

# Towards an efficient IS service management: The internal customers' Zone of Tolerance

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FIGURE 1

Zone of tolerance.

This article addresses the zone of tolerance (ZOT) as a diagnosis tool for managing the quality of information systems' (IS) service delivered to internal customers. The concept of ZOT results from dividing customers' expectations into two measures:

- level of desired service, which represents what customers believe that can and should be provided; and
- the adequate service, corresponding to the minimum level of service the customer is willing to accept.

The difference between these two expectation measures results in a ZOT, which represents the interval of service performance that the customer considers satisfactory.

This article aims to contribute to a better understanding of internal customers' ZOT by considering the frequency of use and skills in IS as explanatory factors. A survey was administered to the internal users of one company's IS department. 276 valid questionnaires were obtained, representing a response rate of 70%.

The results showed that internal customers had a narrow zone of tolerance, which differed according to the users' IS skills and how frequently they used the IS support service; occasional users and skilled users were the least susceptible to heterogeneity in the service delivery.

From management point of view, a wider ZOT would be more favourable, meaning that some variability in service would not result in user dissatisfaction. So, in this case, strategies should be designed to manage the expectations regarding the adequate service. Users should be clearly informed of the benefits of the use of IS services, and the responsibilities and limits on the use thereof.

The article demonstrates the relevance of assessing the ZOT of IS services and provides insights on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of IS services to internal customers. In fact, the adopted model enables the assessment of the service quality and the identification of strengths and weaknesses of the service, indicating the critical aspects for urgent improvement. Managerial implications, limitations and suggestions to future research are also provided.

