

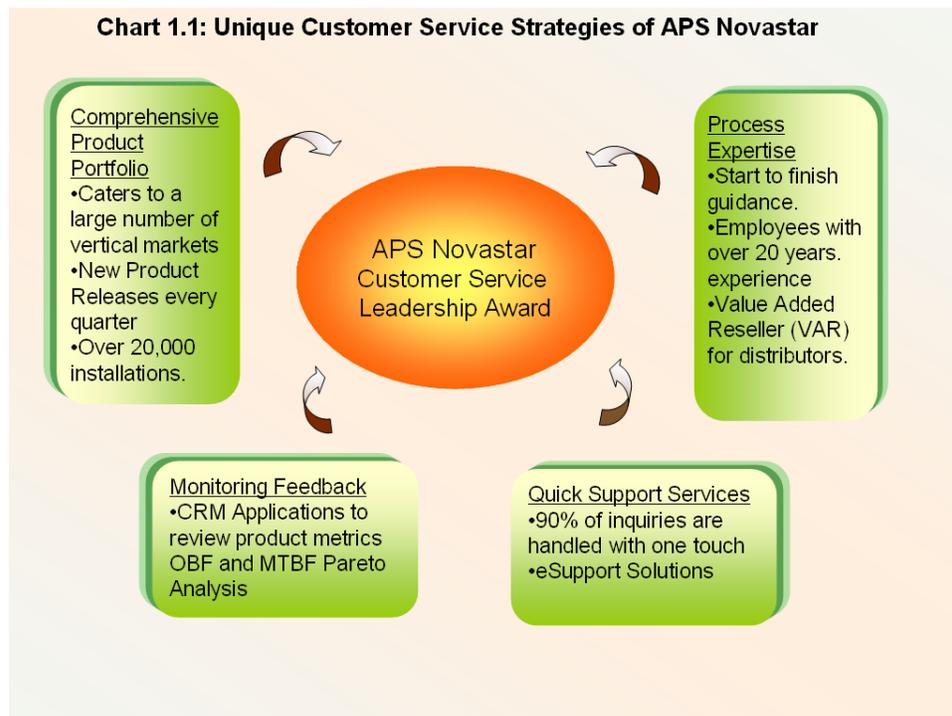
2009 Global SMT Equipment Customer Service Leadership of the Year Award

APS Novastar, LLC

The 2009 Frost & Sullivan Customer Service Leadership of the Year Award is presented to APS Novastar for demonstrating excellence in the SMT Equipment market (Low-Medium Volume). The award recognizes APS Novastar's demonstration of remarkable receptiveness to customer needs and its persistent focus on long and short-term customer profitability goals. The company's highly experienced technical and customer service team and its exceptional efforts in the delivery of high end value added customer services have earned it the recognition.

APS Novastar, LLC, established in 1982 is a global leader in the design, development and manufacture of OEM equipment for the short to medium run surface mount technology (SMT) and printed circuit board (PCB) markets.

Chart 1.1 shows the unique customer service strategies of APS Novastar



Comprehensive Product Portfolio

APS Novastar boasts of a well designed product portfolio that caters to the requirements of a wide variety of customers across diverse industry verticals. Its products include stencil printers, automated pick and place robots, reflow ovens, wave and selective solder equipment, component counters and lead forming equipment.

APS Novastar's product innovation pipeline produces an average of three to four new product introductions on a rolling twelve month basis. APS designs new products depending on the need in the industry and customer feedback. The company is renowned in the market for low cost of ownership by coming up with economical service solutions. Approximately 15.0 percent of APS Novastar's annual revenue are derived from new products.

The engineering team's sustaining innovation strategy refines existing themes and processes of longer run SMT assembly tools making them affordable and extremely easy to operate for a busy, multi-tasking technician or operator.

APS Novastar has installed over 20,000 products in the telecom, defense and aerospace, security, transportation, automotive, medical device and diagnostics, personal computer, display and academic markets.

Highly Skilled Customer Service Team

APS Novastar helps customers get the most of its systems from the start to finish by providing the right services at the right time such as initial guidance during start-up, selection depending on budget, training and usage of the systems. They help to identify issues, document and refine processes, and are involved in the entire integration process.

The company offers exceptional service with its advanced technical support team. The average tenure of a technical or application support employee is 20+ years thereby having a team with rich industry experience.

For its distributors, APS Novastar employs a rigorous Value Added Reseller (VAR) assessment, qualification, training and certification program affording APS Novastar's customers around the world the same quality of service as they would have received from APS Novastar.

The high quality and cost-effective services provided by its superior talent offers its customers higher ROI as well as reliable and long standing client-vendor partnerships.

Efficient and Quick Support Services

Total service solutions are provided to the customers in the form of 24x7 access to the most up-to-date product service information. With every new product delivery, the customers receive access to telephone or email applications and technical service support throughout the warranty period. It is APS Novastar's customer service policy to respond within 24 hours or sooner to a customer inquiry. Further, 90+ percent of the time, an inquiry is handled with one touch. An unique and innovative process coupled with a dedicated customer and technical service team leaves no customer inquiry unanswered regardless of organizational size, or when they purchased their equipment from the company.

Recently, APS Novastar launched a new website whereby the strategy for the website was a platform of complementary service support 24/7 anywhere in the world. The new website features dynamically updated technical application FAQs, "Ask an Expert", glossary of SMT industry terms and a file library full of easy-to-understand how to guides. This eSupport solution covers everything from technical manuals to user guides.

Monitoring Customer Feedback

Primary data gathering and surveys offered on the website are used to gather feedback. The results are stored in a CRM application that is used to make further product and customer decisions. Periodical meetings are held to review the metrics and product performance paretos. APS Novastar works to systematically improve customer experience through the use of ERP, CRM and product warranty, OBF and MTBF pareto analysis.

At APS Novastar, the most contemporary methodologies developed are applied through external benchmarking and internal employee and team idea contributions. The recent self-service enhancements made to the website, the deployment of CRM database management and automated telephony system are some of the steps in this direction.

The company has seen an approximate 20+ percent increase in the customer base throughout the implementation of CRM and new customer applications, service and order management self-service website utility.

Conclusion

Excellent feedback from the industry and its customers has made APS Novastar a worthy recipient of this award. APS Novastar has built strong brand equity over the years. A strong technical team in place, periodic review with customers and monitoring feedback has helped the company retain accounts and remain market leaders. Its customer centric strategies aimed at offering a total solution approach to its customers has helped elevate its market position and differentiate it from its competitors. The company's strong growth rate of 16.7 percent (year on year) since 2002 is a testimony to their superior products and services. As evident from its commitment towards "best-in-class" customer service, APS Novastar is a deserving recipient of the Frost & Sullivan Customer Service Leadership of the Year Award in the Global SMT Equipment market.

Award Description

The Frost & Sullivan Award for Customer Service Leadership of the Year is bestowed upon the company that has demonstrated excellence in customer service leadership within the industry. The recipient company has shown tremendous responsiveness to customer needs and has continually focused on long and short-term customer profitability goals. In addition, the recipient company demonstrated flexibility in tailoring their product offerings to suit customer businesses.

Research Methodology

To choose the recipient of this Award, the analyst team tracks industry participants and monitors their customer service methods on an ongoing basis. The Award recipient is selected based upon extensive research collected from key market participants, secondary and technology sources, and customer interviews. Collected data is then cross tabulated to find the number one ranking company.

Measurement Criteria

In addition to the methodology described above, there are specific criteria used in determining the final ranking of industry competitors. The recipient of this Award has excelled based on the following criteria:

- Value-added promotional support

- Providing value-added technology and services
- Responsiveness to customer needs
- Time to market
- Monitoring and addressing customer feedback

About Best Practices

Frost & Sullivan Best Practices Awards recognize companies in a variety of regional and global markets for demonstrating outstanding achievement and superior performance in areas such as leadership, technological innovation, customer service, and strategic product development. Industry analysts compare market participants and measure performance through in-depth interviews, analysis, and extensive secondary research in order to identify best practices in the industry.

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