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## **Evaluation of the Customer Satisfaction and Expectations of NATO Communications and Information Academy (NCI Academy)**

Pedro Miguel da Silva Oliveira

Master in Applied Management

Supervisor:  
Professor Doctor Sofia Lopes Portela, Assistant Professor  
ISCTE-IUL

August, 2023

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BUSINESS  
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Department of Marketing, Operations and General  
Management

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## **Abstract**

This project investigates customer satisfaction and expectations within the NATO Communications and Information Academy (NCI Academy), which offers training in communication systems for NATO. The study employs a B2B Customer Satisfaction survey among representatives from various entities across NATO member nations. The survey covers dimensions like training alignment, operational requirements, customer support, collaboration, value for money, and overall satisfaction. The analysis reveals positive responses in areas like training quality and applicability, while highlighting potential improvements in collaboration, value for money and customer support. The paper emphasizes the significance of transparent communication, customer support and suggests enhancing collaboration between NCI Academy and its customers by proposing. By understanding customer expectations and satisfaction, this study aids NCI Academy in refining its services to better meet customer needs and elevate overall satisfaction levels.

**Keywords:** NATO, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Support, Customer Satisfaction Survey, Training Quality, Customer Perceived value

**JEL Classification:** M31, I21

## **Resumo**

Este projeto investiga a satisfação e as expectativas dos clientes na Academia de Comunicações e Informação da OTAN (NCI Academy), que oferece formação em sistemas de comunicação. O estudo utiliza um inquérito de satisfação do cliente B2B aplicado a representantes de várias entidades dos países membros da OTAN. A pesquisa abrange dimensões como alinhamento de treinamento, requisitos operacionais, suporte ao cliente, colaboração, relação custo-benefício e grau de satisfação em geral. A análise revela respostas positivas em áreas como a qualidade e aplicabilidade da formação, ao mesmo tempo que destaca potenciais melhorias na colaboração e na relação custo-benefício. O documento enfatiza a importância da transparência na comunicação e no suporte ao cliente e sugere melhorar a colaboração entre a NCI Academy e seus clientes. Ao compreender as expectativas e a satisfação dos clientes, este estudo ajuda a NCI Academy a refinar seus serviços para melhor atender às necessidades dos clientes e elevar os níveis gerais de satisfação.

**Palavras-Chave:** NATO, OTAN, NCI Academy, Satisfação do Cliente, Suporte ao cliente, Formação, Requisitos de Formação

**JEL Classification:** M31, I21

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## **Glossary**

AirC2 - Air Command and Control

B2B – Business to Business

CIV – Civilian post

CIS - Communication and Information Systems

CPV – Customer Perceived Value

E&T - Education and Training (NCIA Service Line)

MIL – Military post

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCI Academy – NATO Communications and Information Academy

NCIA – NATO Communications and Information Agency

SERVQUAL - Service quality scale

SME - Subject Matter Experts

SST - Service Support Training contract

TMS - Training Management System

## 1. Introduction

The NATO Communications and Information Academy (NCI Academy) consolidates all Education and Training services provided by the NCI Agency. The NCI Academy has a legacy of over sixty years of providing communication and information systems (CIS) and cyber education and training services across the NATO enterprise.

The NCI Academy comprises around 100 dedicated professionals in Agency locations in Belgium, Netherlands, and Portugal, as well as instructional staff embedded in other parts of the NCI Agency, academia and our commercial partners. Its flagship location in Oeiras, Portugal, provides advanced training delivery facilities.

As such, NCI Academy provides training on both static and deployed NATO communication and information systems (CIS), Air Command and Control (AirC2), cyber security and cyber defence. In addition, it plays a pivotal role in designing and developing new learning solutions for its customers, by conducting a thorough analysis of training needs and leveraging the latest learning technology (NCI Academy, 2023).

The NCI Academy also provides education and training (E&T) services for internal Agency staff in support of professional and personal development, and post or mission-specific requirements, to ensure the Agency has the necessary skills to meet customer requirements.

The NCI Academy currently provides its services to around 75 different entities and organisations in the Alliance, ranging from NATO Command Structure entities to NATO partners around the world, with the mission to deliver essential technical, operational, and managerial training. The management of these customers entails a level of complexity unique to this organisation and context, as these are aggregated in several layers of training operational requirements and priorities.

As NCI Academy is simultaneously a customer-funded and, at the same time, a non-profit organisation governed by NATO Nations, its business strategy must adapt to meet all requirements from both models.

In a military training organisation, value-based selling can be studied by assessing how well the organisation's sales strategy aligns with the needs and expectations of its customers. This can be done through various research methods such as surveys, interviews, and analysis of sales data. By understanding the customer's needs and expectations, the organisation can develop a value-based selling strategy that effectively communicates the value of their offerings to the customer. This can be achieved by gathering feedback and data from customers, which allows the organisation to gain insights into areas where they can improve their offerings and enhance the perceived value for their customers. Overall, studying the customer perceived satisfaction in a military training organisation can help the organisation

improve their offerings, service, sales strategy, and better meet the needs and expectations of their customers.

As the new management paradigm for the NCI Academy has its main focus on the customer, the purpose of this project is to measure its customer's perceived value and their overall satisfaction with the Academy with the ultimate goal of continuously improve not only the business model but also the services provided to the NATO world.

The assessment conducted as part of this project aimed to know what expectations the customers have about NCI Academy in several dimensions, such as understanding what they feel about how the Academy manages its offer versus the customer training requirements. Also, the complex nature of the bidding and demand process of the NCI Academy requires constant assessment; thus is very important to understand its customer's opinions about this key issue.

Another concern that is widely debated at various levels on the organisation is the applicability of its catalogue compared to the customer training needs, which may influence the customer engagement towards the NCI Academy, along with its perception.

Also, this study was interested in understanding the perception that customers have about the value of the services provided by the Academy versus the price they pay for those services, that is, its value for money.

As the Academy spends a considerable amount of time directly supporting its customers on all activities, ranging from training operations to business related enquiries, the quality of these interactions have gained more and more weight as a performance measure for the organisation. Therefore, this project also aims to understand the perception of the quality of the customer support provided by the Academy.

The methodology used for this project consisted in first, understand the relevant indicators from the various areas and internal stakeholders of the Academy the will require assessment from customers. With these indicators defined, this project analyzed the relevant literature regarding customer satisfaction and expectation to match these concepts with previous research.

Following the standard traditional approach suggested in literature to assess customer satisfaction, a survey including the agreed dimensions was designed to be applied to all customer organisation representatives during the course of 3 weeks. After collecting all data, a statistical analysis was conducted that will be presented in this project with the necessary results interpretation using a prior understanding of the reality of this organisation, when possible providing suggestions for improvement where needed.

After briefly provide context and explain the scope of this project in chapter 1, the next chapter addresses the review of relevant literature related to the topics and dimensions under discussion here. The chapter 3 presents in detail the methodology used in this project, and,

after that, the results in chapter 4 show in detail the quantitative description of the responses collected by the survey instrument. The fifth chapter presents the main results and highlight the customer satisfaction and expectation trends regarding the dimensions used, while proposing solutions to improve these results. Lastly, the conclusions are presented in chapter 6.

## **2. Literature Revision**

### **2.1. Customer Perceived Value**

Customer Perceived Value (CPV) has been a central concept in the marketing literature for several decades. It is considered a subjective evaluation that customers make about the overall benefits they receive from a product or service relatively to the costs of acquisition. (Zeithaml, 1988).

CPV has been defined extensively in the marketing literature. Zeithaml (1988; p.14) defined CPV as "the customer's overall assessment of the utility of a product or service based on perceptions of what is received and what is given." Similarly, Woodruff (1997; p.142) defined CPV in a sense that "a customer value is a customer's perceived preference for an evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performances, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer's goals and purposes in use situations" customer's overall assessment of the utility of a product or service based on perceptions of what is received and what is given." Other authors defined CPV as the difference between the perceived benefits and the perceived costs of a product or service (Oliver, 1997), or as the customer's assessment of the quality of a product or service in relation to its price (Dodds et al., 1991).

Several authors have investigated the antecedents of CPV. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) argued that CPV is influenced by a customer's personal characteristics, situational factors, and product attributes. Several variables, such of personal characteristics like age, gender, and income level can affect how customers perceive value. Even situational factors such as time pressure, store atmosphere, and social influence can also influence how customers evaluate value. Finally, product attributes such as quality, price, and brand image can affect how customers perceive value (Chen & Hu, 2019).

CPV has been found to have a significant influence on customer behavior. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) found that perceived value has a positive impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Similarly, Dodds et al. (1991) argued that CPV is a key determinant of customer purchase behavior. Chen and Hu (2019) found that CPV mediates the effect of service quality on customer loyalty. In addition, several studies have found that CPV is positively associated with customer retention, word-of-mouth communication, and willingness to pay a premium price for a product or service (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Lai et al., 2009; Zeithaml, 1988).

Several researchers have developed scales to measure CPV. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed a multi-item scale to measure customer perceived value in the context of retail banking services. Lai et al. (2009) developed a scale to measure perceived value in the context of mobile phone services. Other researchers have used a single-item measure to

assess CPV (e.g., "Overall, how would you rate the value you receive for the price you pay?"). There is ongoing debate in the literature about the optimal way to measure CPV and the extent to which different measures are comparable (Wirtz et al., 2016).

## **2.2. Customer Satisfaction**

Over the last decades, organisations have increasingly understood the importance of prioritizing customer satisfaction. The cost-effectiveness of retaining existing customers over acquiring new ones is widely recognized. As a result, customer satisfaction has become a crucial operational goal, leading to investments in areas like product quality and customer service. However, the effectiveness of these efforts raises questions about how organisations measure their success in achieving customer satisfaction goals.

Unfortunately, many organisations lack clear measurement strategies, and some do not measure customer satisfaction at all, even among those that do measure it, methodologies often lack adequacy (Hill, 1996). The author also claims that, in the realm of quality management, the widely accepted adage "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it" emphasizes the importance of measurement (Hill, 1996; p.1)

Customer satisfaction as a research topic has seen a significant increase in the last 50 years as its importance started to be clear, leading to the establishment of customer satisfaction as a legitimate field of study (Kivela et al., 1999), after the groundbreaking research conducted by Cardozo (1964), Olshavsky and Miller (1972), and Anderson (1973) played a pivotal role in initiating the exploration of customer satisfaction, laying the groundwork for subsequent investigations into this concept (Joao, 2006).

As the research for this field increased, so the many definitions to describe what is Customer Satisfaction. Oliver (1981; p. 27) defined satisfaction as "a final psychological state resulting from the disconfirmed expectancy related to the initial consumer expectations." In a similar vein, Churchill et al. (1982; p. 493) offer their own definition of customer satisfaction, describing it as a "response by the consumer to the purchase and use of a product". The authors claim this response is derived from the comparison the consumer makes between the rewards and costs of purchase in relation to expectations. For Churchill et al, "Similar to an attitude, it can be quantified as an overall satisfaction encompassing various attributes."

Some years later, Tse and Wilton (1988; p. 205) provide an alternative perspective based on the gap between expectations and experience, where customer satisfaction is characterized as "the consumer's reaction to the evaluation of the perceived disparity between expectations and the eventual outcome after consumption."

Collectively, these diverse definitions underscore that customer satisfaction is a dynamic process. It is the ultimate result of all interactions, engagements, and experiences that transpire throughout the entire trajectory of purchasing and consumption.

The theory of customer expectations and perceptions suggests that customer satisfaction is influenced by the alignment between customers' expectations and their actual experiences with a product or service (Oliver, 1980). This author found a positive correlation between these variables, meaning that when perceived performance exceeds expectations, customer satisfaction is likely to be high.

Building strong customer relationships and fostering trust contribute significantly to customer satisfaction (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Studies have demonstrated that customers who have a positive and trusting relationship with an organisation are more likely to be satisfied and exhibit higher levels of loyalty.

Furthermore, individual characteristics and demographics can influence customer satisfaction. Age, gender, income, and prior experience are some of the personal and demographic factors that have been found to impact satisfaction levels (Yi & Jeon, 2003).

The way an organisation handles service failures and resolves customer complaints can have a substantial impact on customer satisfaction (McCole et al., 2010). Effective service recovery strategies, such as timely and appropriate problem resolution, can help restore customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Service quality scale SERVQUAL, a scale that has been used in hundreds of studies has also been consistently identified as a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction (Parasuraman, et al, 1988). According to Cronin and Taylor (1992), the five dimensions of service quality - reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles - have been found to play a significant role in shaping customers' satisfaction levels.

Researchers have employed various methodologies to measure and assess customer satisfaction. Common approaches include surveys, interviews, focus groups, and analysis of customer feedback data. The most popular methods employed to gather customer satisfaction data primarily involve telephone and mail surveys. Likert scales, semantic differential scales, and customer satisfaction indexes are frequently used measurement tools (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996). According to Mentzler et al. (1995), the prevalent forms of analysis include cross-tabulations, qualitative evaluations, descriptive statistical measures (such as means, standard deviations, and percentages), and regression analysis.

On the whole, customer satisfaction is a multifaceted construct influenced by a range of factors, including service quality, expectations, relationships, trust, and service recovery. Understanding these factors is crucial for organisations seeking to enhance customer satisfaction and build customer loyalty. Future research should continue to explore emerging

trends, such as the impact of digital technologies and the role of emotions in shaping customer satisfaction, to provide deeper insights into this important area.



### **3. Methodology**

The purpose of this project is to understand the perceived satisfaction and expectations of the NCI Academy customers regarding pre-established dimensions that are considered of core importance by both the Business Management and Operations teams of this institution. With the results of this analysis, NCI Academy may improve their offerings, sales strategy, and better meet the needs and expectations of their customers.

To do so, the following steps were performed:

1. To identify the population;
2. To design a B2B Customer Satisfaction survey instrument to assess the opinions of customers about the NCI Academy;
3. To analyze the gathered data;
4. To propose a set of actions to improve the customer satisfaction and better meet their expectations.

#### **3.1. Population**

The population of this study comprises the representatives and point of contacts of the customer entities and sub-units of those entities who manage either the contracts or the seats allocated to them. This is a universe of over 200 individuals from 31 member nations and 148 main organisations and 90 sub-entities of those organisations.

The NCI Academy customer universe is comprised by a total of 148 primary entities, from which around 75 establish a formal contract with this organisation. Of the 148 primary entities, 15 have a combined total of 122 sub-entities or child organisations under their umbrella.

The participants assume the following roles:

- Customer main Point of Contact
- Alternate Customer main Point of Contact
- Customer invoicing Point of Contact
- Primary Training Coordinator
- Alternate Training Coordinator

### 3.2. Survey

A survey was designed to measure the customer satisfaction and expectations of NCI Academy customers. It was designed taking into consideration the specificities of the context and core business of NCI Academy. As such, it is composed of three sections:

- Section 1: “Respondent Data”, which is comprised of 3 questions;
- Section 2: “Dimensions of Satisfaction”, which was comprised of 24 questions divided into eight dimensions;
- Section 3: “Overall Satisfaction and Expectations”, which was comprised of 2 questions.

The dimensions that compose the core of the applied instrument are as follows (see in detail in Annex A):

- Expectations
- Offer versus customer needs
- Bidding and demand process
- Applicability
- Post-Training delivery service
- Customer Support and Responsiveness
- Relationship and Collaboration
- Value for money

All the questions that compose the dimensions were evaluated in a 5-points agreement Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree =5 as showed in the table below.

*Table 1. 5 point Likert Scale used in the survey*

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

*(Likert, 1932)*

The survey was validated and approved by the leadership representatives. The survey was created on the Survey Monkey portal, and the link was sent via email to the population in study by the Customer Relations Officer of the NCI Academy. The final version of the survey in on Annex B.

Although the distribution list is not confidential, the survey does not have any elements that may identify the respondents. Also, the headline specifies that all data is protected and anonymity is guaranteed by not capturing any identification elements on the questionnaire.

The survey was sent via email to 277 representatives of the NCI Academy customers' organisations.

The survey was made available in an online format for a period of 3 weeks, from the 25<sup>th</sup> of July to the 10<sup>th</sup>. Two weekly reminders were sent and it was also internally advertised on the shared management portal. 56 valid responses were received, which represents a response rate of 20.2%.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Sample Characterization

The majority of the respondents belongs to a Ministry of Defence/ NATO Nation related entity or a NCI Agency (41.07% and 32.14%, respectively) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Question 1 - Participants distribution by their organisation type

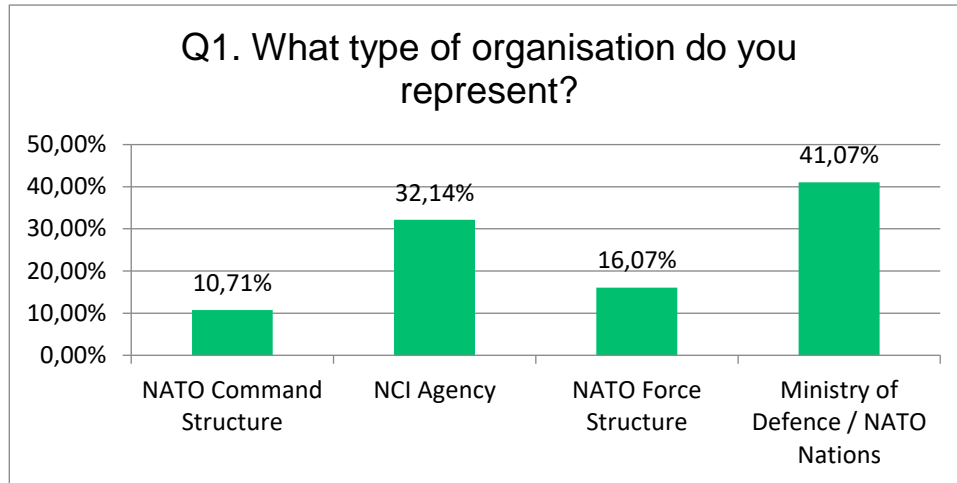
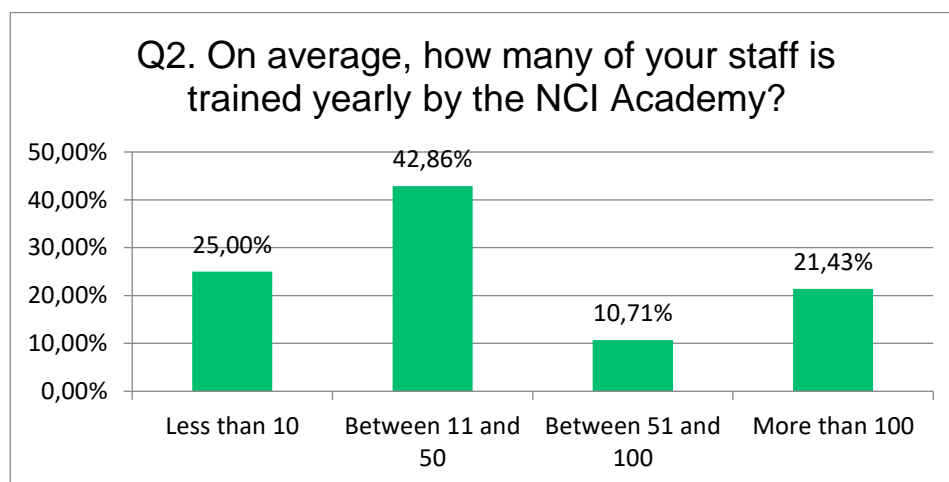


Figure 2 shows that 42.86% of the respondents represent organisations that send between 11 to 50 students to be trained by the NCI Academy, while 25% of the respondents admit having less than 10 students trained by this organisation yearly.

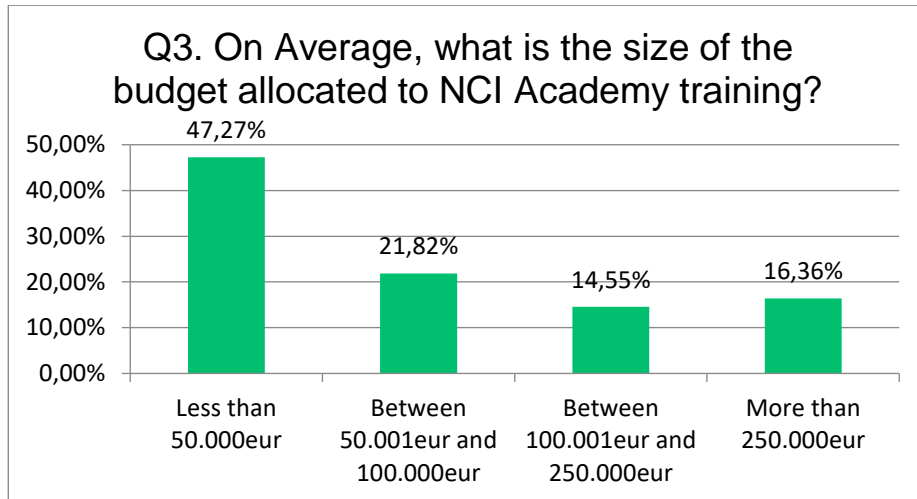
Figure 2: Question 2 - Size of participant's staff contingent sent to be trained by NCI Academy



Regarding the size of budget to NCI Academy training, almost half of the respondents admit allocated less than 50.000EUR, with a total of 26 replies corresponding to 47.27% of the total

(Figure 3). The allocated budget and the number of students per year are strongly correlated ( $r = 0.76$ ;  $\text{sig} < 0,05$ ).

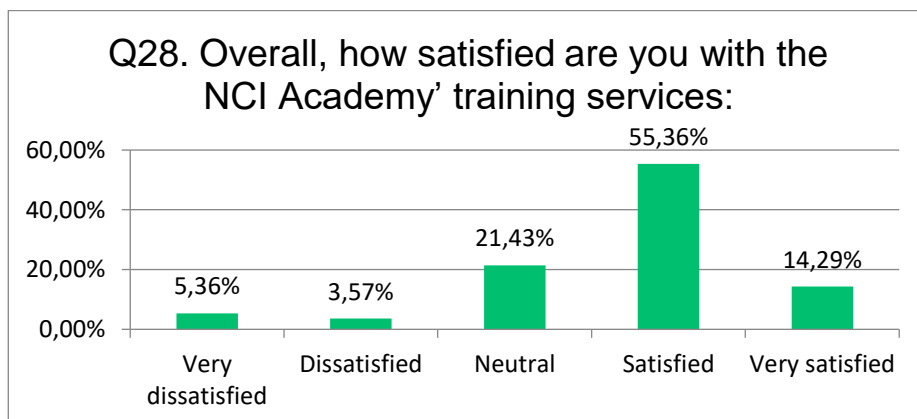
Figure 3: Question 3 - Size of participant's entity budget allocated to NCI Academy



#### 4.2. Overall Satisfaction and Expectations

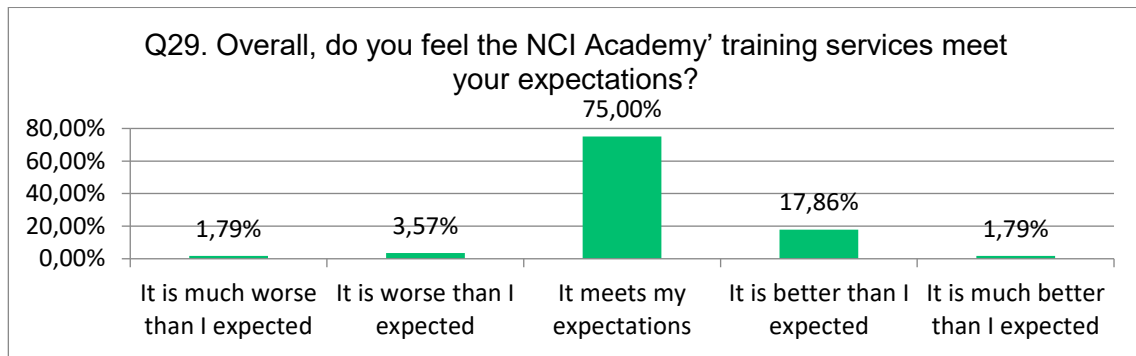
When asked about how satisfied the respondents (Figure 4) were with the NCI Academy training services, the majority answered “satisfied” or “very satisfied”, which accounts for 55.36% and 14.29% of the total answers, while 8.93% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Figure 4: Distribution of answers from question 28 related to the overall customer's satisfaction



Regarding the opinion from respondents about how their expectations related to training services were met, 75% admitted that the NCI Academy have met them, while 17.86% responded that the Academy's services are better than expected (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Distribution of answers from question 29 related to the overall customer's expectations



### 4.3. Customer Satisfaction: Dimensions Results

The Cronbach Alpha was computed for each dimension, which is presented in the following table. It can be concluded that all dimensions are internally consistent.

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha analysis from survey's results

| Dimensions                          | Cronbach Alpha |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Applicability                       | .844           |
| Bidding and Demand Process          | .907           |
| Customer Support and Responsiveness | .923           |
| Expectations                        | .535           |
| Offer Vs Needs                      | .510           |
| Post-training Service               | -              |
| Relationship and Collaboration      | .870           |
| Value for Money                     | .855           |

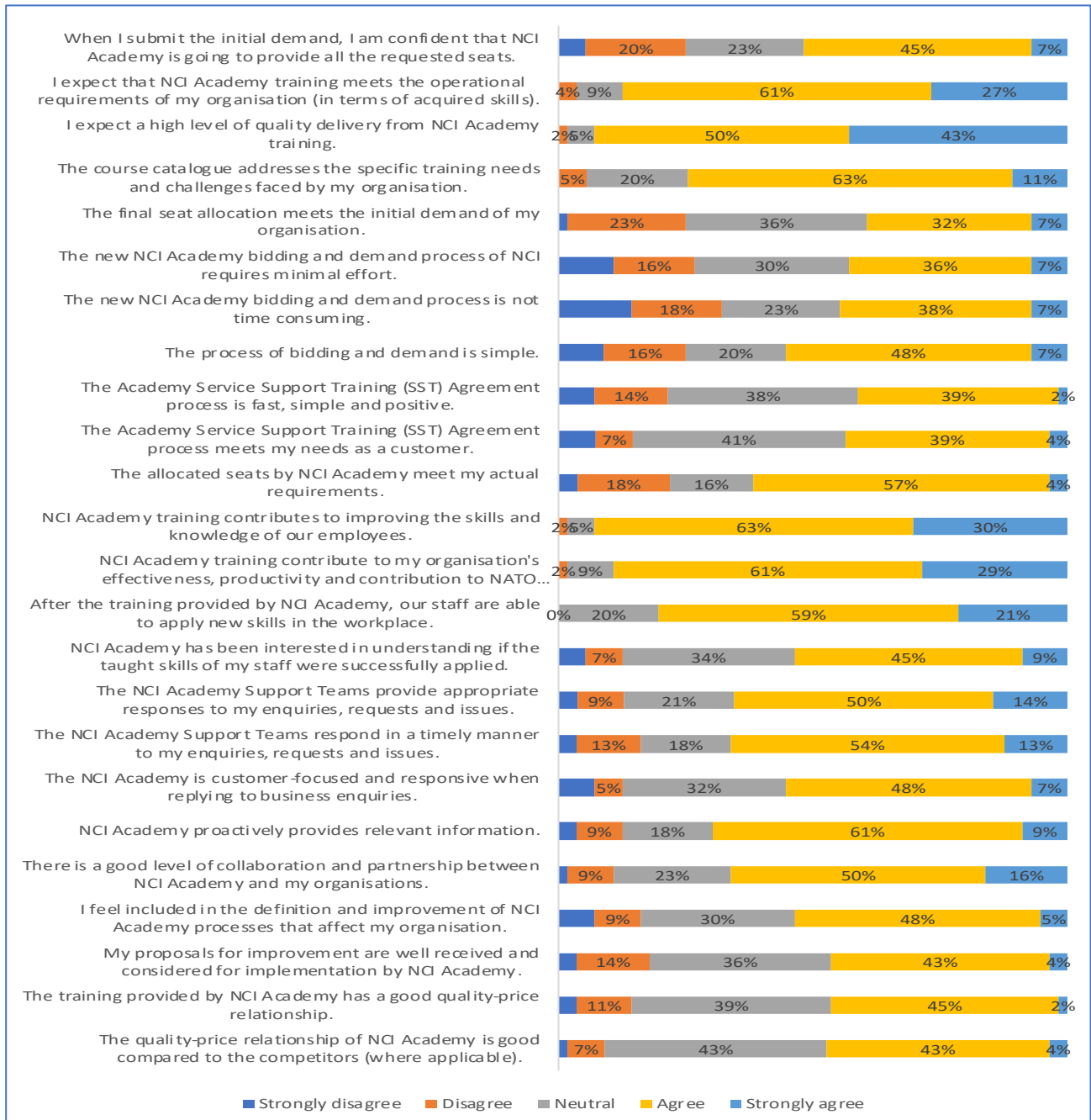
The overall average across all dimensions was 3.54, which can be classified as a neutral satisfaction regarding the subjects presented on the survey (Table 3). "Applicability" is the dimension with the higher average satisfaction reaching 4.13 while the "Bidding and Demand Process" achieved the lower score of satisfaction with an average of 3.21.

Table 3: Statistical analysis of the survey

| Dimensions                          | Mean        | Standard Error | Median      | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Applicability                       | 4.13        | 0.09           | 4.00        | 0.6417             |
| Bidding and Demand Process          | 3.21        | 0.14           | 3.33        | 1.0403             |
| Customer Support and Responsiveness | 3.57        | 0.13           | 4.00        | 0.9579             |
| Expectations                        | 3.91        | 0.11           | 4.00        | 0.8043             |
| Offer Vs Needs                      | 3.50        | 0.11           | 3.50        | 0.8234             |
| Post-training Service               | 3.45        | 0.13           | 4.00        | 0.9519             |
| Relationship and Collaboration      | 3.45        | 0.12           | 3.67        | 0.9273             |
| Value for Money                     | 3.35        | 0.11           | 3.00        | 0.7948             |
| <b>Total Avg</b>                    | <b>3.54</b> | <b>0.12</b>    | <b>3.65</b> | <b>0.8815</b>      |

The overall median achieved across all dimensions is 3.65, which puts this result between “Neutral” and “Agree”. The dimension that divided the opinions of the respondents more is the Bidding and Demand Process, while Applicability was rated as the more consensual across the board.

Figure 6. Distribution of Survey answers from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree by percentage



On the Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree scale, the majority of respondents chose “Agree” with an average of 49%. The second highest score was “Neutral” with an average of 25% respondents choosing it, as it can be observed in figure 6.

Table 4. Sum of % Distribution of 2 higher points and 2 lower points of the scale

|   | T2B | B2B | Mean |
|---|-----|-----|------|
| When I submit the initial demand, I am confident that NCI Academy is going to provide all the requested seats.          | 52% | 25% | 3,29 |
| I expect that NCI Academy training meets the operational requirements of my organisation (in terms of acquired skills). | 88% | 4%  | 4,11 |
| I expect a high level of quality delivery from NCI Academy training.  | 93% | 2%  | 4,34 |
| The course catalogue addresses the specific training needs and challenges faced by my organisation.                     | 73% | 5%  | 3,8  |
| The final seat allocation meets the initial demand of my organisation.  | 39% | 25% | 3,2  |
| The new NCI Academy bidding and demand process of NCI requires minimal effort.  | 43% | 27% | 3,13 |
| The new NCI Academy bidding and demand process is not time consuming.   | 45% | 32% | 3,05 |
| The process of bidding and demand is simple.  | 55% | 25% | 3,29 |
| The Academy Service Support Training (SST) Agreement process is fast, simple and positive.                              | 41% | 21% | 3,14 |
| The Academy Service Support Training (SST) Agreement process meets my needs as a customer.                              | 43% | 14% | 3,25 |
| The allocated seats by NCI Academy meet my actual requirements.   | 61% | 21% | 3,4  |
| NCI Academy training contributes to improving the skills and knowledge of our employees.                                | 93% | 2%  | 4,21 |
| NCI Academy training contribute to my organisation's effectiveness, productivity and contribution to NATO operations.   | 89% | 2%  | 4,16 |
| After the training provided by NCI Academy, our staff are able to apply new skills in the workplace.                    | 80% | 0%  | 4,02 |
| NCI Academy has been interested in understanding if the taught skills of my staff were successfully applied.            | 54% | 13% | 3,45 |
| The NCI Academy Support Teams provide appropriate responses to my enquiries, requests and issues.                       | 64% | 13% | 3,64 |
| The NCI Academy Support Teams respond in a timely manner to my enquiries, requests and issues.                          | 66% | 16% | 3,59 |
| The NCI Academy is customer-focused and responsive when replying to business enquiries.                                 | 55% | 13% | 3,43 |
| NCI Academy proactively provides relevant information.  | 70% | 13% | 3,63 |
| There is a good level of collaboration and partnership between NCI Academy and my organisations.                        | 66% | 11% | 3,7  |
| I feel included in the definition and improvement of NCI Academy processes that affect my organisation.                 | 54% | 16% | 3,36 |
| My proposals for improvement are well received and considered for implementation by NCI Academy.                        | 46% | 18% | 3,29 |
| The training provided by NCI Academy has a good quality-price relationship.   | 46% | 14% | 3,3  |
| The quality-price relationship of NCI Academy is good compared to the competitors (where applicable).                   | 46% | 9%  | 3,4  |

Legend:

T2B - Top 2 Box - Sum of the 2 higher points of the scale

B2B - Bottom 2 Box - Sum of the 2 lower points of the scale

Table 4 shows the sum between the 2 higher points (Top 2 box: "Agree" and "Strongly Agree") and 2 lower points (Bottom 2 box: "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree"), comparing them together. It's possible to observe in the Top 2 Box that respondents are more satisfied with the level of quality in training delivery (93%), contribution of training to improve staff skills



(93%), organization effectiveness (89%), ability to meet customers operational training requirements (88%) and applicability of learnt skills by staff (80%).

On the other end of the spectrum, customers showed a lower level of satisfaction with the bidding and demand process with 3 questions related to that dimension receiving the most answers in the bottom 2 box (32%, 27% and 25%). The overall average for this distribution is 3.54.

Consistently the questions that have higher satisfaction rates in T2B are also the ones with lower scores on the B2T column. However, the questions who received lower satisfaction scores in the first column do not entirely match questions who scored lower on the second column, with only 3 of them overlapping.

Figure 7: Ranked average distribution



When ranking the answers by their highest average on figure 7, it can be observed that the questions related to the dimensions of "Expectations" and Applicability are scored on the top

5 with averages above 4. The questions associated with Bidding and Demand received the lowest average scores with a maximum of 3.29 and a minimum of 3.05, indicating a clear trend of discontent.

Table 5: Spearman Correlation Coefficient (r) between dimensions and variables

|   | On average, how many of your staff is trained yearly by the NCI Academy? | On Average, what is the size of the budget allocated to NCI Academy training? | Overall, how satisfied are you with the NCI Academy' training services: | Overall, do you feel the NCI Academy' training services meet your expectations? |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| When I submit the initial demand, I am confident that NCI Academy is going to provide all the requested seats.          | -.187  | .082  | .175  | .225  |
| I expect that NCI Academy training meets the operational requirements of my organisation (in terms of acquired skills). | -.170  | -.157   | .212  | .236  |
| I expect a high level of quality delivery from NCI Academy training.  | -.010  | .022  | .240  | .254  |
| The course catalogue addresses the specific training needs and challenges faced by my organisation.                     | -.135  | -.046   | .312*   | .281*   |
| The final seat allocation meets the initial demand of my organisation.  | -.222  | -.067   | .278*   | .366**  |
| The new NCI Academy bidding and demand process of NCI requires minimal effort.  | -.260  | -.099   | .285*   | .359**  |
| The new NCI Academy bidding and demand process is not time consuming.   | -.257  | -.088   | .290*   | .399**  |
| The process of bidding and demand is simple.  | -.179  | -.019   | .282*   | .427**  |
| The Academy Service Support Training (SST) Agreement process is fast, simple and positive.                              | -.236  | -.140   | .366**  | .376**  |
| The Academy Service Support Training (SST) Agreement process meets my needs as a customer.                              | -.190  | -.111   | .435**  | .477**  |
| The allocated seats by NCI Academy meet my actual requirements.   | -.255  | -.147   | .220  | .359**  |
| NCI Academy training contributes to improving the skills and knowledge of our employees.                                | -.066  | -.047   | .422**  | .530**  |
| NCI Academy training contribute to my organisation's effectiveness, productivity and contribution to NATO operations.   | -.174  | -.132   | .430**  | .584**  |
| After the training provided by NCI Academy, our staff are able to apply new skills in the workplace.                    | -.150  | -.275*  | .293*   | .421**  |
| NCI Academy has been interested in understanding if the taught skills of my staff were successfully applied.            | -.153  | -.021   | .457**  | .573**  |
| The NCI Academy Support Teams provide appropriate responses to my enquiries, requests and issues.                       | -.208  | -.216   | .486**  | .573**  |
| The NCI Academy Support Teams respond in a timely manner to my enquiries, requests and issues.                          | -.043  | -.010   | .408**  | .539**  |
| The NCI Academy is customer-focused and responsive when replying to business enquiries.                                 | -.173  | -.184   | .438**  | .579**  |
| NCI Academy proactively provides relevant information.  | -.079  | -.204   | .457**  | .512**  |
| There is a good level of collaboration and partnership between NCI Academy and my organisations.                        | -.029  | -.077   | .536**  | .695**  |
| I feel included in the definition and improvement of NCI Academy processes that affect my organisation.                 | -.136  | .004  | .400**  | .544**  |
| My proposals for improvement are well received and considered for implementation by NCI Academy.                        | -.197  | -.093   | .388**  | .443**  |
| The training provided by NCI Academy has a good quality-price relationship.   | -.168  | -.293*  | .138  | .144  |
| The quality-price relationship of NCI Academy is good compared to the competitors (where applicable).                   | -.157  | -.332*  | .207  | .169  |
| On average, how many of your staff is trained yearly by the NCI Academy?  | 1.000  | .795**  | .010  | -.136   |
| On Average, what is the size of the budget allocated to NCI Academy training?   |  | 1.000   | .014  | -.144   |
| Overall, how satisfied are you with the NCI Academy' training services:   |  |   | 1.000   | .556**  |
| Overall, do you feel the NCI Academy' training services meet your expectations?   |  |   |   | 1.000   |

Table 5 shows the Spearman correlation coefficient between dimensions and 4 variables, indicating a significant relation between the overall satisfaction and the majority of the questions.

The dimensions do not appear to have a significant relation with the nr of staff trained yearly by the Academy. Regarding the average size of budget, the results show that this variable has a strong correlation with the nr of staff trained (0.79), two negative weak correlations with the applicability of skills (-.275) and training price-quality (-.29.3) and one moderately negative correlation with the comparison of price-quality with competition.

With a 0.01 degree of confidence, 10 questions show evidence of a moderate correlation (above 0.40), with 3 of the questions showing values between 0.40 and 0.30 with the overall satisfaction variable and 9 other questions with a weak correlation of at least 0.20.

For the overall expectations metrics, it can be observed in table 6 that 1 question indicates a r. above 0.70 indication a moderately high relationship, while 18 questions show a moderate relation with this concept (above 0.30). Also, a weak correlation can be found on 4 questions with the overall expectations metric.

#### **4.4. Main conclusions from the survey results**

The number of responses was considered representative of the universe of external customers that use the services of the NCI Academy as they account for more than 20% of the total number of available contacts who the survey was shared with. The time of the year where the study was conducted was not beneficial to receive a great amount of responses as, historically customer staff breaks for leave in July and August leaving only skeleton crews to tackle basic tasks and activities. The overall results suggest that the majority of participants have a positive opinion about the services provided by the NCI Academy, and also the processes involved in those services, namely the Bidding and Demand process and Customer Support and Responsiveness

The questions associated with the Applicability dimension received the most overall positive answers which confirms the specificity of this area and the subjects that are being covered by NCI Academy training.

Expectations about meeting the training demand, meeting operational requirements of the organisations and maintain a high level of quality on training delivery are also positive, with more than 70% of answers showing that trend. The breakdown of the results confirm that when assessing the opinion of customers on the degree of confidence that the NCI Academy will meet their training needs in terms of number of staff members trained, the opinions are more divided. Historically the Academy has limited resources to cope with the demand of certain training areas, consistently building waiting lists of a numerous of highly procured courses.

On the opposite side, the above-mentioned topics of operational requirements and high quality of delivery are historically well regarded by both customer representatives and students, a trend which these results seem to continue to confirm.

Customer support and responsiveness of the teams engaging directly with customers have never been formally assessed, at least on the customer's perspective. The results suggest that overall, there is a significant feeling of satisfaction with the responses and support received from the Academy support teams. Although the trend is certainly positive, the results suggest a significant amount of room for improvement particularly on response times and business enquiries.

When analyzing Offer vs Needs, and specifically about how the customers agree that the Academy addresses their entities training needs, the respondents do agree with that notion with a 63.6% response rate for that question, however regarding whether if this organisation meets their customers initial demand, the answers reflect the resources limitations currently faced by the Academy (23% Disagree, 35% Neutral and only 32% Agree). This reality keeps being reflected in the Annual Planning cycle when transforming customer's demand into training opportunities where the Academy capacity reaches its limits in several areas, falling short to meet all the demand.

The level of Relationship and Collaboration depicted by the respondents is positive, with more than 50% positively agreeing with the questions asked. However it was found a lot of room for improvement in this area, as both when asking if they feel included in the NCI Academy processes (53.6% Agree or Strongly Agree) and if they agree that their proposals for improvement are considered (46.4% Agree or Strongly Agree), the answers are very diversified. In effect the NCI Academy has been reviewing and drastically modifying its business and operational processes, which affects directly its organisational stakeholders.

One of such processes is the Bidding and Demand procedure, which is a very specific process that establishes a formal agreement between the NCI Academy and its external customers. This process is core to the organisation as it establishes the battle rhythm for the whole year in terms of operations as it aims to capture the demand in terms of training requirements. On the 6 questions related to this dimension, on average, less than 50% of the subjects expressed positive feedback. The simplicity (or complexity) of the Service Support Training (SST) contract and the effort required to comply with the Bidding and Demand process were the questions that received the lower scores.

The inclusion of a metric associated with Post-training Service aimed to understand the relevance of this particular concept for customers. The results show that the majority of answers were positive, while the "Neutral" also achieved a significant percentage of responses. Although statistically this question showed some correlation with other dimensions, especially the questions related to the Bidding and Demand Process ( $R= 0.48$ ;  $\text{sig} < 0.05$ ), we have found that no relevant conclusions can be withdrawn from this indicator alone.

Regarding the value for money offered by Academy Services, although the results are positive, more than 40% of the respondents did express a neutral feeling about this dimension. This may indicate that, due to the military nature of this organisations and the work they do, it may not be a dimension easily applicable here, as it is a highly specific and applied area. In fact, the questions associated with this dimension did not show any significant correlation with any others. Also, in 2023 there was a redefinition of the price proposals for courses and services, which, in some cases registered an increase of the cost per seat.

Understanding that in a Non-Profit organisation the aim is always to set the prices of the services matching the costs of providing those services, and as the Academy Business areas are calculating those prices with that framework in mind, it can be suggested a more transparent communication with the external customers to clarify the changes.

Overall, between being satisfied (55.4%) and very satisfied (14.3%) the great majority of the subjects provided positive feedback (39 out of the 56 responses). Taking into consideration some negative answers provided in the various dimensions above, these overall results can be a good indicator of the training quality provided, however it is not clear that this indicator measures clearly the overall satisfaction with all aspects of this delivery, at a B2B level.

The expectations indicator registered, on the other hand, the majority of answers on the central value, with 75% of the respondents admitting that this organisation does meet their expectation in terms of training services. This outcome is consistent with the fact NCI Academy training is very specific, its courses defined by NATO requirements and its mission being to deliver essential technical and operational training for NATO entities.

To conclude, the main areas where NCI Academy should improve are:

- Bidding and Demand Process
- Offer Vs Needs
- Expectations
- Relationship and Collaboration

## **5. Improvements Proposal**

Improving the service provided by the NCI Academy regarding the identified relevant dimensions used in the survey to better connect with customers is essential for building long-term partnerships and fostering business growth.

In the previous chapter, based on the results collected and its analysis, we have identified several key points that need to be improved, such as refining our Bidding and Demand process, making a better effort to match our offer with the demand requested by the customer which also influences the expectations customer have about our training delivery quality.

While we recognize that several aspects and processes that influence Customer Satisfaction need redefinition at various levels (Operational, Business, Communicational), this project, as a starting point, focuses on proposing a comprehensive strategy to enhance customer relationships and collaboration and start tackling the shortfalls at this level, which will allow to improve the aspects identified on chapter 4.

### **5.1 Improving the Bidding and Demand process**

As supported by the results, Bidding and Demand process is still a source of dissatisfaction from customers. As it's the process responsible to engage with customers, capture and receive their yearly demand for seats that should mirror their training requirements, which is a key element for our core business. This process has been historically troublesome as the Academy cannot match the number of seats requested every year due to lack of resources. This is expressed by the respondents answers when asked if the process is time consuming, if it requires minimal effort and if the process is fast, simple and positive where there's a clear trend of dissatisfaction towards these items.

Also, this process has a certain number of administrative steps that organizations need to follow, either liaising with their own internal stakeholders and also NCI Academy financial and business stakeholders. As common on public organizations, many different approval processes and timelines have to be respected when dealing with budget allocation and formal requests. Although a great effort have been done to facilitate this process, the following improvement proposal seeks to accelerate this:

- a) Understand Customer Real Training Needs and Goals
  - Regularly engage in conversations to understand their specific training requirements and business roadblocks

- Conduct needs assessments to identify their pain points, challenges, timelines and opportunities.
- b) Build an automation into our proprietary Training Management System (TMS) that should capture:
- Actual Customer training Requirements based on past behavior
  - A proposed upfront tentative course plan for the following year where customers can directly reserve real seats on real dates as currently scheduling is dependent of customer demand.
  - Provide access to students to this calendar so they can request seats directly to their Training Authorities.
- b) Customized Solutions
- Tailor the training offerings to meet specific requirements of the customers, when they have high demand for specific courses
- c) Personalized Communication
- Maintain open lines of communication through multiple channels, such as email, phone, and in-person meetings to boost customer service quality.
  - Communicate to all customers with transparency in a regular basis by establishing recurrent well define timeframes to send information (weekly, monthly, etc)
- d) Proactive Support
- Anticipate customer needs and proactively offer solutions before they even ask.
  - Monitor and track demand submission regularly
  - Provide timely responses to inquiries and demonstrate a willingness to go the extra mile.
- e) Regular Check-ins
- Schedule regular check-in meetings to review progress, gather feedback, and discuss upcoming training needs.
  - Use these interactions to strengthen the relationship and show genuine interest in their success.

## **5.2 Improve on Relationship and Collaboration**

Most of the above proposals also cover one of the other indicators of dissatisfaction regarding Relationship and Collaboration as due to the nature of the current Bidding and Demand process a high degree of interaction between entities is required. However, the customers expressed more dissatisfaction when asked if their proposals are well received and implemented and also if they feel included in the definition and improvement of processes that

affect the subject's organisations. Taking into consideration these factors, there are strategies that can be implemented to amplify this level of collaboration such as:

- **Dedicated Relationship Managers:** Assign dedicated relationship managers to key customers based on the types of entities, providing them with a single point of contact and personalized attention to answer their needs more effectively.
- **Engage in Co-Creation and process alignment:** Collaborate with customers to co-create training programs that address their unique challenges and incorporate their insights. Also, understand when and where their internal processes clash with the Academy requirements and work out strategies to overcome these roadblocks via workshops, forums, etc.
- **Reward Loyalty:** Implement a loyalty program that rewards customers for their proactivity and continued collaboration and business based on a rating system taking advantage of the prototype of a customer rating system already present in the Academy TMS.
- **Resolve Issues Swiftly:** Address any concerns or issues promptly and efficiently, a concern expressed in the survey results, by establishing a standard deadline to provide answers (24 to 48h). A possible effective form to do this is by implementing a customer ticketing system.

In the end, building strong customer relationships requires consistent effort and a customer-centric mindset. By focusing on understanding their needs, providing exceptional service, and fostering collaboration, it is possible to create a foundation for lasting partnerships and mutual growth.

### **5.3 Improve on the gap between Offer VS Needs**

As a historically sensitive point for the Academy that has been confirmed by the survey results, showing how dissatisfied are our customer with this topic, the fact that NCI Academy is not able to meet the full set of seats requests submitted by the customers. To tackle this supply and demand issue, there are four main strategies that can be used (Crandall et.al, 1996):  
Either we can:

- **Provide—**Attempt to have sufficient capacity at all times to meet peak demand. While this means there may be excess capacity, the provider believes this is more important than taking the chance of losing business.



- Match—Attempt to anticipate demand patterns so that capacity levels can be changed as needed. This means scheduling the work force carefully and using subcontractors or other temporary arrangements.
- Influence—Attempt to change customer demand patterns to obtain good utilization of resources. This requires that marketing carefully plan promotions, pricing, and other marketing programs, so they are closely coordinated with operations.
- Control—Keep demand variation to a minimum to fully utilize unique services and need high-cost resources to provide the level of customer service expected.

As the Academy is already chasing solutions to cope with lack of resources in terms of staff to be able to cope with all requests, our focus will be solely on managing supply and demand. Analyzing the applicability of each strategy, it's clear that Control is the suitable approach to offer improvements measures to the Academy's supply and demand issue, as this strategy is more applicable to scheduling and manage seat overflow (in airlines).

Demand and supply control strategy:

By analyzing historical data regarding course scheduling, seat allocation, seat requests, key NATO exercises periods and customer behavior we can establish patterns to fully utilize the capacity resources by:

- Controlling course scheduling instead of having the demand drive the supply. This translates into a pre-defined schedule where customers will be asked to reserve their seats in advance. This approach aligned with good customer relations and communication, will drive the customer to accept the need to vary their scheduling patterns to match the organization limits.
- Effective use of Waiting Lists as a form of demand control, and as vehicle to express customer's interest in certain courses in certain dates to build historical data.
- Allow a certain degree of overbooking, as historically the average fill rate on Academy courses is around 76%.

Also we can use a Match strategy in certain areas to bring service contractors and Service Line subject matter experts (SME's) to expand the Academy's course offer in terms of number of available seats.

Similar to other industries, such as airports and air sectors, the Academy struggles with periods and areas where over- and under scheduling and seat requests occur. Strategic planning is essential to maximize resources and finding a balance between the demand and

supply of courses and available seats (Barnhart et. al, 2012). A suggestion to efficiently distribute customer demand is to allocate capacity to the users that assign the highest value to it:

- Using the already established customer priority order which gives strategic priority to certain customers actively involved in NATO operations
- Using a Customer rating system assessing their behavior through the year and operational requirements
- Consider Training Requirement as an Operational Requirement rating system, having the customers rating the priority of the requests in order of importance.

#### **5.4 Strategies to cope with Expectations management**

The proposal for this area of improvement also contemplates the fact that it's necessary to establish a feedback mechanism to gather continuous input on services, allowing to make improvements based on the suggestions of customers using this project survey as the baseline. Creating a detailed feedback loop is essential for continuous improvement and ensuring that the proposed changes are effective in boosting customer satisfaction.

In Annex C we can find a proposed structure to successfully establish a comprehensive feedback loop. Knowing that creating an effective feedback loop requires consistent effort and commitment from a multitude of organizational resources, both technical and human. It's also crucial to maintain transparency with customers and stakeholders about the progress being made and the results achieved through the feedback-driven initiatives.

## 6. Conclusion

This project aimed to gain insight on the satisfaction and expectations of the customers of NCI Academy, particularly focusing on dimensions that are key performance indicators for the NCI Academy. The primary goal was to leverage this knowledge to enhance the institution's offerings, refine its strategy, and ultimately improve customer satisfaction.

The core issue at hand was the need to comprehensively assess and elevate the levels of customer satisfaction and expectations concerning the services provided by the NCI Academy. This involved pinpointing specific areas that demanded improvement, notably the Bidding and Demand Process and Relationship and Collaboration.

The project was designed to achieve several vital objectives. Firstly, it aimed to gauge customer satisfaction and expectations accurately. Secondly, it sought to generate actionable insights that could inform and guide enhancements in customer relationships and collaboration. Lastly, it intended to empower the NCI Academy to elevate the quality of its services based on the valuable feedback received from its diverse customer base.

The methodology of this project was executed through a series of structured steps. It began with the identification of the project's target population, consisting of representatives from various customer entities. Subsequently, a specialized B2B Customer Satisfaction survey was meticulously designed. This survey comprised three distinct sections: Respondent Data, Dimensions of Satisfaction, and Overall Satisfaction and Expectations. To gather responses, the survey was distributed to 277 representatives.

Once data collection was completed, an in-depth analysis was undertaken, encompassing sample characterization and an evaluation of customer satisfaction dimensions. Additionally, a crucial component of the methodology was the establishment of a comprehensive feedback loop, a vital element for ongoing improvement.

The core proposals to address the identified areas of improvement and foster stronger customer relationships were multifaceted. They encompassed strategies such as understanding customer needs and goals, implementing personalized communication, offering proactive support, conducting regular check-ins, tailoring solutions to meet specific customer requirements, engaging in co-creation, providing value-added services, assigning dedicated relationship managers, establishing a robust customer feedback loop, instituting a loyalty program, conducting training reviews and assessments, consistently offering training updates, creating networking opportunities, resolving issues swiftly, focusing on continuous improvement, and maintaining transparency with customers and stakeholders.

These proposals aimed to not only meet but exceed customer expectations and ensure the sustained success and satisfaction of NCI Academy's diverse customer base.

This structured approach to understanding and enhancing customer satisfaction and expectations provides a comprehensive roadmap for NCI Academy to navigate and continue to excel in the complex world of B2B customer relationships and service excellence.

It is observable that the majority of replies come from representatives of the sub-entities of the NCI Agency organisation, which can be related to the fact that most of the respondents come from entities that have small budgets (less than 50.000eur).

The timing chosen for applying the survey was significantly affected by the leave period on most military and civilian organizations which could have prevented many customer representatives from providing their inputs.

Now that the baseline was established, it is recommended to review some of the metrics in order to fine tune the instrument by analyze the statistical results, conducting interviews with customers, etc.

In the future, when reapplying the survey to study the evolution of the improvement strategies, it is recommended to add specific questions to provide a better characterization of sample in order to infer correlations between profile and answers such as time in service of the respondent, clarify if occupies a CIV or MIL post, an understand if respondent is a Point of Contact as a full time job or part of the normal functions.

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## Annexes

### Annex A – Dimensions of the Customer Survey

The 8 dimensions covered in the Customer Survey

| Dimensions                          | Questions  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Expectations                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When I submit the initial demand, I am confident that NCI Academy is going to provide all the requested seats.</li> <li>• I expect that NCI Academy training meets the operational requirements of my organisation (in terms of acquired skills).</li> <li>• I expect a high level of quality delivery from NCI Academy training.</li> </ul>  |
| Offer Vs Needs                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The course catalogue addresses the specific training needs and challenges faced by my organisation.</li> <li>• The final seat allocation meets the initial demand of my organisation.</li> </ul>  |
| Bidding and Demand Process          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new NCI Academy bidding and demand process of NCI requires minimal effort.</li> <li>• The new NCI Academy bidding and demand process is not time consuming.</li> <li>• The process of bidding and demand is simple.</li> <li>• The Academy Service Support Training (SST) Agreement process is fast, simple and positive.</li> <li>• The Academy Service Support Training (SST) Agreement process meets my needs as a customer.</li> <li>• The allocated seats by NCI Academy meet my actual requirements.</li> </ul> |
| Applicability                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCI Academy training contributes to improving the skills and knowledge of our employees.</li> <li>• NCI Academy training contribute to my organisation's effectiveness, productivity and contribution to NATO operations.</li> <li>• After the training provided by NCI Academy, our staff are able to apply new skills in the workplace.</li> </ul>  |
| Post-training Service               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NCI Academy has been interested in understanding if the taught skills of my staff were successfully applied.</li> </ul>   |
| Customer Support and Responsiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The NCI Academy Support Teams provide appropriate responses to my enquiries, requests and issues.</li> <li>• The NCI Academy Support Teams respond in a timely manner to my enquiries, requests and issues.</li> <li>• The NCI Academy is customer-focused and responsive when replying to business enquiries.</li> <li>• NCI Academy proactively provides relevant information.</li> </ul>   |
| Relationship and Collaboration      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a good level of collaboration and partnership between NCI Academy and my organisations.</li> <li>• I feel included in the definition and improvement of NCI Academy processes that affect my organisation.</li> <li>• My proposals for improvement are well received and considered for implementation by NCI Academy.</li> </ul>  |
| Value for Money                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The training provided by NCI Academy has a good quality-price relationship.</li> <li>• The quality-price relationship of NCI Academy is good compared to the competitors (where applicable).</li> </ul>   |

## **Annex B – NCI Academy Survey**

Your experience with the Academy as a provider for your NATO Operational training requirements is vital to the continuous improvement of our services and customer support. The Academy invites you to give us your honest opinion about this experience through a 5 minute questionnaire. All responses are confidential and no personal data is collected or maintained.

### **Q1. What type of organisation do you represent?**

NATO Command Structure

NCI Agency

NATO Force Structure

Ministry of Defence / NATO Nations

### **Q2. On average, how many of your staff is trained yearly by the NCI Academy?**

Less than 10

Between 11 and 50

Between 51 and 100

More than 100

### **Q3. On Average, what is the size of the budget allocated to NCI Academy training?**

Less than 50.000eur

Between 50.001eur and 100.000eur

Between 100.001eur and 250.000eur

More than 250.000eur



| Question Nr | Question  | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------|---|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 4           | When I submit the initial demand, I am confident that NCI Academy is going to provide all the requested seats.          |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 5           | I expect that NCI Academy training meets the operational requirements of my organisation (in terms of acquired skills). |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 6           | I expect a high level of quality delivery from NCI Academy training.  |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 7           | The course catalogue addresses the specific training needs and challenges faced by my organisation.                     |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 8           | The final seat allocation meets the initial demand of my organisation.  |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 9           | The new NCI Academy bidding and demand process of NCI requires minimal effort.  |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 10          | The new NCI Academy bidding and demand process is not time consuming.   |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 11          | The process of bidding and demand is simple.  |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 12          | The Academy Service Support Training (SST) Agreement process is fast, simple and positive.                              |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 13          | The Academy Service Support Training (SST) Agreement process meets my needs as a customer.                              |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 14          | The allocated seats by NCI Academy meet my actual requirements.   |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 15          | NCI Academy training contributes to improving the skills and knowledge of our employees.                                |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 16          | NCI Academy training contribute to my organisation's effectiveness, productivity and contribution to NATO operations.   |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 17          | After the training provided by NCI Academy, our staff are able to apply new skills in the workplace.                    |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 18          | NCI Academy has been interested in understanding if the taught skills of my staff were successfully applied.            |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 19          | The NCI Academy Support Teams provide appropriate responses to my enquiries, requests and issues.                       |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 20          | The NCI Academy Support Teams respond in a timely manner to my enquiries, requests and issues.                          |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 21          | The NCI Academy is customer-focused and responsive when replying to business enquiries.                                 |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 22          | NCI Academy proactively provides relevant information.  |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 23          | There is a good level of collaboration and partnership between NCI Academy and my organisations.                        |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 24          | I feel included in the definition and improvement of NCI Academy processes that affect my organisation.                 |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 25          | My proposals for improvement are well received and considered for implementation by NCI Academy.                        |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 26          | The training provided by NCI Academy has a good quality-price relationship.   |                   |          |         |       |                |
| 27          | The quality-price relationship of NCI Academy is good compared to the competitors (where applicable).                   |                   |          |         |       |                |

**Q28. Overall, how satisfied are you with the NCI Academy' training services:**

Very dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Neutral

Satisfied

Very satisfied

**Q29. Overall, do you feel the NCI Academy' training services meet your expectations?**

It is much worse than I expected

It is worse than I expected

It meets my expectations

It is better than I expected

It is much better than I expected

## **Annex C – Customer Feedback Loop**

Proposal for the implementation of a Customer feedback loop:

- A. Collect Feedback:
  - a. Regularly gather feedback from customers through various channels such a recurrent survey and direct interactions.
  - b. Design feedback mechanisms that cover different touchpoints in the customer journey, including pre-training communication, training delivery, post-training support, and overall experience.
- B. Analyze Data:
  - a. Collate and analyze the feedback data to identify recurring themes, trends, and areas of concern.
  - b. Categorize feedback based on different dimensions like training areas, customer support, process improvements, and value for money.
- C. Identify Actionable Insights:
  - a. From the analyzed data, pinpoint specific insights that can drive actionable improvements and transform it into Action Items. Prioritize these based on their potential impact on customer satisfaction.
- D. Engage Stakeholders:
  - a. Involve relevant stakeholders within the organization, including training coordinators, customer support teams, operations managers, and decision-makers.
  - b. Present the feedback data, insights, and proposed actions to these stakeholders to gain their input and buy-in.
- E. Propose Solutions:
  - a. Based on the identified insights, propose detailed solutions or initiatives that address the areas of improvement. These could range from process changes to communication strategies to resource allocation adjustments.
- F. Plan Implementation:
  - a. Develop a clear plan for implementing the proposed solutions. Define responsibilities, timelines, and resource requirements for each initiative.
  - b. Break down complex solutions into smaller, manageable steps to facilitate smoother execution.
- G. Implement Changes:
  - a. Execute the planned initiatives while closely monitoring progress. Communication and coordination are crucial during implementation.

- b. Ensure that all relevant teams are informed about the changes and trained, if necessary, to adopt new practices.
- H. Monitor and Measure:
  - a. Put in place a monitoring Dashboard to track the impact of the implemented changes.
  - b. Use both quantitative (e.g., customer satisfaction scores, response times) and qualitative (e.g., customer feedback, anecdotal evidence) metrics to evaluate success.
- I. Iterate and Refine:
  - a. Based on the ongoing monitoring and measurement, make adjustments as needed to optimize the effectiveness of the implemented changes.
  - b. Be prepared to iterate on solutions to achieve the desired outcomes.
- J. Communicate Back to Customers:
  - a. Close the feedback loop by communicating the changes made based on customer feedback. This demonstrates that the organization values customer input and is committed to improvement.
- K. Solicit Follow-up Feedback:
  - a. After implementing changes, encourage customers to provide follow-up feedback to gauge their perception of the improvements and to identify any remaining concerns.
- L. Regular Review:
  - a. Establish a regular review cycle where you periodically reassess customer feedback, evaluate the impact of changes, and identify new areas for improvement.