

My attendant is a Very Big Blessing in my life. I don't know what I would do without her. Please, do not ever take her from me.

She helps in my continual gaining of confidence. She does not inhibit my growth in caring for myself.

Without her, my quality of life would be much less. She engages me on a daily basis, allowing me to have a freshened sense of my abilities. She makes me feel better about my situation. I went from working 16-18 hours daily to not being able to physically work at all. However, she allows me to work my mind and encourages me to do so. . . I don't know what I would do without her.

She is my right arm.

– Clients of HCA Home Care Aides

Business value is measured in the health care industry not only in financial terms, but also in highly qualitative ways. In the home care industry, providing quality care to clients is what **Home Care Associates (HCA)**, a worker-owned cooperative, hopes distinguishes it from other providers competing for contracts in its Philadelphia service region. HCA provides an extensive training program to its employees, as well as employment supports that are greater than those offered by most other providers. These supports include ongoing training, employment benefits, scheduling to help aides put together full-time work schedules (part-time is more the norm), and other professional supports.

HCA competes with other direct care providers for clients via contracts from third-party payers. Prior to working on their business value assessment, they had heard anecdotally from both their patient clients and their third-party payer clients that their aides provided better service than did aides employed by other agencies (who provide less training and fewer benefits to their home care aide employees).

Measuring Customer Satisfaction

Working collaboratively with one of the agencies with which they have a contract, HCA developed a customer satisfaction survey to query patient clients about their satisfaction with their assigned home care aides. The contractor was also interested in knowing how clients assess the quality of services provided, and agreed to field the survey both to clients who have aides

provided by HCA and to clients whose aides come from other providers of home care services. HCA's interest was in learning whether or not clients are more satisfied with HCA-trained healthcare attendants than attendants from other providers.

The survey, which is available on AspenWSI's website, was designed to be completed by individuals with a wide range of literacy ability and asks about very specific competencies relevant to the home care aides' duties and performance. Respondents were asked to answer each question by indicating their level of satisfaction with services provided by their primary attendant as well as whether or not that service is important to them. The survey included 36 questions and focused on six key service areas: punctuality and attendance, initiative, communication, professionalism, flexibility and sensitivity to difference. The survey was administered by mail, and resulted in a respectable 22.4 percent completion rate (122 of 500 surveys returned).

Selected Results

There was certainly an element of risk in fielding a survey of this type. While HCA had an interest in confirming what had until then been only impressionistic reports about the high quality of their services, they not only took a risk in attempting to measure something notoriously difficult to measure, but they also ran the risk of getting results that could possibly be negative not only for them but also for the agency with whom they contracted. Nevertheless, they determined together that they would proceed and see together what they would learn.

Results from the survey indicated that the majority of all clients were satisfied with the services they were receiving—from a range of different providers. But there were differences between HCA and non-HCA clients in terms of the respondents who were most satisfied. For example, 92 percent of respondents whose primary attendant was employed by HCA indicated that their attendant almost always demonstrates professionalism. In comparison, the percentage of non-HCA clients who responded similarly was 80 percent.

The difference between the two groups was found to be statistically significant for all 36 questions and in favor of HCA attendants in response to all but one question. In sum, on average, clients with HCA attendants were satisfied with the services provided by the contractor more often than were clients with attendants from other sources. That difference was greatest with respect to individual questions including:

- Arrive on time and leave as scheduled
- Generally have a good attitude about work
- Act on your behalf to make sure your needs are met
- Listen to and understand your needs
- Discuss options and choices with you
- Manage difficult situations in a caring, yet professional manner
- Take time to answer your questions
- Treat you with courtesy and respect
- Seem knowledgeable and confident
- Seem truthful and honest

- Show good judgment when dealing with your everyday needs
- Have the ability to care for minor injuries
- Respect professional boundaries between you and him/herself
- Respond to your needs in a timely manner
- Show respect for your lifestyle
- Show respect for issues of confidentiality and privacy

While these customer satisfaction indicators do not directly correlate with cost savings or other financial measures, they do clearly point to HCA providing quality service and differentiating their service from that of their competitors. In addition, taking the initiative to evaluate their own performance in this rigorous manner shows the agency's customers in a very tangible way that providing quality service is a high priority for HCA.