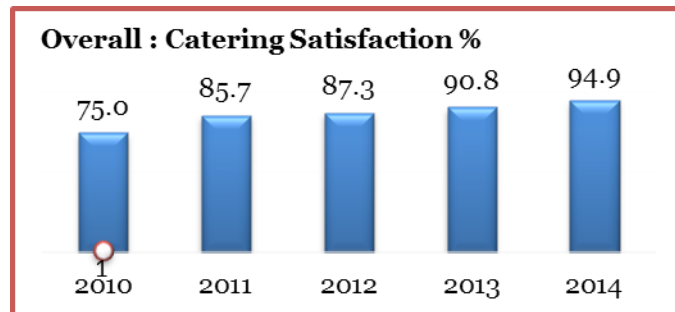


Chart 17

The overall housekeeping satisfaction percentage increased from 97.5% in the year 2010 to 99.1% in the year 2014

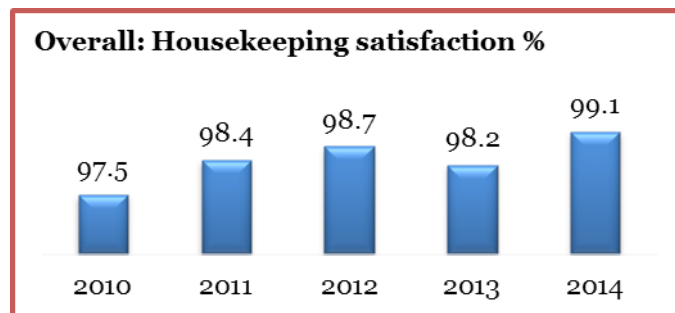


Chart 18

The overall laundry satisfaction increased from 87.1% in the year 2010 to 98.5% in the year 2014.



Chart 19

JIC analyses Individual company wise performance of customer feedback to understand the customer requirements in precise and addresses their requirement promptly to sustain the overall customer satisfaction levels.

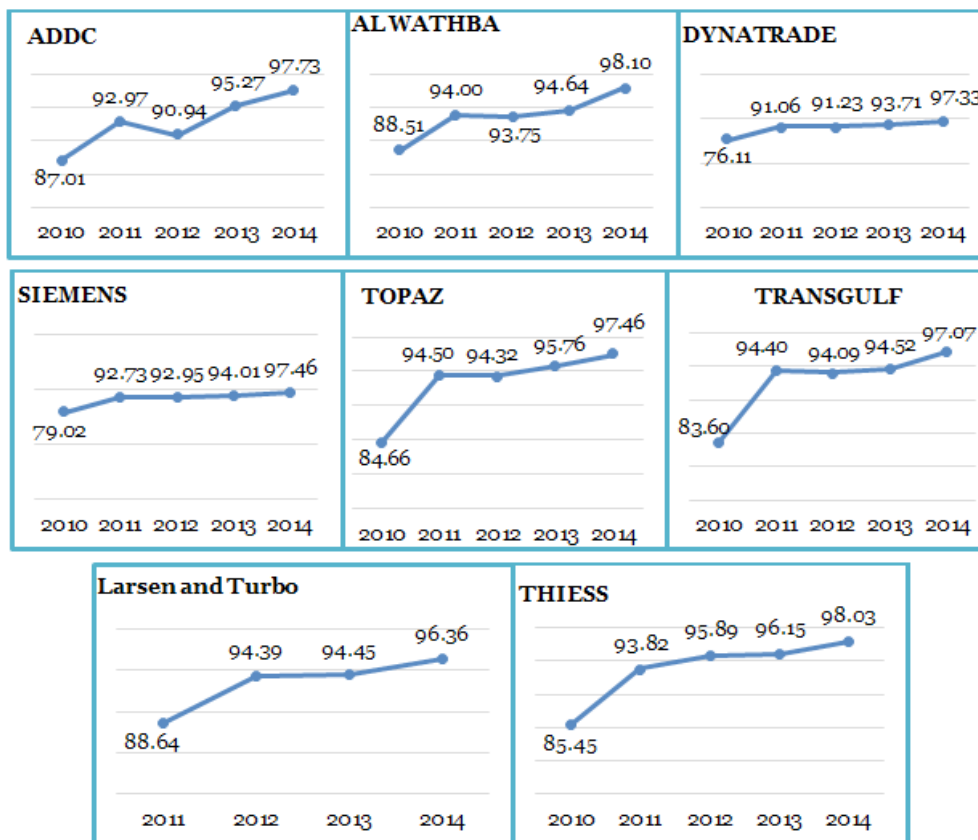


Chart 20

Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Some of the financial benefits of implementing SPEARS were cost reduction in operation by 10% in the year 2013 while comparing it to 2010 operational cost. SPEARS has enabled JIC achieve and excel in the overall organizational Excellence. As a result we were able to receive various recognitions in the Local region and in International Level, Such as the **Sheikh Khalifa Excellence Award** for business excellence, **Arabia Corporate social Responsibility Award for partnership category**, **BIZZ Arabic 2014** for Business Excellence, and SPEARS was recognized as an **International Best Practice** for the Year 2014 in overall.

Overall purchase cost is monitored and quality raw materials are purchased at a price better than the regular market price. The chart below depicts the results of the best procurement practices.

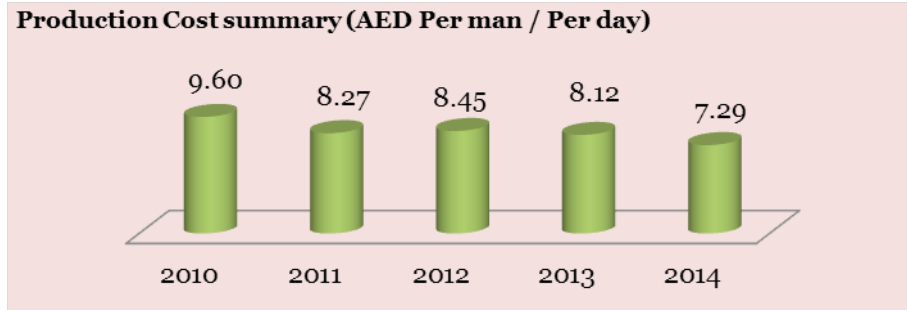


Chart 21

The below chart shows overall cost reduction in production cost due to following structured.

Market Price vs Purchase cost: 2010 - 2014

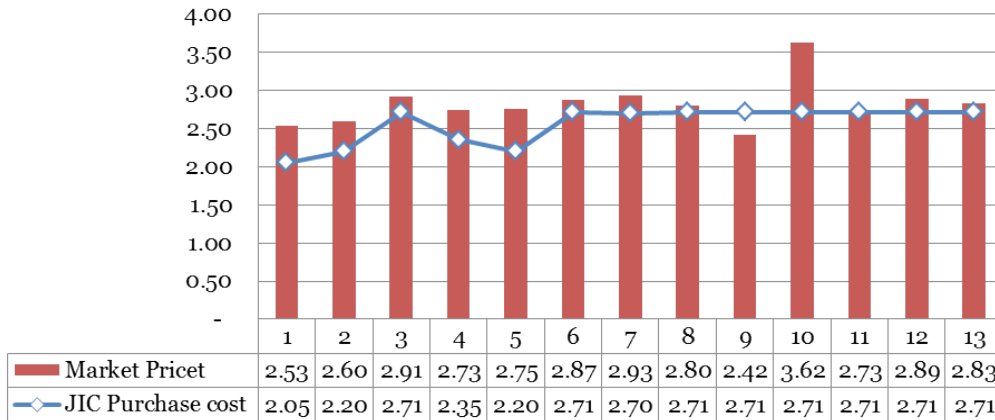


Chart 22

The average number of customers served by JIC increased from 2102 in year 2010 to 4541 in the year 2014

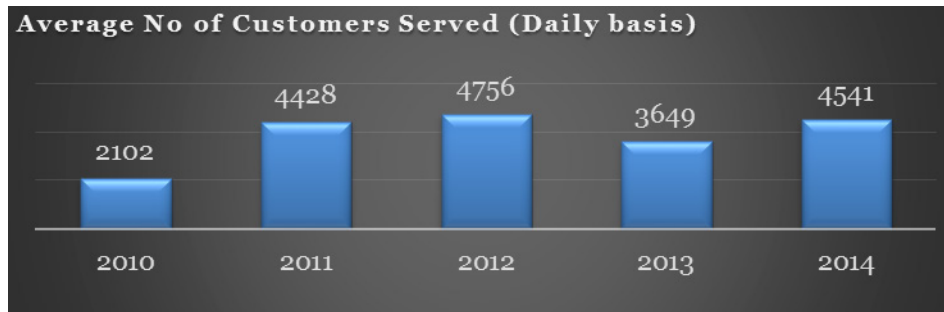


Chart 23

Fruits of SPEARS

There are various results and benefits an organization can achieve by implementing SPEARS in its business operation and process. SPEARS has since its inception enabled JIC to achieve various results which are both financial and non-financial in nature. Setting clear objectives created a positive difference in the employee performance levels.

Future of SPEARS

SPEARS has improved the overall organizational performance related to employees and customers and as part of our regular internal audit and review system management of JIC decided to extend the SPEARS methodology to its supplier stake holders to ensure and improve the performance levels .

Also management has decided to use SPEARS methodology as a project management methodology to ensure effective project implementation.

Conclusion

Empowerment is a concept that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems and proactive behavior to social policy and social change. Empowerment provides potential capacities for exploiting the capabilities of human that don't use completely. Employees' empowerment should be used by management as one of the strategies in achieving organisation objectives. Employee empowerment creates a high degree of commitment and reduces employee turnover and increases customer satisfaction. Employee empowerment has a positive impact on an organization's quality of work, employee satisfaction, collaboration, productivity, and costs. Organizations that provide employees with the freedom and flexibility to make a difference often see higher quality work from employees. Employees in an organization that focuses on empowerment rate their satisfaction levels as high compared to employees in organizations with a culture that prohibits employee empowerment. As employees are empowered and treated as vital components of the organization, they gain self-confidence and collaborate with others in order to achieve more than one person could by working independently. Empowered employees feel a sense of increased responsibility, accountability, and ownership for their work, resulting in increased productivity. Empowering employees reduces organizational costs such as employee turnover costs, operational costs, and employee retention costs. Management should trust their employees and encourage open communication in organisations. On the other hand, achieving sustainable competitive advantage or organizations that activate in the turbulent environment and market is so important and vital.



Recommendations

This paper investigates the impact of employees' empowerment on the gaining sustainable competitive advantage for Al Jazeera International Catering, an organization into the hospitality industry in UAE. In this research three dimensions of sustainable competitive advantage have been investigated. These three main dimensions for competitive advantage in this paper included: employee performance, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. This paper will contribute to the existing literature of employee empowerment and will inspire managers to come up with interventions similar to SPEARS to promote employee empowerment in organisations. This study specifically will make management see employee empowerment as an opportunity to minimise employee turnover in organisation. In this era of globalisation the idea empowering the lower levels of management is being given great attention. In order for the organisation to respond quickly to any environmental change there is need for employee empowerment. It is highly recommended that organizations especially those in service industries for gaining sustainable competitive advantage should attend to the empowerment of employees by using innovative tools such as SPEARS. Empowerment enables both employees and managers to gain an updated knowledge and abilities which would enable them to gain sustainable competitive advantage in their work which in turn would provide competitive advantage for the organization.

Limitation and Scope for Further Research

The study was conducted based on data acquired from the employees of Al Jazeera International Catering only, which is in the hospitality business and the findings may not be applicable to the other business. Since we have found employee empowerment as an important factor that enhances sustainable competitive advantage, it is recommended that there is a wide scope for repeating this research with larger sample sizes than this study, more demographics factors must be added in the study and should be expanded to all service industries throughout the country which could lead to a different set of results. As such, this study can be considered as exploratory.

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