# UK Call Centre Cognitive Study

The UK call centre industry has a poor public image. Researchers at Leeds University Business School wanted to investigate call centre workers own perceptions to see how uniform and different they were from the public image. Using Cognizer 1.1 Personal Edition they collected and analysed over 200 cognitive maps.

Situation

The call centre industry is one of the most rapidly expanding sectors of the UK economy with an estimated 8000 call centres employing 640,000 agents, accounting for almost 2 percent of the UK working population. The call centre industry has a high media profile and publicity has, in the main, been adverse, with jobs being characterised as low status, tightly monitored and controlled, and stressful.

Researchers at Leeds University Business School wanted to better understand how front line agents and their supervisors viewed their occupation. Were their perceptions and understandings of the industry, and their roles within it, the same as the prevalent public image? Was there a common view across the call centre industry as a whole or, alternatively, were there significant differences between organisations? Were agents' views radically different from their supervisors? What were the main influences on their understanding?
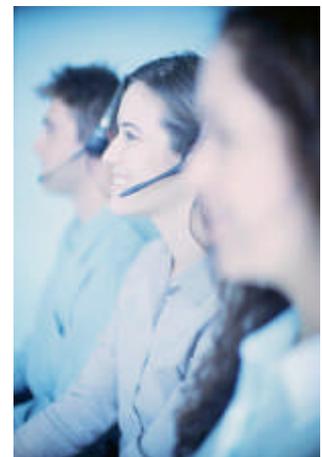
Solution

The study required the collection of a large number (over 200) of cognitive maps from several public and private sector organisations. The researchers were keen to ensure that all participants had a chance to speak of issues which they viewed as relevant and that the data was collected in a sufficiently rigorous manner that it then allowed the appropriate comparisons to be carried out.
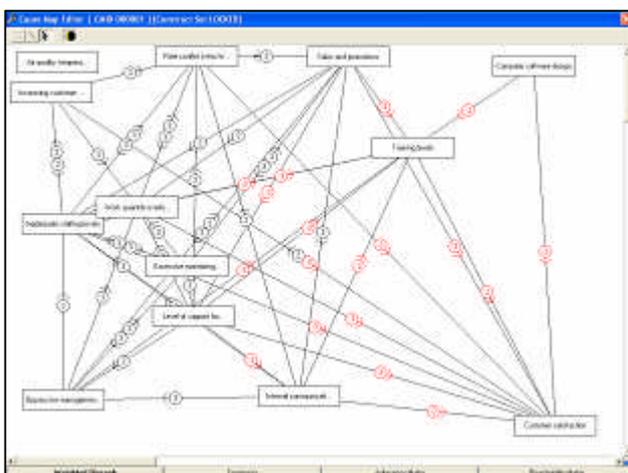
Cognizer 1.1 Personal Edition was chosen to collect the cognitive maps. Within Cognizer participants could choose from a menu of constructs those of particular importance to themselves. Then, using the pairwise comparison feature, the cognitive cause maps were elicited. For editing and validating purposes, the researchers chose to use the facility for participants to immediately view their maps in graphical format.

Cognizer was then used to calculate several quantitative measures of structure and content of the collected maps. These measures along with additional participant information recorded within Cognizer were analysed statistically.

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From the statistical results the researchers found little evidence to support the prevalent public image of the call centre industry. They also found significant variability between and within organisations.

Benefits

The Leeds University Business School researchers identified several key benefits in using Cognizer 1.1 Personal Edition for their UK call centre cognitive study.

Easy management of large numbers of cognitive maps

To conduct a quantitative study involving over 200 cognitive maps, the researchers required both comprehensive and easy management of the data. Cognizer provides a centralised store for all maps. The maps can be easily selected and grouped for elicitation, display and analysis. A common set of constructs can be easily shared among maps, allowing appropriate comparisons to be carried out.

Comprehensive choice of cognitive map elicitation methods

The researchers chose to use pairwise comparison to elicit their cognitive maps directly from the participants. This allowed them to bypass potentially lengthy and complex coding exercises.

Comprehensive range of quantitative measures

To analyse individual maps and groups of maps, the researchers required a full range of quantitative measures. Cognizer provides a comprehensive set of content and structural measures that can be easily selected and calculated. It also provides comparison methods to quantitatively compare maps within a group. All measurement results can be exported for analysis in statistical packages such as SPSS.

Positive participant reaction to Cognizer

A critical design issue is, of course, the likely impression and benefit provided to the participant. Gauging response at the time of collecting the cognitive maps and by the collection of anonymous questionnaires after, the researchers were able to determine that the use of Cognizer was very well received by participants.

For More Information

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For more information about Leeds University Business School, visit the Web site at:

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