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The Editor
The Straits Times
Forum Page

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Dear Editor,

Service quality is driven from the top

We thank Mr David Kwok Ng Kan and Mr Paul Chan Poh Hoi for their suggestions to improve the management of service quality in the Public Service (ST, Aug 6).

Mr Kwok observed that Quality Service Manager (QSM) lines in some government agencies were answered by junior staff while Mr Chan suggested that independent consultants be involved in auditing the quality of service in the government agencies.

The volume and nature of the calls to QSM lines vary from agency to agency and each agency allocates resources appropriate to meet the needs. However, we assure Mr Kwok that regardless of the arrangement, QSMs, who are senior civil servants leading the drive for service quality in their agencies, have oversight of all the feedback received through the QSM lines. QSMs are ultimately responsible for ensuring that feedback and queries received are looked into thoroughly and expeditiously.

Mr Chan noted that currently, "mystery shopper audits" on an organization were done by public officers from another government agency. He suggested using independent third parties.

We have thus far taken the approach of using public officers to conduct the audits as it is cost-effective. Such audits and QSM lines are but two ways we monitor feedback on customer service. Agencies conduct their own customer focus groups and feedback polls regularly. In addition, the Public Service Division engages survey companies to determine customers' perception of the overall service level of the Public Service. Independently, some consulting firms also conduct surveys on the customer service quality of the Public Service.

Notwithstanding this, we agree that there are advantages to Mr Chan's proposed approach. We will consult the QSMs to see how we can work with independent consultants to conduct "mystery shopper audits" without escalating cost.

Thank you.

Mr Calvin Phua
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