Developing Guidelines for Collecting and Using Feedback in Japanese Fitness Clubs

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The purpose of this study was to develop guidelines for promoting, collecting and using client’s feedback in Japanese fitness clubs. Discussions were conducted to develop the guidelines with three business people belonging to three major fitness clubs. Good practices were collected using an interview survey, the guidelines were developed based on good practices. As a result, 7 items and phrases were created for promoting to collect and use client’s feedback. The guidelines included 2 concepts. One was to be able to work on immediately and adapt to each work place. The other was to be simple and low cost.

Existing systems of each club to collect client’s feedback had a few problems, and was difficult to collect positive feedback. Moreover, each club depended on accidents to collect client’s feedback without intention. The guidelines support internationally collecting client’s feedback. In addition, each item was decided considering the service record in the fitness industry. Positive feedback was effective for encouraging those who have a short service record. Negative feedback was effective for promoting growth of veterans having a long service record.

The guideline based on good practices was led. The guidelines include, 7 items and phrases considering adjustment for each workplace, ease, and low cost.

Key words: resilience, client’s feedback, the guideline, fitness clubs

Introduction

Recently, the importance of the fitness industry is increasing with a desire for a healthy life. However, fitness club employees supporting people’s sports are exposed to much stress by complaint handling, emotional labor, sales budget, a shortage of career prospects and others. Hence, resilience is needed for adjusting to stress and overcoming adversities.

Moreover, how to enhance resilience is focused on discipline of business administration. However, most existing resilience training is collective training, which needs very high costs. An approach for enhancing resilience by existing resilience training is difficult for fitness clubs. In addition, it was shown that many Japanese small enterprises and workplaces do not have knowledge and theory for improvement of mental health1). Therefore, we decided to develop a tool for simplifying and supporting resilience enhancement with a simple and low cost way by the manager and employees as a self-help effort2).

The tool includes three perspectives. Firstly, promoting challenge to stretched work with much stress as a trigger for growth. Secondly, constructing a good relationship for promoting to receive much support from associates. Finally, collecting and using feedback from clients3). These are shown as important factors in the process for enhancing resilience of fitness club employees3).

Three improvement areas were decided in the guidelines for supporting resilience enhancement4). It was considered that items about promoting challenge and constructing a good relationship are...
able to be applied to other lines of business. However, an improvement area for promoting to collect and use client’s feedback is a unique point of fitness clubs requiring a close relationship with clients. That improvement area might not be created, if fitness clubs were not targeted. That is different from other improvement areas. In addition, the paper showing the guidelines for supporting to enhance resilience does not discuss enough about the background. Moreover, the improvement area has a high specialty about fitness club service. Therefore, we showed the process of development and the character of the guidelines for promoting collecting and using client’s feedback in this paper.

Methods

Fieldwork was carried out three times in June of 2014. The purpose of fieldwork was to ascertain the present situation of the system for collecting and managing feedback from clients at branches of three major fitness clubs in Japan. Moreover, we discussed with informants three times about the ways to collect and use feedback from clients.

1. Informants

We asked 3 informants. One of them was male, and the others were female. Two informants were regular employees, they were playing the role of manager in a fitness club. Another informant was an owner of a fitness club, who had been instructing simultaneously as a free instructor at a major fitness club for many years. She has experience as an administrator at a major fitness club.

2. Data collection

Before fieldwork, we collected good practices about client’s feedback from narrative data collected with semi-structured interviews from October to November in 2012. Discussions were carried out for considering good practices. They were narrated by 13 fitness club employees. Discussions were carried out one to one between the first author and each informant in a meeting room. Each discussion was for 60-90 minutes. Before the discussions, the important narrative about the necessary support from clients in the process of overcoming difficulties was extracted as a good practice. In the discussion, we set the following 3 agendas. 1) Confirming the ways each shop collects feedback from clients. 2) studying good practices about collecting and using client’s feedback, 3) considering contents of the guidelines including select items and determining phrases. The procedure for deciding the items and phrases of the guidelines was followings. Firstly, items were decided tentatively based on good practices. Secondly, items were decided considering followings, i) possibility, ii) ease, iii) self-help, iv) low cost. Finally, items and phrases were modified based on industrial psychology’s basic theory by the research team.

Result

1. Present circumstance

Firstly, we asked informants if client’s feedback was important for overcoming adversities from a business person’s point of view. We gained a common answer, they said “Yes”. Especially, we had a consensus like the following. “Especially, I think positive feedback plays a significant role when the employee have a short professional career in the fitness industry”. However, they felt difficulty in dragging effective feedback intentionally. In addition, we confirmed an existing frame for collecting feedback in each company. As a result, “A lot of feedback had been collected with a sheet of paper, most collected feedback was negative feedback, there was little positive feedback”. The answer was a common answer from 3 informants belonging to each company. Under the present circumstance, we obtained approval necessary to collect positive feedback from all informants. We confirmed the need that business people need to have positive feedback, we discussed about how to collect and use client’s feedback based on good practices.

2. Concepts

We collected many good practices. Good practices were made by a strict selection from the perspective of collecting intentionally and promoting employee’s growth with feedback. As a result, we defined 7 items for supporting collection and use of client’s feedback. Those included two concepts. One of them was to be able to be worked on immediately and to adapt to each work place. In addition, important things were very simple and need no
special cost. As a result, 7 items and each phrase was determined based on these concepts.

### 3. Items and phrase

We discussed contents of the guideline considering the above concepts. As a result of the discussion, the guidelines including 7 items and phrase of each item was led (Table-1). 7 phrases included specific examples based on good practices.

| 1 | Promoting report of output, admiration for operation, and words of encouragement: If you received a report or output (change of mind and body, children get the ability to swim) and admiration for operation, you promote feedback directly to the concerned person. If you received warm, welcome growth, and encouraging feedback, you accept honestly. |
| 2 | Confirming client’s real intention of sharp feedback (word, expression, attitude) : If you received sharp feedback, you confirm the client’s real intention of sharp feedback. In many cases, clients have a different intention from their word. The opportunity is a chance for creating a good relationship. |
| 3 | Sharing of a feedback received personally: If you received feedback (both positive and negative), you share the feedback with any staff (it is not limited to the administrator). Negative feedback is shared as problem of the organization, it is necessary that the organization work out was to solve the problem. It is not considered a problem of the individual. If the administrators received consultation about negative feedback, it is required to treat the problem as organizational problem and separate it from personal evaluation. |
| 4 | Treating negative feedback reception staffs received as organizational problem: Reception staff easily become the contact person to receive negative feedback. Clients have a different intention even when they tell directly negative feedback to reception staff on the surface. It is necessary to treat negative feedback as an organizational problem, separating from personal evaluation on such case. |
| 5 | Telling positive side of associate to client: If you are told negative feedback from associates, you have never conformed to a negative campaign. You are required to protect your associates when you were told negative feedback. It is very important to tell clients the positive side of associates. |
| 6 | Moving out of your position for collecting feedback: When you go out of your working position (including cleaning, go round to check a locker room, and helping other sections), communication increases. It is very important to go out of your position. If you do that, you gain many opportunities for joining “Idobatakai” (gossip circle or chat) of inter clients. In addition, feedback is collected naturally. |
| 7 | Using feedback for quantum leap: There is a lot of feedback which bring significant growth to employees. You can work out how to promote growth with negative feedback. Then, it is desirable to share the challenge based on feedback. |

### Discussion

We had discussions based on on-site viewpoints. Because, the previous study about client’s feedback was limited. It was found that each company had an existing system with a paper medium for collecting client’s feedback. However, it was observed that the existing system might not be functioning enough. The effectiveness was dependent on efforts by each branch. For example, when we visited one shop, the shop had run out of paper for collecting feedback. In one branch, the administrator was not concerned, a part time worker had checked papers on which clients wrote requests. A part time worker gave the paper to the person in charge, but even then the unsolved paper was put aside. Under the present circumstance, there was a question of whether the existing system for collecting feedback was functioning or not. However, one branch had produced some positive results using handling requests from clients. When clients wrote the paper for feedback, most of their requests were about the time schedule of programs and malfunction of facilities. Additionally, this feedback was negative. In this study, we did not need such feedback. We need effective feedback to enhance resilience.

It was shown that client’s feedback significantly influence fitness club employees. We found that most of the feedback was not intentionally taken up. About positive feedback, the fitness clubs depend on fortuity and strength of the employee’s personal relationship with clients. In this study, we focused on intentional collecting feedback. At first, we considered positive feedback was more important than negative feedback. However, informants...
showed that both kinds of feedback was important. The administrator had intended that they utilize positive feedback for employees who have a short service record in the company. The reason for this was that, administrators thought positive feedback was directly linked with the worth and joy of their job. Besides, the administrators thought negative feedback brought opportunities of growth to employees who have a long service record in the company. It showed necessity of a new contrivance for collecting and using feedbacks from clients. Hence, a few items about how to use feedback were included in the guidelines.

The guidelines included 7 items as shown, however we should consider that each branch has a different situation. It is necessary to adapt to each situation flexibly for each branch to be effective. It was explained that responding to local needs is important. In addition, the necessary items were different depending on length of work career and age of individuals. It was required to contrive for adapting situations of each workplace. Moreover, it is necessary that the relation is verified between how to apply a guideline and the effect applying a guideline.

Finally, we should consider that the content of the guideline depends on the characteristic of the fitness club’s workplace. Hence, the way of promoting collection and use of client’s feedback has more room for more research. It is needed to refine the content of the guidelines.

Conclusion

The guidelines based on good practices were led. The guidelines include 7 items and phrases considering adjustment to each workplace, ease, and low cost. In addition, the guidelines showed the tangible practical way to use and collect intentionally.

References