



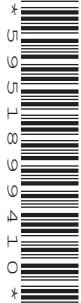
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

**Tuesday 24 May 2016 – Afternoon**

**AS GCE APPLIED BUSINESS**

**F243/01/CS The Impact of Customer Service**

**CASE STUDY**



**Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes**

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## Vanessa's Vegetarian Enchantments

### Background

Vanessa's Vegetarian Enchantments (VVE) is a specialist retailer which sells vegetarian foods from a shop. The business was established three years ago because its owner, Vanessa, was frustrated at the lack of high-quality food options available for vegetarians such as herself.

VVE's opening days and times are Wednesday to Friday from 10 am until 4 pm, Saturday from 9 am until 5.30 pm and Sunday from 11 am until 3 pm.

Vanessa has completed a significant volume of research on vegetarian food so she has good product knowledge. She has previously run the shop on her own but now employs an experienced, full-time assistant, Jessica. Depending on how busy the shop is, Vanessa also employs two or three part-time shop assistants. The part-time shop assistants are usually students at the local university which means staff turnover tends to be high. Most students are not highly motivated to work in a shop. This means that they make mistakes such as not removing out-of-date products from the shelves or not stocking the shelves properly. The last such mistake had nearly resulted in an injury to one of the members of staff. It is not surprising, therefore, that morale is low as the working environment is not as safe as it should be. Getting people to work as a team is also a problem for Vanessa and her business.

### Ambitions

Vanessa is very ambitious. The level of sales at VVE has grown due to a high level of repeat business and the advertisements placed in local newspapers. Recent research conducted by Vanessa suggests that 80% of VVE's customers have shopped there more than twice. This suggests that VVE's customer retention is excellent. The main reason given by customers for returning to VVE was the general pleasant nature of the staff. They also liked the high quality products which VVE stocks and the fact that the shop is generally clean and tidy. Some customers, however, said that they only shop at VVE at weekends but would visit there more often on their way to and from work if VVE were open for longer. VVE also has its own website but this is only used to provide basic information.

The shop, which is located in the town centre, attracts customers of all ages. VVE is popular with individuals, couples and families. Many customers are from the local area but many also come from other towns. VVE has a code of practice which is displayed to customers and copies are provided to staff. Vanessa had always thought that her vegetarian shop would win an award one day. Her main goal for next year is to win the town's 'Best Customer Service' award.

### Moving Forward

One Sunday, during a particularly busy period, Vanessa noticed a member of staff, Ian, was wearing a dirty shirt. He also looked very scruffy compared with another member of the team, Sally, who was very smartly dressed. When asked by Vanessa why he had come into work with dirty clothes, he said that he did not care what Vanessa or the customers thought, and he was only working at VVE until he found a better job. "Anyway", said Ian, "I have never been given any training or guidelines about how to dress, so it's your fault, Vanessa. Not only that, I do more work than anyone else for the same pay and you never thank me for all my hard work!" Jessica had heard Vanessa and Ian's conversation and thought that Vanessa ought to know that she had overheard Ian being rude to some customers the previous day.

Later that day, Jessica was chatting with Vanessa when the subject of improving VVE through better customer service was raised. Jessica suggested that it would be a good idea if Vanessa gave her the role of Customer Service Manager in the near future. Jessica also suggested using the website more effectively and sending out newsletters to customers with information

about new products or recipes. Vanessa thought that the newsletter was a good idea. She wondered how to obtain the details of customers and was concerned about collecting and keeping personal information. Vanessa was not comfortable with technology and did not want to use a computer to store customer details. Vanessa suggested that her staff ask customers for their information and, at the same time, conduct some research by asking the customers to say what they thought about *VVE* and how *VVE* could be improved.

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Another matter which Jessica raised was that she had recently had to help a customer, Mr James, who was in a wheelchair, with his shopping. This was because the aisles were not wide enough for the wheelchair to manoeuvre. Mr James said it was against the law to discriminate against disabled people in this way and that he wanted to make a complaint. Jessica advised Vanessa that she had taken details of Mr James' address and had informed him that she would ask Vanessa to send a letter of apology.

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Vanessa clearly has a lot to think about if she wants to improve her business and win the 'Best Customer Service' award. Vanessa pondered how she was going to achieve this.

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