

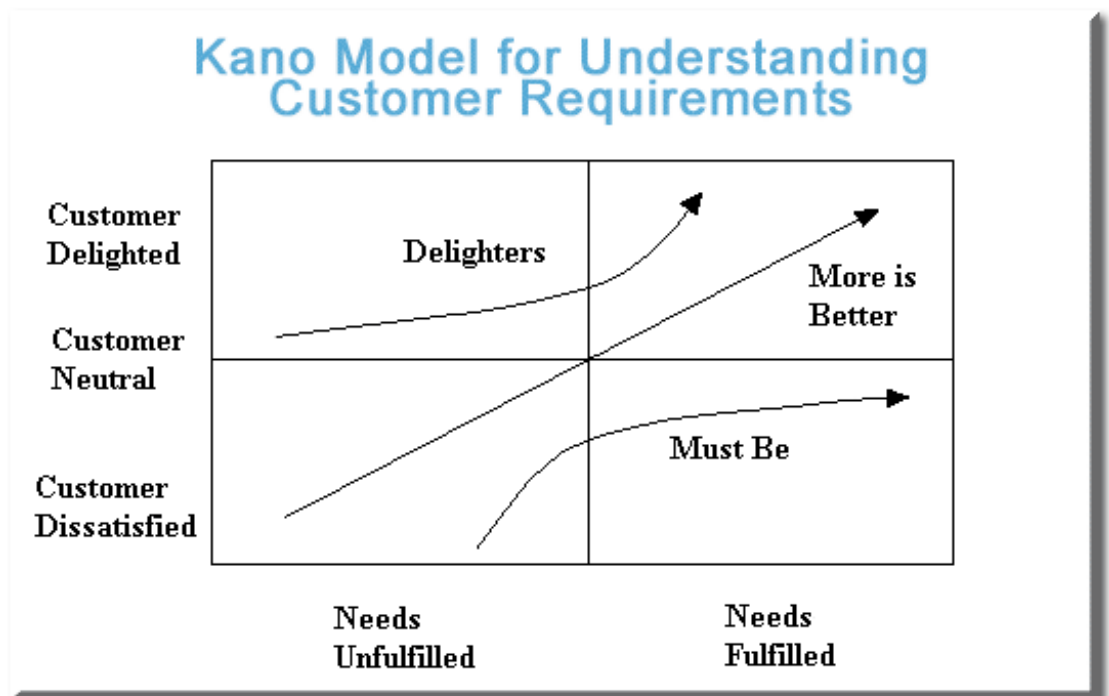


## Becoming an Employer of Choice

Is your organization competing for talent? Are you finding it harder to attract and retain the kind of people required for your organization or business to thrive and succeed? If so, you are not alone!

Overwhelming numbers of organizations are experiencing difficulties filling non-entry level positions <sup>1</sup>. Key positions are remaining vacant. And increasingly, desperate managers are filling vacant positions by hiring employees away from competitors and partner organizations <sup>2</sup>. The net effect is simply that companies that do not have a desirable work environment are unable to attract and retain the employees they want <sup>3</sup>. This problem creates a ripple effect on customer satisfaction, market share and profitability<sup>4</sup>.

One helpful model for thinking about what differentiates "employers of choice" comes from Dr. Kano, a leader in the quality movement. Originally developed to help companies understand customer requirements, the model is also helpful to understand the needs of employees.



Some needs can be thought of as "must be". "Must be" needs become "dissatisfiers" when they are absent but create no competitive edge when they are present. From an employee perspective, these needs might include a safe, clean working environment, and a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. If the "must be" needs are not met, you may hear complaints, but if they are met, you will not have increased employee satisfaction because they are "expected".

Some needs are in the "more is better" category. When these needs are unfulfilled, employees are dissatisfied but as they are fulfilled, employees have increased satisfaction. From an employee perspective, these needs might include training and development, career opportunities, and rewards.

Some needs are "delighters" and this is the area where companies are working to differentiate themselves. Because these needs or requirements are not expected, if they are not met, they do not create dissatisfaction. If they are met, they can provide a competitive edge - at least, temporarily.

Why just temporarily? Consider frequent flyer programs. When they were first introduced, they delighted customers. Over time, however, these programs have become expected and no longer serve to differentiate airlines. In a sense, the bar is continually raised as companies strive to find ways to delight both customers and employees.

But what will "delight" employees - the latest computer equipment? A homey workspace? Concierge service? Ability to bring their pets to work? Aren't companies going overboard? Does this really make good business sense?

Research indicates that "delighters" do not need to be costly or outrageous to implement. For instance, the number one desire by employees in Canada according to two major studies is for more flexibility<sup>5</sup>. Employees want more control and choice in such things as where they work (home or office), when they work, with whom and for whom they work, and the kinds of projects and assignments. Remember though that delighters are as unique as individuals so no single strategy will work for all companies.

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<sup>1</sup> What to Do Before the Well Runs Dry: Managing Scarce Skills, Conference Board of Canada, April 2000.

<sup>2</sup> The Alberta Technology Report, Ernst and Young, TDBank and Silicon Valley North, May 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Forecasting the US Workforce and Workplace of the Future, and various other reports, March 1999, Corporate Leadership Council.

<sup>4</sup> Happy Workers, High Returns, Fortune Magazine, The 100 Best Companies to Work For, January 1998

<sup>5</sup> Workplace 2000: A Portrait of Working Canadians, Angus Reid and Aon Consulting Study as reported in MacLean's Magazine, 1999