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Analyzing the Historical Complaints Regarding Household Goods and The Department of Defense's Remedy

June 2024

Capt Danielle K. McAnally, USMC

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Prepared for the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA 93943.

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ABSTRACT

The frequent permanent change of station (PCS) that military members undergo every few years requires the movement of the members' household goods. The Government Accountability Office, among other government entities, researched the movement of household goods and determined it needs more oversight by the Department of Defense (DOD). In response, the DOD approved a new contract to ensure better oversight of household goods for military members, which is in effect in 2024. This thesis systematically analyzed comments in the services' trade publications to investigate if the current contract is likely to address customers' concerns. The results show Gaps 1 and 2 are the most prevalent customer service gaps with moving goods in the PCS process. I recommend the DOD monitor the communication within the new system by utilizing customer feedback and monitor the upgraded technology behind the new claims process.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BV	Best Value
CONUS	Continental United States
CSS	Customer Satisfaction Score
DOD	Department of Defense
DTR	Defense Travel Regulation
FMSCA	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HHG	Household Goods
JTR	Joint Travel Regulations
MFAN	Military Family
OCONUS	Outside Continental United States
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PII	Personally Identifiable Information
PS	Performance Score
RDD	Required Delivery Date
RLHF	Reinforcement learning from human feedback
RS	Rate Score
SOFS-A	Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members
TRANSCOM	Transportation Command
TSP	Transportation Service Provider



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I. INTRODUCTION

A. INTRODUCTION

Military families are dissatisfied with government contracted movers. According to the Defense Personal Property Management Office, damaged and missing items are the number one reason for customer dissatisfaction. Service members experience problems related to moving companies that include damage to belongings, late deliveries, and unexpected incurred costs and are deeply dissatisfied (Military Family Life Survey, 2022).

Every year, more than 400,000 service members and their families conduct a permanent change of station (PCS), according to a trusted site used for active duty members' informational purposes (Military OneSource, 2023). According to the 2019 Military Family Support Programming Survey released by the Military Family Advisory Network (MFAN) 84% of respondents had moved to a new duty station within the past two years and 36% had moved within the past 12 months (Military Family Advisory Network, 2019). The same survey found that more than 50% of respondents opted to use government contracted movers and 68% experienced loss or damage to personal items in their move (Military Family Advisory Network, 2019). A 2021 survey showed that 65% of respondents identified settling claims for damaged or missing household goods as one of their top four PCS related problems (Office of People Analytics, 2021). Service members' dissatisfaction with the movement of their household goods has been a long-term problem, which previous DOD solutions have failed to address.

The movement of military members' household goods lacks oversight at the Department of Defense level. Frame attributes the lack of oversight to a lack of quality assurance inspectors, too few transportation providers, an abundance of broken items, and a claims process that is overly burdensome (2019). In 2020, the DOD Inspector General published the findings of its fiscal year 2018 inquiry, showing 9,852 shipments costing \$102.3 million were delivered over 5 days past the Required Delivery Date (RDD) (Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, 2020). Table 1 breaks down costs and times by the number of total shipments compared to the number of late shipments and the total cost (in



millions) of the late shipments. The responsible moving companies did not explain their failure to deliver the shipments promptly.

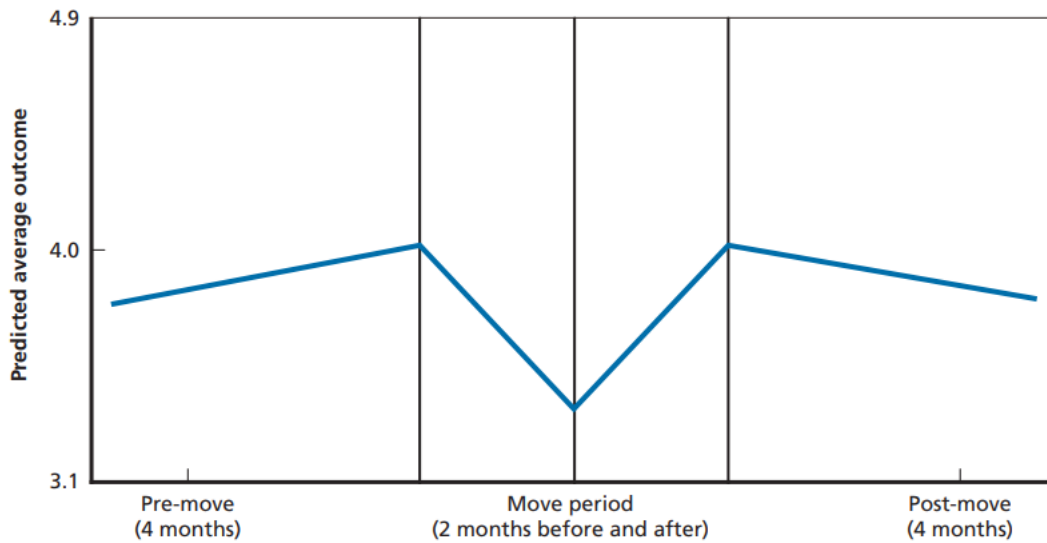
The service members who experienced late shipments had to pay additional costs, such as lodging, food, and necessities (Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, 2020). Military members paid approximately \$5,000 every move for out-of-pocket expenses that they were not able to recoup (Military Family Advisory Network, 2020). Moves are so costly, that service members are allowed to receive advance payment of their basic pay to cover the costs that may incur throughout their move (Defense Finance and Accounting Services, n.d.).

Joint Shipping Office	Location Base and State	Total Shipments	Number of Late Shipments	Total Cost of Late Shipments (In Millions)
Mid-Atlantic	Ft. Belvoir Army Base, VA	2,343	965	\$9.0
South East	Naval Air Station Jacksonville, FL	2,291	697	6.3
South Central	Lackland AFB, TX	2,601	1,055	9.1
North Central	Colorado Springs, CO	2,617	1,287	8.7
Total		9,852	4,004	\$33.1

Figure 1. Total Shipments Compared to Late Shipments. Source: Department of Defense Office of Inspector General (2020).

The DOD is facing challenges with recruiting and retention. In fiscal year 2023, the only branch to meet 100% of their recruiting goals was the Marine Corps. The Navy and Army both fell below 70% with the Airforce just above 80% (Department of Defense, 2023). Dissatisfaction with the PCS process relates to retention intentions among military members (Tong et al., 2018). Service members rank quality of life and finances in the top ten reasons why they choose to leave service (Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Team, 2017). The Deployment Life Study found that PCS moves and the financial hardship that comes with them are directly correlated with retention intentions among military members (Meadows, Tanielian, Karney, 2016). As shown in Figures 2 and 3, service members' commitment to the military and retention intentions sharply decline during and after PCS moves.

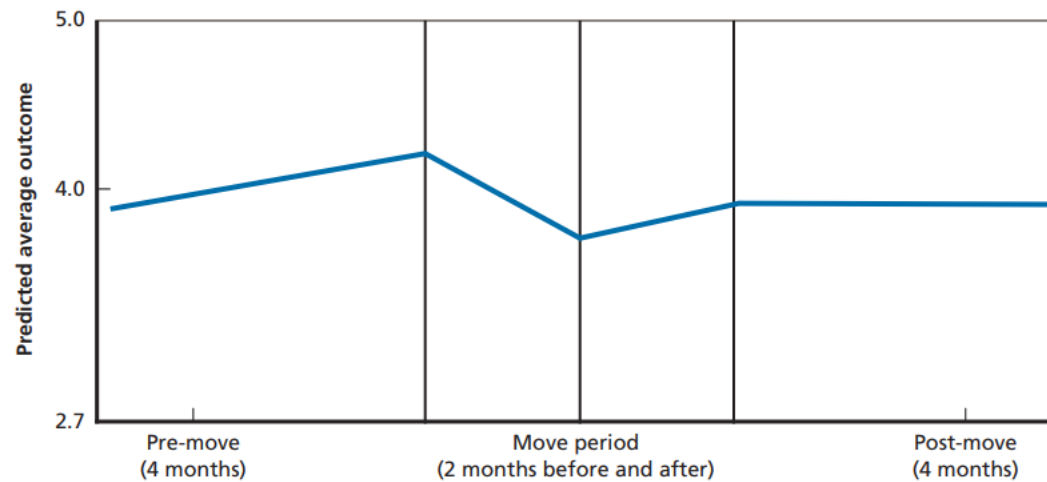




NOTE: The y axis is centered on the mean value and presents a range representing plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean.

RAND RR2304-2.6

Figure 2. Service Member Commitment to Military over the PCS Move.
Source: Meadows et al. (2016).



NOTE: The y axis is centered on the mean value and presents a range representing plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean.

RAND RR2304-2.7

Figure 3. Service Member Retention Intentions over the PCS Move.
Source: Meadows et al. (2016).



The Department of Defense has made many efforts to improve service members' moving experience. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has produced numerous reports about the issues service members experience. While in a 2007 report, the GAO noted the improvements since 2001, the problem was not solved. The lack of a positive solution sparked many military families to sign a petition with Change.com entitled "Hold Military Moving Companies Accountable" beginning in 2018 (Military Spouse Chronicles, n.d.). The petition was initiated to make the issues with moving household goods visible to lawmakers and, with over 100,000 signatures, the petition was noticed by the media (Military Spouse Chronicles, n.d.).

In 2019, the Pentagon initiated a plan to hire a single private company to oversee all military moves and, in 2021, selected HomeSafe Alliance to be the exclusive move management provider (HomeSafe Alliance, n.d.). By transferring to a single contractor overseeing all moves, the Department of Defense hopes to improve the oversight of moving sub-contractors. HomeSafe Alliance won the \$6.2 billion contract to revamp the government moving system and servicemembers will begin to utilize the new system in the 2024 moving cycle (HomeSafe Alliance, n.d.). The contract that goes into effect summer of 2024 is the DOD's most recent attempt to bridge the gap between service members' expectations and their experiences with contracted movers.

Despite the continued efforts, retention intentions are affected by the dissatisfaction within the current PCS process. The new contract with HomeSafe Alliance aims to address service members' dissatisfaction with the household goods moving process. By identifying common complaints and analyzing the proposed contract, this study will determine if the current \$6.2 billion contract is likely to meet service members' expectations and address their long-held dissatisfaction with the movement of their household goods.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION AND APPROACH

This study investigates the question "How will the new contract with HomeSafe Alliance bridge the known gaps between the current PCS process and service members' expectations of PCS moves?" To answer this overarching question this study investigates:

- 1) What were the key gaps in the PCS process and the factors driving those gaps, 2) What



do service members expect and what standards do their expectations suggest, and 3) To what extent is the new policy, as implemented by HomeSafe Alliance, designed to meet the identified gaps?

This study conducted a gap analysis to answer the research questions. I applied the Gaps Model to analyze four primary sources of data. The Gaps Model identifies four general customer service gaps. I collected previously published, first-hand quotations of service members and subject matter experts about PCS experiences from articles inputted into ChatGPT. I analyze these quotations, the DOD request for proposals, and descriptions of HomeSafe Alliance goals and services presented on the organization's webpage. The results show Gaps 1 and 2 are the most prevalent customer service gaps with moving goods in the PCS process.



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II. BACKGROUND

A. BACKGROUND

The DOD has struggled with retention over many years and continues to struggle today. Retention in the military is a continuous effort that requires leaders to develop policies and strategies that address human behavior and personnel needs (Sminchise, 2016). Military retention “refers to the rate at which military personnel voluntarily choose to stay in the military after their original obligated term of service has ended” (Kapp, 2002). There are various reasons military members choose to leave the service, including their experiences with the PCS process. The literature on turnover is consistent with the military, except that the general literature does not focus on jobs that include frequent moves through the PCS process (Holtom et al., 2008; Hom et al., 2017)

B. RETENTION IN THE MILITARY

The DOD is an all-volunteer force that must meet its recruiting and retention goals to project power and lethality. When the military struggles with retaining personnel, leaders lacks experience, and job satisfaction and efficiency decline (Kapp, 2002). According to a GAO National Security Snapshot from March 2023, retention challenges are costly for the DOD. In some career fields, it can cost up to \$500,000 to train a professional, thus retention issues can be a financial loss for the DOD (United States Government Accountability Office, 2023). Housing relocation is important at all stages of a military career and an issue that is of concern regardless of rank (Sminchise, 2016). Because housing and relocation issues are present at all ranks and levels of the military, the issues present in the PCS process directly relate to retention among military members.

Retention in the military continues to be a complex issue, but one that is essential to ensuring a ready force to project power and meet the national security needs. Only 23% of Americans between the ages of 17 and 24 meet the military service requirements (Garamone, 2023). Surveys of military members showed the highest ranked considerations for leaving the military are financial pressures, spouse employment, and impacts of service on family life (Military Family Life Survey, 2022). According to the 2022 Military Family



Lifestyle Survey, “military families are weighing the costs and benefits of military service, in the context of increasing out of pocket costs for housing and relocation, as well as rising food costs” (Military Family Life Survey, 2022). Dissatisfaction stemming from the PCS process leads to a decline in service member retention intentions across all ranks due to many different stressors, including financial stress (Sminchise, 2016; Tong et al., 2018). For spouses and active duty members, relocation issues are a concern as highlighted in Figure 4 (Military Family Life Survey, 2022):

Top Military Family Issues						
	Active-Duty Spouses (n=3,173)	Active-Duty Service Members (n=466)	Veteran Spouses (n=889)	Veterans (n=2,433)	National Guard Families (n=285)	Reserve Families (n=212)
Spouse employment	50%	33%	30%	12%	19%	26%
Time away from family	45%	42%	29%	32%	48%	42%
BAH/Off-base housing concerns	40%	38%	10%	8%	10%	16%
Military pay	40%	44%	25%	33%	38%	28%
Relocation/PCS issues	37%	34%	14%	14%	7%	15%
Impact of deployment on family	28%	22%	30%	29%	46%	40%
Concerns about transition from military to civilian life	20%	25%	33%	29%	20%	17%
Access to military/VA health care system(s)	19%	26%	46%	45%	31%	32%
Military benefits	12%	21%	27%	26%	24%	27%

Figure 4. Top Military Family Issues. Source: Military Family Life Survey (2022)

According to a 2020 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members (SOFS-A), only 56% of active duty members were likely to stay in the military after their initial obligation (Office of People Analytics, 2020). This is not a new trend. A study examining retention and recruitment issues from 1975 to 2001 highlighted that retention was an issue throughout those 25 years (Kapp, 2002). This study cited many issues driving the long-term trend including the civilian economy, competition with higher education, attitude



changes among young Americans, and insufficient resources. The same source mentions that in addition to those issues, job dissatisfaction due to a variety of factors that encompass the nature and pace of military operations, a lack of critical supplies and equipment, “quality of life” issues, and changes in the military culture are causes of retention shortfalls. The executive branch and Congress has continued policy changes to address the shortfalls including increasing military pay, improving retirement benefits, improving housing, and improving reimbursements for moves (Kapp, 2002).

The challenge of recruitment and retention varies based on the economic status of the nation. For example, the Army’s goal of 80,000 annual recruits is easier to meet when the unemployment rate is higher (Krueger et al., 2022). The inverse is also true, when the employment rate is high, recruiting and retention is low. The Congressional Research Service states that one basic question drives an individual’s decision to stay or leave: “Would I be better off if I stayed in or left the military?” (Kapp, 2002). Both tangible factors such as pay as well as the intangible factors such as quality of life affect this consideration (Kapp, 2002). A summary of data from 2010–2020 states that overall, the military’s retention has a negative trend with an additional negative trend in spouse’s support in staying (Office of People Analytics, 2020).

Retention is an ongoing issue within the DOD that is multifaceted and complex. The DOD struggles with retention due to many causes, both tangible and intangible. One facet of quality of life is the PCS process and the problems surrounding how moves are conducted within the military. If the PCS process is addressed, it could positively affect retention across the DOD.

C. PCS

Service members must be counseled before conducting their move. Their counseling is based on the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) and they are educated on what allowances they can receive and how to conduct their move. This section describes how the government conducts service member moves and defines household goods, household goods transportation, and the Joint Travel Regulations (JTR).



A permanent change of station (PCS) is a long-term assignment ranging from two to four years inside the continental United States (CONUS) or outside the continental United States (OCONUS) (Military OneSource, 2023). PCS moves are necessary for the service member to fulfill the needs of the service. Whether that be new jobs, rank changes, training opportunities, or other reasons, more than 400,000 service members conduct PCS moves every year (Military OneSource, 2023). A service member PCSing first receives orders to their new duty station with a no later than date that they must check in. Then, the military family decides how to move their household goods (HHG). They may move their goods on their own or they may arrange a personal property shipment through the government (Military OneSource, 2023).

The Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) establishes the laws and policies that regulate the allowances for service members and their families (Defense Travel Management Office, 2024). The JTR applies to all service members, their dependents, and DOD civilians and employees, and addresses per diem, travel, and transportation allowances (Defense Travel Management Office, 2024). The travel categories include temporary travel, leave, and permanent change of station (Defense Travel Management Office, 2024). The JTR is the governing document on conducting PCS across the military.

Household goods (HHG) are defined as “items associated with the home and personal effects belonging to the service member or civilian employee and dependents on the effective date of the order or transfer” (Defense Travel Management Office, 2024, p. A-12). Figure 5 shows examples, but not an exhaustive list, of items that may be included in the definition. Household goods do not include items such as livestock, live animals, plants, building materials, perishable items, and live ammunition (Defense Travel Management Office, 2024).



Table 1. Examples of Household Goods. Adapted from Defense Travel Management Office (2024)

Vehicle spare parts	Car engine or transmission, seats, tops, winch, spare tires, fuel cans
Vehicles other than a personally owned vehicle (POV)	Motorcycle, moped, hang glider, golf car, snow mobile, trailer
Watercraft	Canoe, skiff, kayak, rowboat, sailboat
PBP&E (professional books, papers, and equipment)	

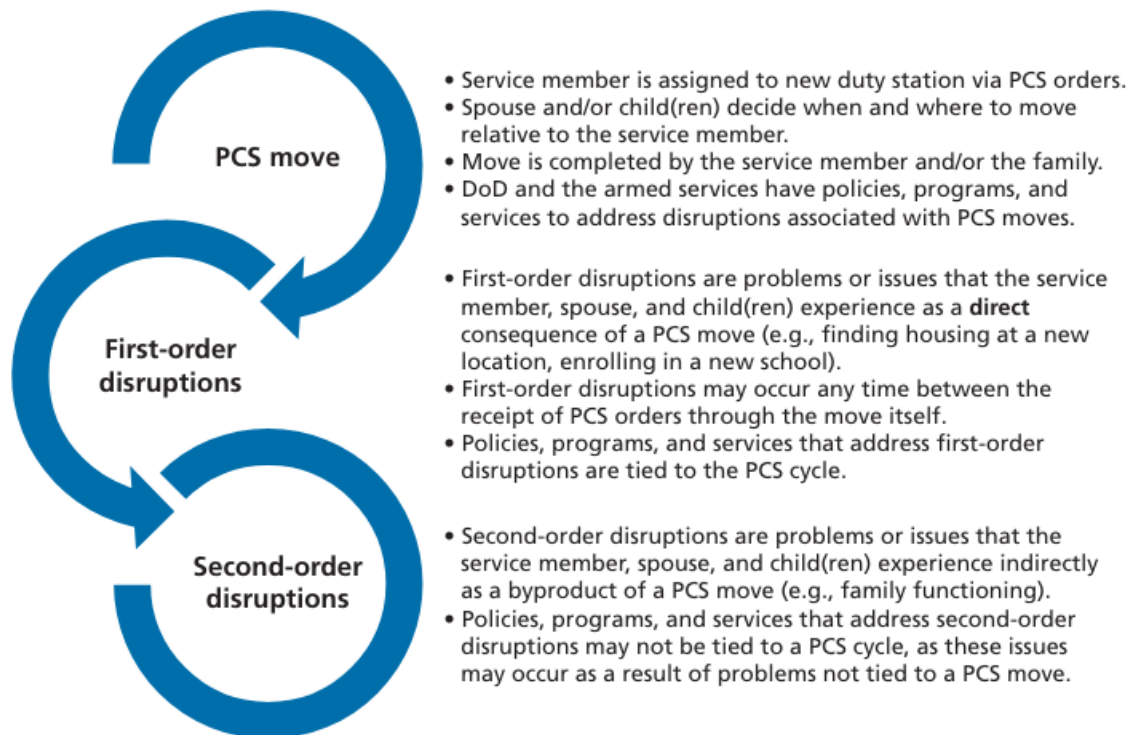
“Household Goods Transportation is the shipping, packing, crating, drayage, storage in transit, uncrating, and unpacking of HHG” (Defense Travel Management Office, 2024, p. A-13). “The act of moving a service member or dependent’s personal belongings from one location to another is HHG transportation” (Defense Travel Management Office, 2024). The service member is allowed to transport their own goods in any way they desire in as many trips as they desire, but the government’s obligation and maximum payment differs (Defense Travel Management Office, 2024). The government’s maximum obligation is “the cost it would be to transport the member’s maximum weight allowance between locations at the ‘Best Value’ cost” (Defense Travel Management Office, 2024, p. 5C-1). The “Best Value” (BV) Cost is defined as “the mathematical calculation to measure performance and rates in domestic and international markets” (U.S. Transportation Command, 2022, p. IV-401-1). The calculation is based on the Transportation Service Provider (TSP) data and the Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) while also considering the Performance Score (PS) and Rate Score (RS) weights of the HHG and the rates on file (U.S. Transportation Command, 2022).

D. CHALLENGES FOR FAMILIES

Families in the military face many challenges with frequent moves. The RAND corporation conducted a study of family stability during a PCS move and concluded that families face two types of disruptions when moving: first order and second order. First order disruptions occur at any time and are a direct consequence of the PCS move such as finding a new school and moving household goods. Second order disruptions are the



indirect effects of the move such as finding a social community and evaluating retention intentions (Tong et al., 2018). Figure 5 highlights the first and second order disruptions:



NOTE: Although this cycle is conceptualized as a single move, problems may compound over multiple moves.

RAND RR2304-2.1

Figure 5. Permanent Change of Station Move Cycle. Source: Tong et al. (2018)

Research also shows that one of the main challenges for military families is the instability caused by the PCS moves, namely, the stress on the entire family (Carlock, 2021). Carlock emphasized that stress stems from many factors from the PCS like the instability of the environment, career opportunities for the spouse, and financial stress associated with the move. Over 65% of participants in a 2021 Active Duty Spouse Survey said that settling claims for damaged or missing household goods was a PCS related problem that impacted their finances (Office of People Analytics, 2021). 68% of the respondents in the MFAN survey mentioned previously claimed that their personal items

were damaged in the move and could not be replaced (Military Family Advisory Network, 2020.). These challenges highlight the quality-of-life issues that service members endure that factor into their decision to stay or leave the military.

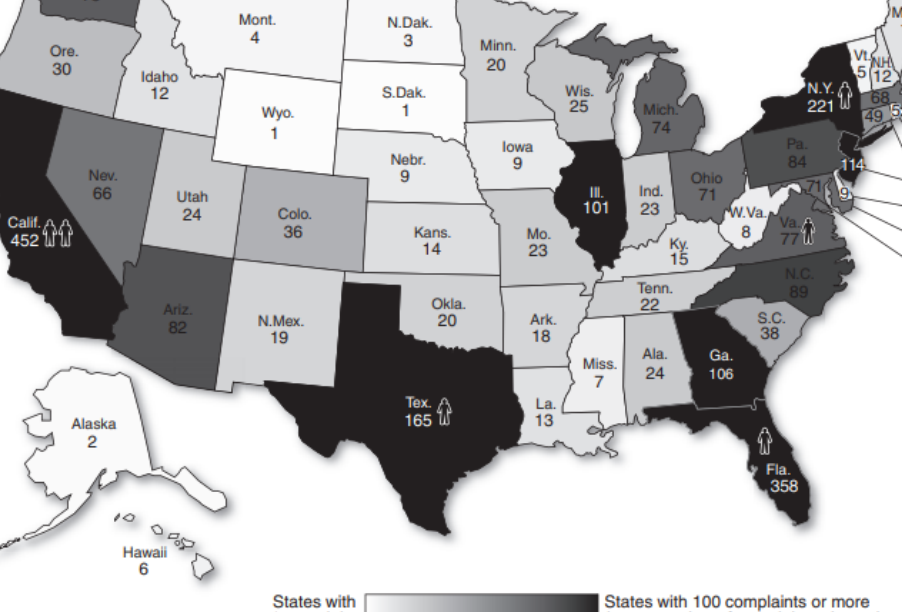
E. WHY MILITARY MEMBERS SEPARATE

There are many reasons why military members separate from service. Military members can choose to separate, be forced to separate for adverse reasons, and be forced to separate for administrative reasons (Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Team, 2017). This same source highlights reasons military members choose to leave the service, most notably quality of life, financial reasons, and failure of military service to meet expectations in various areas. Military members choose to leave the service for many reasons, some of which cannot be fixed. But with retention continuing to be an issue for the DOD, it is remedying the areas that can be fixed, such as the movement HHG could have a positive impact on military member separation.

F. MOVING HHG AS A FOCAL POINT FOR THIS PROJECT

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has conducted multiple reports on the existing PCS process and the common issues that have been observed by service members. In 2009, the GAO published a report on the need for increased consumer protection within the goods moving industry. This report specifically addressed the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and the slow progression of the household goods consumer protection efforts. The focus of the FMCSA was not on consumer protection and using complaint data but on the increase of household goods compliance reviews (Tong et al., 2018). In addition, a separate GAO report found that the FMCSA was not making its complaint data available to the public, a practice inconsistent with the Department of Transportation's policy and one that affected the moving companies chosen to move military members' families (GAO, 2023). Figure 6 highlights the number of complaints in each state in 2008:





States with 1 complaint

States with 100 complaints or more (exact number of complaints shown in each state)

The number of FMCSA household goods specialists located within each state (8 total nationally)

Sources: FMCSA; GAO; and Map Resources (base map).

The issues with the PCS process directly correlate to retention intentions among military members. The Deployment Life Study suggested that PCS moves and the financial hardship that comes with them are directly correlated with retention intentions among military members (Meadows, Tanielian, Karney, 2016).

The contract the DOD made with HomeSafe Alliance has been the most recent attempt to address the issues within the PCS process. HomeSafe Alliance was formed to be the exclusive move management provider to the DOD beginning in 2024 (HomeSafe Alliance, n.d.). This contract was developed to provide the DOD a single move manager to mitigate some of the customer satisfaction issues within the previous PCS process. With

the known challenges with HHGs and PCS, HomeSafe Alliance is attempting to make the PCS process more smooth, more simple, and more efficient (HomeSafe Alliance, n.d.). Their website boasts a new way to conduct moves by utilizing one application to conduct all virtual aspects of the move. Their digital inventory is an attempt to keep inventories accurately accounted for while packed, in transit, and once delivered. According to their website, HomeSafe hires “reliable haulers” and stores goods in a “HomeSafe approved warehouse facility” while providing customer service specialists at every point in the PCS.

PCS is a known stress within the military community and a requirement that makes service members question their retention intentions. Many reports and the recent implementation of the HomeSafeAlliance contract demonstrate DOD leaders’ recognition of the problem. The Gaps Model developed in customer service research provides a useful lens through which to examine the disconnect between customer and provider.

H. ANALYTICAL LENS: THE GAPS MODEL

Customer satisfaction has been a widely studied area of research since the 1970s. Many studies draw on the disconfirmation paradigm which proposes that “satisfaction is related to the size and direction of the disconfirmation experience, where disconfirmation is related to the person’s initial expectations” (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982). Churchill and Surprenant (1982) elaborate this paradigm, grouping an individual’s expectations into three categories:

1. Confirmed, when a product performs as expected,
 2. negatively disconfirmed when the product performs more poorly than expected, and
 3. positively disconfirmed when the product performs better than expected
- (p. 492)

The authors propose that individuals are dissatisfied when their expectations are negatively disconfirmed. Dissatisfaction stems from the discrepancies between expectations and actual performance (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982). This study draws on the Gaps Model, a service quality model that explains the different gaps in expectations and actual service performance to explore service members’ expectations regarding the movement of HHG during PCSing and service providers of expectations of service members’ expectations.



I. THE GAPS MODEL

Acceptable service quality has become essential to American citizens as the economy has morphed into a service economy (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Service quality is an informative lens with which to assess the movement of HHG within PCS moves. The Gaps Model is an expectation-confirmation theory that describes the consumer's experience with quality while including the factors that contribute to a quality determination as depicted in Figure 7 (Mauri et al., 2013). The Gaps Model consists of four gaps that describe reasons why customers and service provider expectation do not align.

Gap 1 occurs when the management wrongly assesses customer quality expectations as a consequence of the lack of market research or the lack of upward communication within the firm.

Gap 2 is the discrepancy between management perception of customer expectations and the settlement of appropriate standards of service quality

Gap 3 occurs when there is a discrepancy between service quality standards and firm personnel performance in the service delivery as a consequence of lack of appropriateness of both the technology and the operating systems which derive from organizational problems or related to the downward communication.

Gap 4 occurs when quality characteristics conveyed to customers through external communication do not match those of service delivered. (Mauri, 2013, p. 136–137)



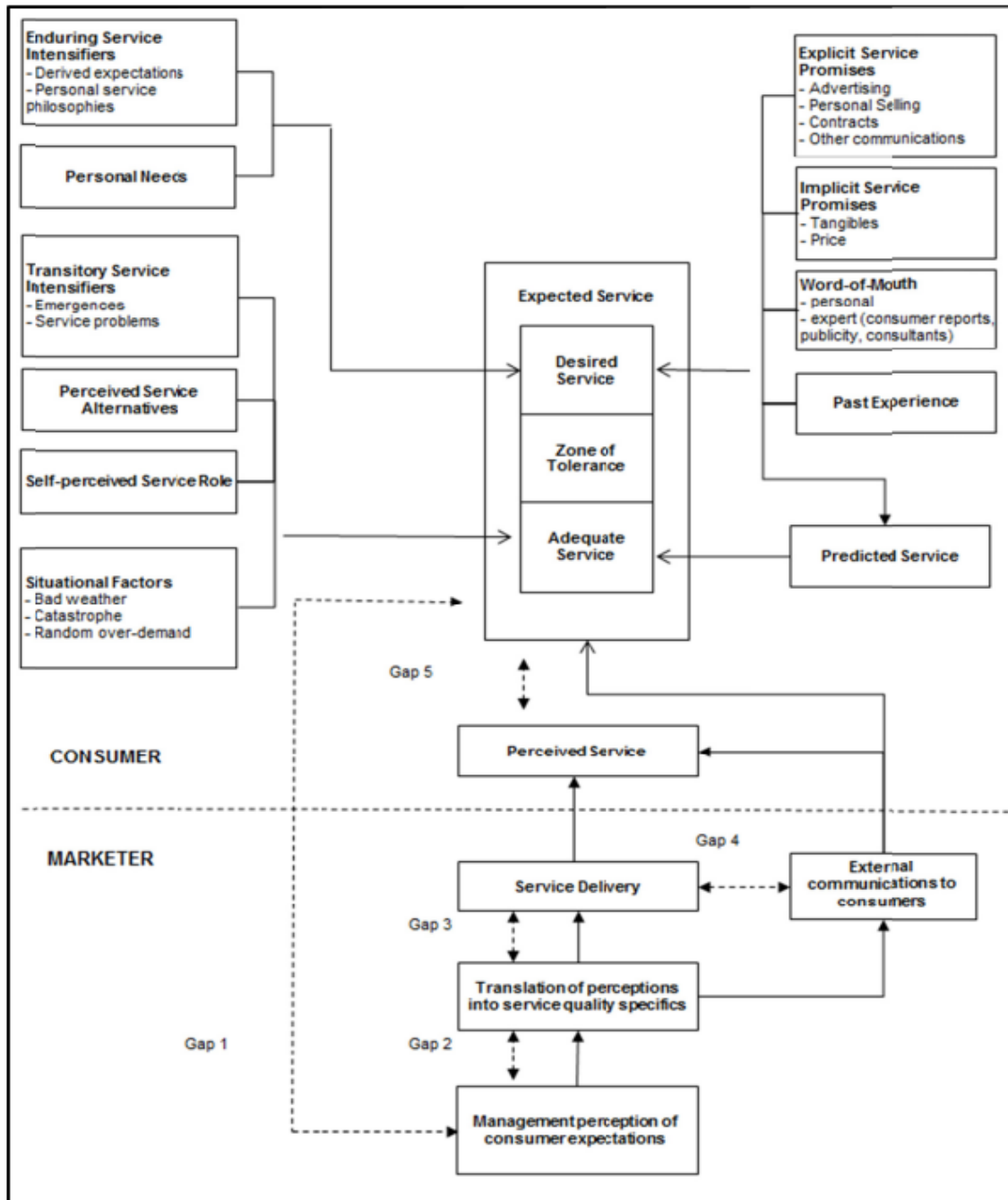


Figure 7. Diagram of the Gaps Model. Source: Mauri et al. (2013)

The Gaps Model proposes that the criteria for which customers assess service quality is not solely based on the outcome of the service. The customer considers the entire process of the service and defines the criteria to evaluate the service quality (Zeithaml et

al., 1990). When evaluating service quality, it is important to understand services are intangible, heterogeneous, and production and consumption of the service are inseparable (Zeithaml et al., 1990). The same source states that the intangibility comes from the fact that service is composed of experiences rather than objects, service performance varies by each producer, and the quality determination is made during the delivery of the service. The Gaps Model is an important tool for assessing service quality and can be applied to the issues surrounding the PCS process.

In the book *Delivery Quality Service*, Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990) explore the balance of customer perceptions and expectations by conducting an in-depth study on the Gaps Model. There are four gaps within the Gaps Model with different qualities within the service industry that contribute to the formulation of the gap. It is important to note that Gap 5 is mentioned but is the actual adverse effect on customers' perceptions of service quality.

Gap 1, one of the most critical gaps in the model, is "the difference between what customers expect and what management perceives they expect" (Zeithaml et al., 1990, p. 51). *Delivering Quality Service* explains the key reasons for Gap 1 as minimal market research orientation, inadequate communication across the company, and too many levels of the management structure. The lack of market research stems from the effort a company makes to understand customers' needs and expectations and the research conducted to generate that information. If the company does not engage in gathering information from the client base, a gap in understanding and utilizing the findings forms (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Gap 1 also forms if there are too many levels of management that separate the top from the bottom, and subsequently, the top managers from the customers, Gap 1 widens (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Communication between personnel and management is crucial when assessing Gap 1. If the flow of information is not passed from the lower-level employees to the higher levels, Gap 1 is exacerbated. Contact between customers and management through formal or informal means provides communication needed to stimulate change. Managers can stimulate conversation in regards to quality of service to lessen the effects of Gap 1 (Zeithaml et al., 1990).



Gap 2 is defined as the wrong service quality standards within a company. *Delivering Quality Service* identifies four factors that contribute to the formation of Gap 2: lack of commitment to service quality, the perception of unrealistic feasibility, incorrect task standardization, and lack of goal setting. The commitment to service quality is the extent to which quality is a strategic goal within a company. If the company does not commit resources to the improvement of service quality, incentivize and emphasize service quality goals, and commit to improved service quality, Gap 2 is likely to widen.

To address Gap 2, management must be convinced that customer expectations can be met with the current systems in place while providing room for change if needed. Personnel and resources must be available to meet the demands of the customer if the company is to close this gap. Task standardization is based on the technology used to achieve customer satisfaction while remaining consistent in the service provided and is a tool used to mitigate Gap 2. Goal setting must be prioritized with clear and measurable goals based on customer-orientated standards to avoid the formation of Gap 2 (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Gap 3 is defined as the service-performance gap. This gap is present when the “employees are unable and/or unwilling to perform the service at the desired level” (Zeithaml et al., 1990, p. 89). The text offers seven factors that contribute to Gap 3: role ambiguity, role conflict, poor employee-job fit, poor technology -job fit, inappropriate supervisory control systems, lack of perceived control, and lack of teamwork. These factors are internal to the company and have a deep impact resulting in Gap 3. If employees are uncertain about expectations from management or believe they cannot meet the demands of their bosses, Gap 3 is perpetuated. The employee’s skills and the tools and technology that support job completion must be an accurate fit to advance the goals of the company. Lastly, teamwork, which influences the extent to which the company can work towards a common goal together, also plays a role in the widening or narrowing of Gap 3.

Gap 4 is caused by promises that do not match delivery. This gap is caused by two factors, horizontal communication and the propensity to overpromise (Zeithaml et al., 1990). The text suggests that horizontal communication is disrupted by the extent different departments in a company communicate and the overlap of policies and procedures



(Zeithaml et al., 1990). If the company's external communications do not reflect the level of service the customer receives, the company's propensity to overpromise drives the formation of Gap 4.

The Gaps Model draws on the expectation-confirmation theory. When applied to the movement of HHG within the military PCS process, it can be used to examine the customer service gaps that are responsible for dissatisfaction.

J. PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyze the most common complaints related to the movement of HHG with the PCS process using the Gaps Model and assess whether the contract with HomeSafe Alliance will address the gaps that exist.

Retention in the military is an ongoing problem that Congress has attempted to address over many years. Quality of life is a major motivator for separating, and PCS affects quality of life. Since moving companies that facilitate the movement of HHG within the PCS process are providing a service, the Gaps Model is an appropriate framework for assessing where the PCS process does not meet customer expectations.



III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

A. INTRODUCTION

This research conducts a gap analysis to answer the research question. I apply the Gaps Model to analyze four primary sources of data and make innovative use of ChatGPT to collect data. The Gaps Model identifies four customer service gaps between expectations and actual service quality. I collect and analyze previously published quotations of service members and subject matter experts about service members' PCS experiences, the DOD request for proposals, and descriptions of HomeSafe Alliance goals and services presented on the organization's webpage. This chapter discusses the data collection process and analysis approach. I provide a brief description of ChatGPT and a detailed explanation of how I used ChatGPT to support this study.

B. RESEARCH FOCUS AND SETTING: CONTRACT WITH HOMESAFE ALLIANCE

After many years of dissatisfaction and a need for change, the DOD has entered into a contract with HomeSafeAlliance to be the single move management provider for all PCS moves. The award synopsis is available on SAM.gov but the entire contract is not available for public viewing. The contract with HomeSafe Alliance is a fixed price contract with economic price adjustments, indefinite delivery, and indefinite quality (IDIQ) for the price of just over \$6.18 billion (Department of Defense, 2021). The Navy awarded this contract to implement a new model for moving HHGs and to "address long standing limitations that exists within the legacy program" (United States Transportation Command, 2024). The contract transition period is from December 2021 to August 2025 and the contract will be in effect for a term up to 9.5 years (KBR, 2022).

The synopsis indicates that the contract aims to improve many aspects of the PCS process. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) published a toolkit to assist DOD personnel when conducting briefs about the new contract. The toolkit specifically addresses these areas as areas of improvement: enhanced communication support, two new



information technology systems, more streamlined processes for filing and settling claims, and a greater utilization of resources (United States Transportation Command, 2024).

C. QUOTATION DATA COLLECTION AND SOURCES

To identify and collect published quotations, I began by searching for articles related to the PCS process. I searched in the *MilitaryTimes* database published in *ArmyTimes*, *AirforceTimes*, *MarineTimes*, and *NavyTimes*. I selected the *MilitaryTimes* database because the focus of this study is military service members and these journals target this audience. The *MilitaryTimes* forum maintains an accurate, independent news source of the issues within the military in real time. I searched the database using the keywords “permanent change of station,” “household goods complaints,” “moving companies,” “damaged goods,” and “moving household goods” to identify articles that discussed the PCS process and thus, that might have quotations. The keywords were chosen to receive the greatest number of hits based on previous practice searches that consisted of key words like “military moves” and “PCS complaints.” These searches yielded 523 hits and 85 total articles included in the analysis:

Some of the hits did not yield articles for the analysis. The four publications are administered by *MilitaryTimes* and some articles were cross-posted in multiple of the four forums. I saved only those articles that were directly pertinent to the topic of this study. For example, when searching permanent change of station in *ArmyTimes*, the second article that populates is entitled “US, Chinese warships’ near miss hint at troubled diplomatic waters,” an article that does not apply to this topic. The third article after searching this keyword is entitled “Why U.S. agencies buy personal info and what it means in the age of AI.” This article was also not pertinent to the topic of this study. After screening for duplication and relevance, 95 articles remained. Table 2 shows the number of search hits and number of articles collected for each term.



Table 2. Number of Search Hits and Articles Saved

Publication	Hits	Saves
<i>ArmyTimes</i>	50	17
<i>AirForceTimes</i>	134	29
<i>NavyTimes</i>	130	20
<i>MarineTimes</i>	209	18

D. USE OF CHATGPT

I used ChatGPT to identify direct quotations in the articles. I analyzed public articles and did not input any personal identifiable information (PII) or sensitive material in ChatGPT. ChatGPT is a form of artificial intelligence that is trained by Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF) to follow a prompt while giving a detailed response to the user (OpenAI, 2024). My advisors approved the use of ChatGPT to support this study. I used OpenAI's ChatGPT (version 3.5 and 4). ChatGPT can quickly scan quantities of text, collect pertinent quotations, and identify potential themes. It does this much more quickly than a human reader. Some risks associated with using ChatGPT are the potential to miss pertinent quotes, misquoting articles, and suggesting summaries rather than direct quotations of the text.

First, I inputted the 95 downloaded articles from *ArmyTimes*, *MarineCorps Times*, *NavyTimes*, and *AirForceTimes* and inserted them into ChatGPT one at a time. I copied the text from the articles and pasted them into ChatGPT. Then I asked ChatGPT to select quotes based on the keywords “dissatisfaction,” “household goods,” “moving company,” and “permanent change of station.” After uploading the articles, I gave the prompt “pull out quotes with keywords ‘dissatisfaction’, ‘household goods’, ‘moving company’, ‘permanent change of station’.” I selected these key words for the prompts after familiarizing myself with the topic by reviewing social media accounts dedicated to reuniting servicemembers with household goods lost during PCS. Then, I read each quote within each article to check that the quotations were correctly quoted and to understand the context of each quotation. The total number of quotes used was 209. Appendix A provides the categorically grouped quotations from the different publications analyzed in this study.



E. HOMESAFE ALLIANCE WEBSITE

I utilized the HomeSafe Alliance “About” page to understand the organization’s mission, vision, and values. The organization website describes general customer expectations, customer expectations at the destination, and customer expectations at the origin. These were useful in understanding HomeSafe Alliance’s interpretation of what the customer expects. I also saved the information the organization provided on how they address mold, the claims process, how to use a smart phone to connect during the move, and the expectation of reimbursement for each branch of service.

F. DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH

The analysis of the quotes consisted of first understanding the context of the quotes within the articles. Then, I read the definitions of the different gaps within the Gaps Model and assessed the factors from the charts in *Delivering Quality Service*. I then grouped the quotations into one of the four gaps in the Gaps Model.

Simultaneously, I reviewed the information surrounding each quotation to group quotations according to contextual factors described in *Delivering Quality Service* and reproduced in Appendix B. I then counted the quotations that fit within each category and assessed the importance of each Gap and the contextual factors.

G. ANALYSIS APPROACH TO AWARD SYNOPSIS AND HOMESAFE ALLIANCE WEBPAGE

The award synopsis is a public summary of the contract awarded by the government. I analyzed the synopsis using the Gaps Model as a lens to determine if the expectations of the company met the expectations of the customer. Specifically, as these relate to the producer rather than the customer, Gap 1 “Not Knowing What the Customers Expect” and Gap 2 “The Wrong Service Quality Standards” were the most prevalent lenses for this data. The conceptual factors give specific illustrative issues for each gap to apply to each scenario and are listed in Appendix B. Similarly, I analyzed the HomeSafe Alliance website using the conceptual factors within *Delivering Quality Service*. My initial analysis showed that customers expected ease of access to the systems and accurate tracking of shipments. Additionally, the customers preferred a management style that prioritized



quality service. The HomeSafe Alliance webpage has a customer tab that includes information on areas that the customer values such as claims, tracking shipments, and delivery expectations. I analyzed the webpage using the customer expectations that were present in the data set.

H. CONCLUSION

The public data and use of ChatGPT allowed for the data to be pulled quickly while considering service members' real experiences. The Gaps Model, a well researched method to analyze customer satisfaction, allowed the data to be categorically analyzed. The contract the DOD made with HomeSafe Alliance is intended to alleviate many of the issues service members experience with the movement of HHG within the PCS process.



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IV. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A. INTRODUCTION

I analyzed the data using the Gaps Model and categorized quotes according to the four Gaps. The results show Gaps 1 and 2 are the most prevalent customer service gaps with moving goods in the PCS process. I recommend the DOD monitor the communication within the new system by utilizing customer feedback and monitor the upgraded technology behind the new claims process.

B. ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION: QUOTATIONS, GAPS, AND EXPECTATIONS

I categorized the quotes in Appendix A to the service gaps using the contextual factors in Appendix B to guide the categorization of the quotes. Table 3 shows the Gaps, the number of quotes in each of the gaps, and the overall percentage of quotes in each gap. Quotes in Gap 1 and Gap 2 were the most prevalent. Twenty-four quotes were not associated with any gap.

Table 3. Number of Quotes and Percentages Associated with Gaps

Gap	Number of Quotes	Percentage of Quotes categorized in Gap
Gap 1	57	27.4%
Gap 2	56	26.9%
Gap 3	38	18.2%
Gap 4	33	15.9%
Quotes that did not apply	24	11.5%

Table 4 shows examples of the quotes mapped to the contextual factors and gaps. The research factors, example questions, and illustrative issues were drawn from *Delivering Quality Service* (Zeithaml et al., 1990) and shown in Appendix B. For example, this quote, “A new analysis shows that 21 percent of all domestic Defense Department household goods shipments in 2018 had at least one damage claim” from an



ArmyTimes article (Jowers, 2020) maps to Gap 1 under the conceptual factor of “Marketing Research Orientation” (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Table 4. Quotes and Prevalence Mapped to Contextual Factors and Gaps

Gap	Research Factor	Example Quotes	Prevalence (high(+), medium(0), low(-))
Gap 1: Not Knowing What the Customers Expect	Market Research Orientation	<p>“But the analysis also concluded that the U.S. Transportation Command ... doesn’t have reliable enough information to determine whether troops’ belongings are getting delivered on time, or whether their claims for damage and loss are being completed, according to the report.” (Jowers, 2020a)</p> <p>“A new analysis shows that 21 percent of all domestic Defense Department household goods shipments in 2018 had at least one damage claim.” (Jowers, 2020a)</p> <p>“The report by the DOD Inspector General isn’t likely to surprise the many military families who complained loudly about their household goods shipments during that year’s moving season.” (Jowers, 2020a)</p>	0
	Upward Communication	<p>“As military families struggle in a moving season that’s more turbulent than any in recent history— because of shortages of moving companies and housing — Army officials are advising soldiers to contact their chain of command if they’re having trouble.” (Jowers, 2021f)</p> <p>“Officials at U.S. Transportation Command this summer have urged families to reach out to their household goods/ transportation offices to learn about their options for assistance, including reimbursement for expenses caused by delays in delivery or pickup.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p>	+
	Levels of Management	<p>“Troops reported problems with delayed deliveries, difficulty getting information about their vehicles’ statuses, trouble accessing the online tracking system and difficulty reaching anyone at the company’s headquarters.” (Jowers, 2014)</p>	0
Gap 2: Wrong Service Quality Standards	Management Commitment to Service Quality	<p>“Movers improperly wrapped China, threw boxes carelessly onto the truck, and lost or stolen bags containing the couple’s shooting accessories, she said.” (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>“From the start, Nicky Johnson said, all they heard from the moving company was, ‘File a claim, we can’t help you, we don’t want to help you.’”(Jowers, 2021d)</p> <p>“While the company delivered her household goods a day early, she has plenty of complaints about the packers, as well as the crew that unloaded her shipment.” (Jowers, 2018c)</p> <p>“Our whole strategy is to reward the highest quality movers. They’re going to have a score card, and those that perform better, provide a better moving experience to the military service member, and meet the required pickup and delivery time frames, will get more work.” (Jowers, 2021i)</p>	+

Gap	Research Factor	Example Quotes	Prevalence (high(+), medium(0), low(-))
	Perception of Feasibility	<p>“According to U.S. Transportation Command officials, the percentages of late deliveries fluctuates weekly.” (Jowers, 2021h)</p> <p>“There have been some persistent issues with the moving industry lacking enough truck drivers, packers and other personnel to load and unload trucks – problems that industry experts said will continue.” (Jowers, 2017b)</p> <p>“Then there’s the shortage of moving companies, which struggle to find workers, deal with shortages of equipment and other issues in a busy moving season, causing delayed or canceled moves for service members.” (Jowers, 2021g)</p>	0
Gap 3: Service Performance Gap	Employee-Job Fit	<p>“There are a limited number of companies that will contract for the moving, All you get is excuses... ‘But they were hired to fulfill a contract to deliver these household goods in 45 days. Either meet the contract or pay me,’ she said.” (Jowers, 2018c)</p> <p>“While the company delivered her household goods a day early, she has plenty of complaints about the packers, as well as the crew that unloaded her shipment.” (Jowers, 2018c)</p>	0
	Technology-Job Fit	<p>“For two weeks, the computerized system that is the backbone of the entire household goods moving process has been ‘almost at a dead stop,’ causing a traffic jam of sorts for service members who needed to get their moves scheduled.” (Jowers, 2019d)</p> <p>“Families have also been frustrated with the lack of information from their moving companies.”(Jowers, 2021e)</p>	0
Gap 4: Promises Mismatched with Delivery	Horizontal Communication	<p>“What is the Army’s plan to hold these companies accountable in order to keep the moving season from being a financial burden for military families?” (Jowers, 2018f)</p> <p>“An Army staff sergeant at Fort Meade, Md., said he has been waiting for more than a month for confirmation that his family’s household goods will be packed up and moved,” (Jowers, 2019d)</p> <p>“Among the solutions she offered is to have move coordinators and quality assurance inspectors properly trained in being a mediator between the military family and the moving company and its crews.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p>	-
	Propensity to Overpromise	<p>“When the movers brought back the supposedly remediated household goods on Jan. 15, 2021, their belongings were in even worse condition.” (Jowers, 2023e)</p> <p>“They complained of unexpected delays in pickups or delivery, and about the quality of work by moving companies, resulting in loss and damage for some families.” (Jowers, 2020a)</p>	-



1. Gap 1

Gap 1 is the most prevalent gap occurring, and as stated previously, one of the most critical gaps in the model (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Mauri et al. (2013) state that Gap 1 occurs due to the wrong managerial assessment of customer expectations resulting from a lack of market research and communication. Explained in a slightly different manner, *Delivering Quality Service* explains that Gap 1 is “the difference between what customers expect and what management perceives that they expect” (Zeithaml et al., 1990, p. 51). The analysis suggests that the complaints regarding the movement of HHG within the PCS process are a result of many different factors including market research orientation, upward communication, and levels of management.

The quotes support the existence of a market research orientation. DOD conducts regular research, both formal and informal, to gather information on the PCS process such as the 2018 study referenced in this quote: “A new analysis shows that 21 percent of all domestic Defense Department household goods shipments in 2018 had at least one damage claim” (Jowers, 2020). However, the quotes suggest the customer did not see a change in the quality of service over the years of information gathering and implemented change. The data collected spanned over ten years suggesting the problem was ongoing and was not adequately addressed, despite the market research.

Upward communication is another factor that contributes to the prevalence of Gap 1. One individual said, “Is it so much to ask our elected officials to step in and protect our service members from the headache and heartache during a PCS?” (Military Spouse Chronicles, 2024) which suggests that military service members perceive top management government officials are disconnected from issues surrounding PCS. Gap 1 is perpetuated if the information flow from the customers to the top levels is stifled or goes unheeded. Additionally, if the face-to-face interaction with customer contact personnel is replaced by call lines, chats, or the proposed customer interface with HomeSafe Alliance, Gap 1 could be further exacerbated because there could be fewer communication opportunities and more opportunities for technology breakdowns.



Gap 1 may also result from too many levels between the highest member of the company and the customer and the lack of information flow on all levels. Within the companies contracted to conduct PCS moves, there are numerous levels, making it difficult for the customer (service member) to contact the company's employees. The service member is required to use the Defense Personal Property System (DPS) to schedule a move, track a shipment, and file a claim, but the systems have many levels and do not foster effective communication as this quote describes: "Troops reported problems with delayed deliveries, difficulty getting information about their vehicles' statuses, trouble accessing the online tracking system and difficulty reaching anyone at the company's headquarters" (Jowers, 2014). Quality assurance (QA) inspectors are assigned through the local transportation office and check in with families in person or via telephone (Blackwell, 2023). The requirement to use this system, being assigned a separate QA inspector, while also communicating with the moving company to conduct a move is a large contributor to the prevalence of Gap 1. The quotes suggest there are too many levels separating those directly involved with the customer from the top managerial levels.

More than a quarter, 27.4%, of the quotes fall within Gap 1. The quotes highlight a difference between what customers expect and what management, and in this case the government and moving companies, perceive what they expect. The highest percentage of quotes are present in the most critical gap, yet there are continued efforts to reach the customer and decipher their expectations. *Delivering Quality Service* states that customer complaints are not always an adequate source for understanding the customers' expectations (p. 54). This suggests that the way the DOD is gaining insight into the customer's desires may not be an effective means to gather information.

2. Gap 2

Mauri and colleagues assess that Gap 2 is a result of "the discrepancy between management perception of customer expectations and the settlement of appropriate service quality" while Zeithaml and colleagues describe Gap 2 as the wrong service quality standards within a company (Mauri, 2013, p. 136–137; Zeithaml et al., 1990). Gap 2 is the incorrect service quality standards within a company and the second highest number of



quotes fall in this category. Many factors contribute to Gap 2 according to *Delivering Quality Service*. Zeithaml and colleagues state that the four factors that contribute to Gap 2 are “inadequate commitment to service quality, lack of perception of feasibility, inadequate task standardization, and the absence of goal setting” (Zeithaml, 1990, p. 71). While the data from the *MilitaryTimes* articles can shed some light on the first two factors, analyzing the latter two factors would require data from the moving companies themselves. Since obtaining data from the moving companies is outside the scope of this research, this analysis excludes those factors from consideration.

Getting a glimpse inside the inner workings of the companies hired to move military families is a difficult task, but the quotations in the data represent the customers’ experiences and whether they perceive that companies care about service quality. Two quotes in particular from *ArmyTimes* highlight the customers’ perceptions that their moving companies were not committed to service quality: “Movers improperly wrapped China, threw boxes carelessly onto the truck, and lost or stole bags containing the couple’s shooting accessories”(Spencer, 2018) and “When the movers brought back the supposedly remediated household goods on Jan. 15, 2021, their belongings were in even worse condition” (Jowers, 2023b). These experiences may be indicative of how service quality is prioritized within the moving companies- if individual employees do not prioritize good quality service, it could be because management has not made service quality a strategic goal.

When companies believe that they can meet a customer’s expectations but then fail to do so, the lack of perception of feasibility is highlighted. These quotes represent three separate sources that highlight a factor that contributes to Gap 2.

“From the start, Nicky Johnson said, all they heard from the moving company was, ‘File a claim, we can’t help you, we don’t want to help you’” (Jowers, 2015)

““We’ve had complaints from people that they’re shocked at how long it’s taking to get their household goods picked up, and we’re hearing lots of complaints about packers, because they’re not able to find people to do the packing, so that’s raising a whole host of issues,’ said Kelly Hruska, government relations director for the National Military Family Association.”(Jowers, 2018)



“While we understand labor constraints facing suppliers — to include those operating in the Defense Personal Property Program — a customer should never be ‘ghosted’ by their moving company,” said Scott Ross, spokesman for U.S. Transportation Command.” (Jowers, 2021c)

The quotes suggest moving companies are not meeting the customers’ service expectations. Overall, Gap 2 was the second most prevalent gap represented by the quotes, at 26.9%. Gap 2 directly ties into Gap 1 as if companies do not understand customer expectations, they cannot change their service quality standards.

3. Gap 3

Mauri and colleagues identify Gap 3 as the employees’ inability to perform at the desired service level. Zeithaml ascertains that Gap 3 is a result of the desired level of service being unattainable by the employees of the company. Although Gap 3 is less prevalent within the data, Zeithaml and colleagues attribute the following to Gap 3’s existence: “role ambiguity, role conflict, employee job fit, technology job fit, supervisory control systems, perceived control, and teamwork” (Zeithaml et al., 1990, p. 90). The quotes from the *MilitaryTimes* articles do not refer to variables obviously related to role ambiguity, role conflict, or the inner workings of companies. The data does obviously reflect on employee job fit and technology fit, so those are the two Gap 3 factors analyzed.

Zeithaml et al. (1990) explain that employees fit their jobs well when companies allocate appropriate resources to the hiring process and hire qualified candidates, and when employees complete their jobs effectively. One indicator within the quotes that employee job fit is mismatched is the fact that employees selected to perform military moves sometimes cannot gain access to bases due to not passing background checks. This quote from the *MarineCorpsTimes* highlighted the base access issues: John Becker, director of military policy for the American Moving and Storage Association, said “There also have been issues with installation access for some moving companies” and noted, “Each base has its own background check policy, he said, and the delay caused by such access problems ‘causes an accordion effect’ as workers are late to their initial location, then the next, and so on” (Jowers, 2017).



Within the data, service members often criticized the technological systems that track moves. For instance, this quote from *ArmyTimes* specifically addressed the government's system: "The delay stems from recent government testing of its information technology system, called MilMove, which service members will use to upload their permanent change of station orders, provide contact information and start a request to schedule their household goods shipment, according to TRANSCOM officials" (Jowers, 2023a). Another quote emphasized the technology in use did not even allow moves to be scheduled by service members for over two weeks (Jowers, 2019). In a *MarineCorps Times* article, Charles White, senior vice president of the International Association of Movers, expressed his concern with the technological systems, which indicates that the customers are not the only parties aware of the issues (Jowers, 2017). The technology associated with the PCS process is one area that continues to be an issue among service members and a large contributing factor to the prevalence of Gap 3.

Although represented in a smaller percentage of the data, Gap 3 is a contributing factor to dissatisfaction among service members within the PCS process. *Delivering Quality Service* provides solutions to these problems in employee job fit and technology job fit. Employee job fit can be addressed by allocating appropriate resources to hiring quality employees as well as offering better pay in jobs that have the most customer contact and providing incentives that encourage employees to stay in these positions longer. The technology job fit can be addressed by providing technology that can be trouble shoot quickly and effectively with a backup system should the primary system fail. Due to PCS being tied to time-sensitive orders, a system that has a way to continue to reach its customers is paramount.

4. Gap 4

Gap 4 is characterized by the mismatch of promises made by the company and the actual delivery of the service. Mauri and colleagues state "a firm promises a service which will not correspond to what actually will be delivered" (Mauri, 2013, p. 137). *Delivering Quality Service* explains that this gap results from horizontal communication and the propensity to overpromise (Zeithaml et al., 1990, p. 117).



The horizontal communication and propensity to overpromise that drive Gap 4 are highlighted in many quotes noting that the service description does not match the delivery. For instance, this quote from the director of the Defense Personal Property Management Office at USTRANSCOM speaks of the low satisfaction rate within the claims department: “Another telling statistic relates to household goods claims for loss and damage. This year, to date, there has been a claims satisfaction rate of 41%” (Jowers, 2023c). Military members are expected to fill out claims with the hope of reimbursement for their lost or damaged items, but with a 41% satisfaction rate, the propensity of overpromising it is great within this area.

Delivering Quality Service suggests that to improve communication about service quality, there must be an effort to realize and quantify what is most important to customers and accurately reflect what the service delivery will look like. Additionally, it is important to communicate to the customers what role they hold when performing the service (Zeithaml et al., 1990, p.123). With these solutions, Gap 4 can be minimized.

5. Expectations

Table 5 shows the expectations and standards within the most prevalent Gaps; Gap 1 and Gap 2. The customer’s expectations and examples of good standards are mapped to the appropriate gap and supported with quotes from the data that show the prevalence of the gap. The quotes in Table 5 show what the customer desires and their expectations of the service quality standards when conducting a PCS move.



Table 5. Expectations and Standards in Gaps 1 and 2

Topic	Gap	Quotes
Customer Expectation	Gap 1	<p>“Military families on the move put the need for greater financial support far ahead of other permanent change-of-station concerns, per a new survey.” (Lilley, 2018b)</p> <p>“Since you and your family are being relocated, it makes sense to expect all your PCS charges to be covered. That’s not always the case. In fact, some experts suggest say that service members spend an average of \$1,725 in non-reimbursable costs during each PCS.” (Navy Federal Credit Union, 2016)</p>
	Gap 2	<p>“In a lively question-and-answer session, families asked officials about problems related to the accuracy of the moving companies’ weighing of their household goods; financial costs incurred by families when they have to leave their homes because of mold and other health issues; how the Army holds moving companies and housing companies accountable; the cumbersome claims process for PCS damage or loss.” (Jowers, 2019f)</p> <p>“The Johnsons contend there should be more of an investigation when items go missing from household goods shipments.” (Jowers, 2015a)</p>
Example of Acceptable Standards	Gap 1	<p>“For example, technology such as smartphone apps will allow the company to be more responsive, communicating with service members in ‘near-real time.’” (Jowers, 2021i)</p> <p>“Now, troops can seek reimbursement for costs related to mandatory microchipping, quarantines, boarding, hotel service charges, virus immunity testing and pet licenses at the new duty station.” (Jowers, 2024)</p>
	Gap 2	<p>“Increased quality assurance inspections of household goods moves. The goal was 75 percent of all moves, but officials are now at 95 percent of moves being inspected.” (Jowers, 2021b)</p>

C. ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION: EXPECTATIONS AND CONTRACT

I analyzed the contract synopsis and the HomeSafe Alliance website using the Gaps Model to determine if there is evidence that the government is aiming to close the service quality gaps that exist within the PCS process, focusing on the movement of HHG. The award synopsis is a small document that gives a glimpse into the contract awarded and suggests the government is attempting to close the service quality gaps. The HomeSafe Alliance website also suggests the government is attempting to close the gaps. When conducting a PCS move, military members use the HomeSafe Alliance website to interface with the contracted movers. The organization's home page consists of tabs for Customers, Service Providers, Careers, About, and Newsroom. With this webpage, HomeSafe Alliance attempts to lessen the service quality gaps within the PCS process.

The contract with HomeSafe Alliance indicates an aim to address the 4 gaps and minimize their effects. The verbiage of the synopsis can give insight into the government's priorities when soliciting bids for the contract. The contract synopsis states that: "The contract fundamentally restructures DOD's relationship with the household goods industry in order to improve access to-and management of- quality capacity to meet demand and enable the Department to affix the accountability and responsibility lacking in today's program" (Lang & Langhauser, 2021). The DOD is attempting to minimize Gap 1 by recognizing that the customer is dissatisfied with the previous management and accountability of the system. The DOD is attempting to remediate Gap 2 by claiming to improve access to management by prioritizing small businesses and ensuring there are few levels between the customer and the management. The government is clearly aware of the access issues with the current system and aims to address the technology fit within Gap 3 as well as meet the demand of quality movers within the PCS process. The government acknowledges the lack of accountability and responsibility within the synopsis and is claiming to attempt to remediate these issues, thus addressing Gap 4.

The HomeSafe alliance website initially addresses some factors of Gap 1 by immediate accessibility and ease of navigation. The first tenant on the Customers tab, as seen in Figure 8, "Improving the relocation experience" shows they are dedicated to



addressing Gap 1 and understanding what the customer wants (HomeSafe Alliance, n.d.). Addressing the stress for families, the website promises ease in the PCS process, a direct action to improving the issues associated with Gap 1.

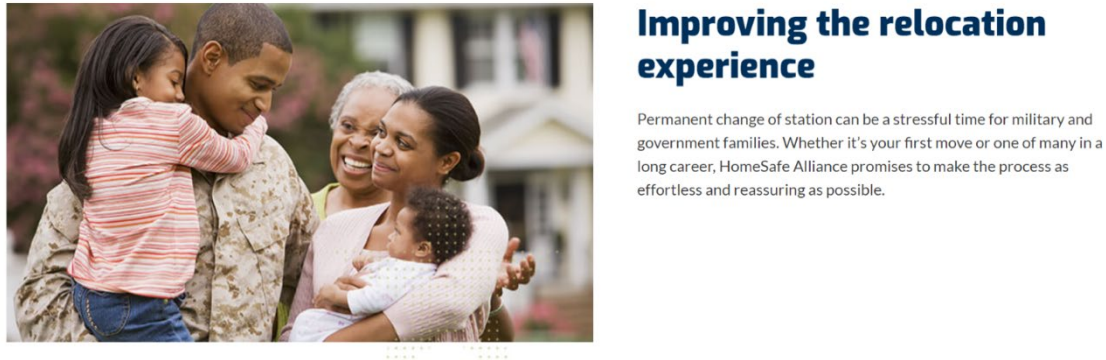


Figure 8. HomeSafe Alliance Website Example 1. Source: HomeSafe Alliance (n.d.)

A desire to address Gap 3 is indicated in the next section of the customer page , which boasts an all-in-one application for the customer to maintain accountability of their move through a secure, digital inventory system as seen in Figure 9 (HomeSafe Alliance, n.d.). Additionally, HomeSafe Alliance claims to have a digital tool to help military members stay within their weight limits as well as a fast and efficient claims process to file claims. They boast simplification and effectiveness as their goal, a goal that aligns with the customers goals suggested in the collected quotes.

Communication you can count on

Stay up to date with the status of your household goods:


- You receive notification (call, text, or email) 24 hours prior to household goods pickup and delivery.
- The HomeSafe Connect color-coded dashboard displays where you are in the move process.
- Smartphone geofencing offers real-time visibility of the moving truck within 10 miles of your home.
- A dedicated customer service specialist responds to your questions or concerns throughout the entire move.



Figure 9. HomeSafe Alliance Website Example 2. Source: HomeSafe Alliance (n.d.)

Gap 2 is identified, and the site indicates an aim to address it as HomeSafe Alliance claims their entire team is committed to exceptional service and believes with the technology and process they have as a company; they can improve the PCS process. The website suggests that user expectations can be met and exceeded using the process the organization has in place.

Gap 4 and its factors are identified in the claims section of the website. HomeSafe Alliance seems to understand that claims are inevitable, so they have developed a method to make the claims process one that is better than the current process. They provide a guide to claims on their website that is attainable without having an account as seen in Figure 10. The claims guide walks the customer through filing claims at different times during their moves and on different items. The guide is user-friendly and easily digestible with timelines, types of claims, and points of contact. The attempt to remediate the gap between actual and promised service suggests the organization is aware of Gap 4 and is working to remediate the problem.



Filing Claims in *HomeSafe Connect*

HomeSafe Alliance carefully handles your household goods to avoid damaged or lost items. In the unfortunate event that something goes wrong, HomeSafe will make it right. We offer a streamlined, claims process through our *HomeSafe Connect* platform to make your experience as stress free as possible. You will use *HomeSafe Connect*'s digital inventory to file claims for any missing or damaged item.

- Say goodbye to carbon copies and messy hand-written inventories:** The digital inventory lists your household goods clearly.
- Search your digital inventory with ease:** Just type in the item you want to find (ex: "couch"), and it will pop up instantly along with easy-to-use buttons to "file notice" or "file claim."
- HomeSafe is your go-to claims solution:** No matter which HomeSafe service provider partner performs your move, you will file the claim with HomeSafe.

Types of Claims

Household Goods Damage For any household good that is missing or damaged during your move.	Inconvenience For a delay if we are unable to meet the required pickup or delivery date.
Real Property Damage For damage to your residence or real property caused by the moving crew.	Hardship For out-of-pocket expenses as part of an inconvenience claim.

How Soon to File

- Household Goods Damage:**
 - File notice of loss or damage within 180 days of delivery.
 - File your claim within 9 months to receive the full replacement value.
 - File your claim within 2 years to receive the depreciated value.
- Inconvenience:** File as soon as possible.
- Real property damage:** File as soon as you identify the damage.

HomeSafe will quickly make a decision on your claim.	
Claims Less Than \$1,000	Claims of \$1,000 or More
Within 30 Calendar Days	Within 60 Calendar Days

Other Claims Options

- HomeSafe is confident we will adjudicate your claim to best meet your needs. However, you maintain the ability to transfer your household goods claim to your Military Claims Office (MCO). You can select this option in *HomeSafe Connect*, which will halt any further negotiation from HomeSafe. Your claim **will not** be transferred to the MCO until you initiate a claim directly to their office. MCO contact information is easily found inside *HomeSafe Connect*.
- If you have minor loss or damage (\$200 or less) noted at delivery, we recommend filing your claim within 3-5 days from delivery in *HomeSafe Connect*. Your claim will be processed as a **Quick Claim**. If we agree with your claim, HomeSafe will send your funds within 7 days after you accept the claim and register with our payment exchange through Citibank.

What You Need to File

For Household Goods Damage:
Provide a description of the loss or damage and the amount you are requesting for your claim. We also ask for manufacturer information (make and model), the cost at purchase, and the year of purchase. Include any photos, receipts, appraisals, and repair estimates that may expedite your claim.

For Inconvenience:
State whether the delay occurred at pickup or delivery and the number of days you are requesting. HomeSafe may compensate you and your dependents listed on your orders with a per diem rate. If you have been inconvenienced, certain hardship expenses can be reimbursed based on receipts.

For Real Property Damage:
State whether the damage occurred at origin or destination. Provide a description of the damage, the claimed amount, and the property owner's contact information. Include any photos or repair estimates that may expedite your claim.

You Should Also Know

- Your moving crew is incentivized to handle your property with care and to provide timely service. They receive scores for the claims you make, based on HomeSafe's Carrier Quality Index (CQI).
- Using powerful analytics, HomeSafe tracks the frequency of claims and analyzes trends. This allows us to reduce future instances of loss or damage to provide better quality moves!
- With HomeSafe, your items are far less likely to go missing! We inventory items with a unique number combination that has a precision of 1 in 1 billion! We can identify the owner of a misplaced item within minutes.

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Figure 10. HomeSafe Alliance Website Example 3. Source: HomeSafe Alliance (n.d.)

The HomeSafe Alliance website appears to be user friendly. The company seems to desire an easy process for the consumer, directly contributing to the shrinking of the gaps within the service quality standards. The quotes show that service members have been dissatisfied with the PCS process, but with the new contract, the HomeSafe Alliance seems to be attempting to address the issues that have resulted in complaints in the past.

D. CONCLUSION

The analysis presented in this chapter provides insight into the issues with customer service that service members have experienced in moving HHG during the PCS process. The quotes, the contract synopsis, and HomeSafe Alliance website mapped well to the Gaps Model and the thematic analysis identifies Gap 1 and Gap 2 as the key gaps within the movement of HHG within the PCS process. Customer expectations and standards were evident in the data and reinforced that the gaps were present. The contract synopsis and HomeSafe Alliance website seem to address the gaps and demonstrate the government's effort to improve the service quality offered within the PCS process for military members and their families.



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V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

This study analyzed quotations pulled from the military services journals to identify gaps in the movement of HHG within the PCS process. The analysis mapped the data thematically to the appropriate service gaps in Zeithaml et al. (1990) customer service gap model. The thematic mapping relied on the factors associated with the gaps described in the model. The data highlighted the customers' expectations and standards.

The analysis suggests the most important customer service gaps in the movement of HHG within the PCS process are Gap 1 and Gap 2. Within Gap 1, the factor with the highest prevalence of quotes was upward communication while market research orientation had the second highest prevalence. Gap 2's highest factor was management's commitment to service quality. Based on my analysis, I offer two recommendations.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, in Gap 1, "Not Knowing What the Customers Expect," the most prevalent factor was upward communication. In Gap 2, "Wrong Service Quality Standards," the most prevalent factor was management's commitment to service quality. These gaps and factors highlight the customer's greatest concerns with the movement of HHG within the PCS process. Thus, the contract with HomeSafe Alliance should focus on continued improvement in these areas. The DOD should continue to focus on these factors when managing the contract.

The analysis of the quotes shows that the quote data fits within the Gaps Model to include the prevalent factors. The analysis of the contract through the lens of the Gaps Model shows that the contract could be effective in improving the most prevalent gaps related to the movement of HHG within the PCS process. The DOD seems to be effectively monitoring and working towards solutions to mitigate the gaps.



1. Recommendation 1

My first recommendation is that DOD should measure and evaluate the expectations of the customers focusing on communication and a commitment to service quality. The new contract addresses communication by having multiple means to reach the customer, such as call lines and chats. To ensure the customer calls are answered effectively and promptly, I recommend there be a team to answer the call lines and chats rather than a completely automated system. Additional attempts at market research should evaluate the customer's experience with the customer interface and measure if the new contract is meeting the customer's expectations. I also recommend that HomeSafe Alliance prompts customers to provide feedback for the company to address areas of concern. To reduce the levels between customer and senior management, I recommend senior management be required to work the call lines or chats to understand the customer and their expectations. Continued efforts in this area will continue to mitigate the gaps present and improve the customer's PCS experience of moving personal goods overall.

2. Recommendation 2

Additionally, continued monitoring of the efficient technology promised by HomeSafe Alliance would be beneficial to ensure the customer's experience improves. With HomeSafe Alliance promising a customer interface with real-time shipment notifications, and many users complaining about a lack of information from the contracted movers, the upgraded technology could solve many of the issues that lead to the gaps. The upgraded technology behind the claims process should also be monitored for its effectiveness by conducting a detailed review of the contract line items. This review could reveal the extent to which the DOD is assessing its effectiveness. If the contract has an award or incentive fees that address the success of the customer interface, that suggests the DOD is focusing on improving the interface. Conversely, if the contract does not focus on this area explicitly, it would suggest the DOD is not focused on improving this area.

C. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Some elements of the research design result in limitations. The data did not expand past 15 years within the *MilitaryTimes* database. Additionally, while the study data



included firsthand accounts, these accounts were published in public sources on the internet. I did not conduct firsthand interviews in this study, nor did I have access to any representatives from HomeSafe Alliance. That said, to the extent the data from *MilitaryTimes* might be representative or illustrative of broad areas of concern, that could lend greater support to my findings and recommendations.

The artificial intelligence algorithm I used in this study was also a limitation. ChatGPT could only group the quotations thematically based on the keywords I input into the system. It could not apply critical thought to the data nor analyze deeper and apply its own interpretation of the data.

Based on my analysis, recommendations, and limitations, future studies on this topic might helpfully assess whether the current contract with HomeSafe Alliance meets the customer's expectations and the promises depicted on their website. Additionally, future research could collect firsthand surveys or conduct interviews to reach a wider customer base, both to validate whether the data from published sources is representative of broader themes and perhaps to suggest additional themes. As I did not have access to the contract, future research could assess the contract in full to determine how the contract addresses the customer service gaps.

D. CONCLUSION

This study addresses the issues with movement of HHG within the PCS process and how they relate to retention. An understanding of the service members' experiences with PCSing and how it leads to negative retention intentions could better the DOD's retention rates overall. Further knowledge of retention intentions being linked to the negative PCS experience can prepare leaders and policy-makers to address these issues to increase retention rates. If the issues surrounding the movement of HHG within the PCS process are addressed appropriately, service member retention intentions could increase and as a result, increase the lethality of the service.



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APPENDIX A. LIST OF QUOTES

<i>ArmyTimes</i>	
Dissatisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “The families’ household goods were so contaminated with mold, they left those belongings in the houses, waiting for the landlord to document and assess the damage and reimburse them,” – Jim Moriarty (Jowers, 2021a) 2. “This year, a number of service members have complained about not being able to get their moves scheduled, and those moving from overseas, especially, have complained about delays in delivering their household goods, which has cost families money.” (Jowers, 2021i) 3. “One day later and not far away on Randolph AFB, workers had loaded about one-third of the Daniels family’s household goods on the truck when Air Force wife Barbara High-Daniels got a call from the moving company’s headquarters, asking her if she knew there was mold on their belongings.” (Jowers, 2023e) 4. “A new analysis shows that 21 percent of all domestic Defense Department household goods shipments in 2018 had at least one damage claim.” (Jowers, 2020a) 5. “They complained of unexpected delays in pickups or delivery, and about the quality of work by moving companies, resulting in loss and damage for some families.” (Jowers, 2020a) 6. “Lack of finalized damage claims means money lost to DOD personnel when their belongings are damaged or lost.” (Jowers, 2020a) 7. “Of those (176,000), more than 37,000 shipments had at least one claim filed for lost or damaged household goods.” (Jowers, 2020a) 8. “As of December 20, 2018, DOD members filed more than 40,000 claims for damaged or lost household goods.” (Jowers, 2020a) 9. “Army wife Alissa Fancher was so upset with the damage being inflicted on her washing machine and other items — not to mention the damage that had been done before her furniture even got there — that she was in tears, and ordered the movers to stop unloading.” (Jowers, 2018c) ““This was a living nightmare, to say the least,” said Fancher.” (Jowers, 2018c) 10. “While the company delivered her household goods a day early, she has plenty of complaints about the packers, as well as the crew that unloaded her shipment.” (Jowers, 2018c) 11. “Another military wife, who asked not to be identified, was so frustrated with the delay in receiving her unaccompanied baggage shipment from overseas that she rented a U-Haul and drove to pick up the shipment, needed in no small part because they have a child with a disability.” (Jowers, 2018c) 12. ““We’ve shelled out about \$4,000’ for needed items, she said. ‘We have a kid with a disability and she needs to sleep in a bed, not on an air mattress.



	<p>... We had to dip into our savings. I'm curious how much worse this is on enlisted families out there who don't have the money.” (Jowers, 2018c)</p> <p>13. “The Italian moving company the military hired to ship their belongings to New Mexico ruined artwork by wife Vennita, a professional artist.” (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>14. “How do I tell her that special little figurine we got to commemorate that special day ... is gone?” said Weir. (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>15. “Her Barbie house is broken beyond repair because they just shoved it in a box. There are all these little things.” (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>16. “Also missing, she said, are family letters, photos and birth announcements. She filed a claim for \$26,000.” (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>17. “After her husband, an enlisted sailor for 18 years, and their 2-year-old daughter arrived in Hawaii from Jacksonville this summer, the couple noticed his supposedly crated iPad had uploaded new photos to their online storage.” (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>18. “Military families are tired of how things with the current moving system are being handled.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>19. “Is it so much to ask our elected officials to step in and protect our service members from the headache and heartache during a PCS?” (Jowers, 2020c)</p> <p>20. “It's a new world. Don't expect the same experience with your household goods move.” (Jowers, 2020b)</p> <p>21. “Our request is for air-conditioned rooms to be built or designated at every single military installation that transports live cargo for families traveling with pets, as well as pet relief stations.” (Sicard, 2022b)</p> <p>22. “He deserved so much better than this, as did every animal that has died at the hands of negligence from AMC.” (Sicard, 2022b)</p> <p>23. “This was the worst permanent change of station move of my 21-year career.” (Jowers, 2023e)</p> <p>24. Once I asked the driver to open the back door, it was obvious there was water and mold damage to the entire shipment. (Jowers, 2023e)</p> <p>25. “After countless hours spent trying to get reimbursement for the damage or loss of more than 70 percent of his family's belongings...” (Jowers, 2023e)</p> <p>26. “Many PCS entitlements are paid out of military pay funds... the error means that the service doesn't have enough money to pay for the roughly 7,500 moves approved between Aug. 15 and Sept. 30 with reporting dates of Nov. 1 or later.” (Winkie, 2023)</p>
Household goods	<p>1. “The families' household goods were so contaminated with mold, they left those belongings in the houses, waiting for the landlord to document and assess the damage and reimburse them,” said Jim Moriarty, attorney for the families. (Jowers, 2021a)</p> <p>2. “This year, a number of service members have complained about not being able to get their moves scheduled, and those moving from overseas,</p>



	<p>especially, have complained about delays in delivering their household goods, which has cost families money.” (Jowers, 2021i)</p> <p>3. “Defense officials launched a ‘re-engineered’ move process in 2009, moving virtually all troops under the program by 2012. But seven years later, following a 2018 moving season fraught with loss, damage and delays for service members and their families, U.S. TRANSCOM announced plans for a global household goods contract.” (Jowers, 2021i)</p> <p>4. “Military families in the midst of moving continue to suffer as shipping disruptions leave them without their household goods for extended periods of time after they’ve arrived at their new duty stations.” (Sicard, 2022a)</p> <p>5. “After surpassing the expected delivery date on Jan. 7, McNulty reached out to the move coordinator, Suddath, and learned that the HHG was to be delivered the next day.” (Sicard, 2022a)</p> <p>6. “Families have waited longer to get their household goods picked up, and they’re waiting longer to get their belongings delivered.” (Jowers, 2021h)</p> <p>7. “Since that 2018 moving season, U.S. Transportation Command has been working on a new Global Household Goods contract that will change how DOD manages household goods moves.” (Jowers, 2021h)</p> <p>8. “The report by the DOD Inspector General isn’t likely to surprise the many military families who complained loudly about their household goods shipments during that year’s moving season.” (Jowers, 2020a)</p> <p>9. “But the analysis also concluded that the U.S. Transportation Command — the command in charge of the process of moving the household goods of service members and other DOD personnel — doesn’t have reliable enough information to determine whether troops’ belongings are getting delivered on time, or whether their claims for damage and loss are being completed, according to the report.” (Jowers, 2020a)</p> <p>10. “In fiscal 2018, the Defense Personal Property System included nearly 176,000 shipments of DOD personnel within the continental U.S., at a cost of \$1.3 billion for taxpayers.” (Jowers, 2020a)</p> <p>11. “During a previous interview... Samantha Keller told Military Times that their entire mold-contaminated household goods remained sealed in their home...” (Jowers, 2021a)</p> <p>12. “Officials at U.S. Transportation Command this summer have urged families to reach out to their household goods/transportation offices to learn about their options for assistance, including reimbursement for expenses caused by delays in delivery or pickup.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>13. “We do anticipate higher-than-average shipment levels in the fall and winter.” (Jowers, 2020b)</p> <p>14. “When the movers brought back the supposedly remediated household goods on Jan. 15, 2021, their belongings were in even worse condition.” (Jowers, 2023e)</p>
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	15. “A new analysis shows that 21 percent of all domestic Defense Department household goods shipments in 2018 had at least one damage claim.” (Jowers, 2020a)
Moving company	<p>2. “Widespread shipping disruptions around the world are affecting all types of industries, to include the moving industry.” (Jowers, 2021e)</p> <p>3. “Families have also been frustrated with the lack of information from their moving companies.” (Jowers, 2021e)</p> <p>4. “Moving companies share the families’ frustration, Bradley said.” (Jowers, 2021h)</p> <p>5. “According to U.S. Transportation Command officials, the percentages of late deliveries fluctuates weekly.” (Jowers, 2021h)</p> <p>6. “HomeSafe will be fully responsible for these moves, bringing accountability to the program from the time a moving company is assigned, through the packing, hauling and unloading, and handling any claims for loss or damage.” (Jowers, 2023d)</p> <p>7. ““There are a limited number of companies that will contract for the moving, All you get is excuses,’ the military wife said. ‘The company says, ‘We have a lot of stuff, we only have so many trucks we only have so many crews. But they were hired to fulfill a contract to deliver these household goods in 45 days. Either meet the contract or pay me,’ she said.” (Jowers, 2018c)</p> <p>8. “Movers improperly wrapped China, threw boxes carelessly onto the truck, and lost or stole bags containing the couple’s shooting accessories, she said.” (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>9. “He doesn’t think they were stolen — company employees must pass background checks and surveillance cameras blanket the warehouse.” (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>10. “There is only so much that our military families can do, and without proper accountability, or fear of repercussions from their contracts, they will continue to get away with the mishandling of our service members’ personal property.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>11. As military families struggle in a moving season that’s more turbulent than any in recent history— because of shortages of moving companies and housing — Army officials are advising soldiers to contact their chain of command if they’re having trouble. (Jowers, 2021f)</p> <p>12. “When the movers brought back the supposedly remediated household goods on Jan. 13, 2021, their belongings were in even worse condition.” (Jowers, 2023e)</p>
Permanent change of station	1. “During a previous interview in June, 2019 about their situation related to their permanent change of station move, Samantha Keller told Military Times that their entire mold-contaminated household goods remained sealed in their home at The Parks at Monterey Bay when her family had moved to a house in the community near Camp Pendleton for her husband’s new duty assignment.” (Jowers, 2021a)



	<p>2. “One Army wife, Valerie McNulty, deployed a brilliant solution to help track down her family’s household goods as they made a permanent change of station move from Fort Carson, Colorado, to Fort Drum, New York.” (Sicard, 2022a)</p> <p>3. “The delay stems from recent government testing of its information technology system, called MilMove, which service members will use to upload their permanent change of station orders, provide contact information and start a request to schedule their household goods shipment, according to TRANSCOM officials.” (Jowers, 2023d)</p> <p>4. “Troops and families of all service branches are feeling the brunt of a widespread housing crunch.” (Jowers, 2021f)</p> <p>5. “In some cases, they’ve had to rent places that exceed their housing allowance by \$600 or more each month, yet are often far away from their installation.” (Jowers, 2021f)</p>
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<i>AirForceTimes</i>	
Dissatisfaction	<p>1. “From the start, Nicky Johnson said, all they heard from the moving company was, ‘File a claim, we can’t help you, we don’t want to help you.’” (Jowers, 2015a)</p> <p>2. “This has been our worst move in over 18 years, and we do not have any hopes of it getting better.” (Jowers, 2021d)</p> <p>3. “I honestly don’t know what to do at this point,” wrote one soldier. (Jowers, 2021d)</p> <p>4. “While these victims often mistakenly blame their moving company, the reality is that flawed procedures employed by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection are exposing people to these risks,” said Paul Milotte, vice president of government affairs for the American Moving & Storage Association. (Jowers, 2018g)</p> <p>5. “Army wife Alissa Fancher was so upset with the damage being inflicted on her washing machine and other items — not to mention the damage that had been done before her furniture even got there — that she was in tears, and ordered the movers to stop unloading.” (Jowers, 2018c)</p> <p>6. “After untold numbers of complaints by military families about their household goods moves this summer, more than 41,000 people have signed a new petition asking military leaders and members of Congress to hold military moving companies accountable.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>7. “One example is the expected transition of the process for managing household goods moves to a single civilian contractor, noted Joyce Raezer, former executive director of the National Military Family Association, who asked for the leaders’ input on lessons learned.” (Jowers, 2019g)</p> <p>8. “Many households let out a collective sigh of relief celebrating what we all know: the need to update policy, most of which was written decades ago.” (Karns, 2021)</p>



	<p>9. “I really want to make sure we get this right, in terms of accountability, predictability and customer satisfaction,” Tillis said. (Jowers, 2019a)</p> <p>10. “While DOD works to protect our military families, keeping them from PCSing means long days sheltering-in-place as a family in a hotel for some, and weeks without household goods for others.” (Shane III, 2020)</p> <p>11. “Thomas has taken that preparation to a whole new level following some moves early in their military life resulted in loss and damage.” (Jowers, 2022)</p> <p>12. “For two weeks, the computerized system that is the backbone of the entire household goods moving process has been ‘almost at a dead stop,’ causing a traffic jam of sorts for service members who needed to get their moves scheduled.” (Jowers, 2019d)</p> <p>13. “It’s either that you have a really great move, or you’re going to have some issues,” indicating the polarization of experiences with the PCS moving process due to technological and capacity issues. (Jowers, 2019d)</p> <p>14. “A Portsmouth, Virginia, moving and storage company postponed an auction of 105 crates containing 47 service members’ household goods following an onslaught of social-media outrage.” (Jowers, 2017c)</p> <p>15. “The vice president of Bay Area Movers, Robin Villers, insists the company was not planning to auction off ‘lost freight,’ as some have alleged. The property being auctioned off has been at the storage facility after the service members’ entitlement for government-paid storage expired -- 20 years, in some cases.” (Jowers, 2017c)</p> <p>16. “But there have been improvements in the rules for making a permanent change of station move, relating to replacement costs for items lost or destroyed and the handling of lithium batteries, privately owned firearms without serial numbers, gun safes, electronic products and other items, according to officials with the U.S. Transportation Command.” (Jowers, 2024)</p> <p>17. “That’s tens of thousands of service members and families that aren’t satisfied with their relocation experience,” Dawson said. (Jowers, 2023f)</p> <p>18. “U.S. Transportation Command’s decision to accept a higher priced bid, from a subsidiary of a foreign-owned company with a questionable track record, is deeply troubling,” wrote Rep. David B. McKinley, R-W.Va., in an Aug. 4 letter to the leaders of the House Armed Services Committee.” (Jowers, 2020d)</p>
Household Goods	<p>1. “Their household goods were picked up in Florida on June 13 and delivered to their new home in Wyoming on July 11. They knew the safes were missing that day and immediately took action, contacting the storage company and filing a police report with the Cheyenne Police Department.” (Jowers, 2015a)</p> <p>2. “His family hasn’t made their permanent change of station move yet and have decided to push back the pickup of their household goods with the hope of finding something before we end up homeless,” he wrote. (Jowers, 2021d)</p>



	<p>3. “Her household goods were delivered in a U-Haul truck after the moving van broke down. She contends that her family’s belongings were haphazardly thrown into that truck, causing extensive damage.” (Jowers, 2018c)</p> <p>4. “Many military families moving this summer have experienced hardships because of unexpected delays in pickups or delivery of their household goods.” (Jowers, 2023d)</p> <p>5. “U.S. Transportation has started the process of handing over the move management, in efforts to make the quality of household goods moves better for service members and their families.” (Jowers, 2019g)</p> <p>6. “In the wake of problems such as damaged household goods and delayed moves, a number of frustrated military families have called on TRANSCOM to hold moving companies accountable for problems.” (Jowers, 2019a)</p> <p>7. “We’ve had complaints from people that they’re shocked at how long it’s taking to get their household goods picked up, and we’re hearing lots of complaints about packers, because they’re not able to find people to do the packing, so that’s raising a whole host of issues,” said Kelly Hruska, government relations director for the National Military Family Association. (Jowers, 2018b)</p> <p>8. “Companies have been unable to see the shipments in the system, so they couldn’t book the shipments. Personal property offices have been trying to get shipments booked.” (Jowers, 2019d)</p> <p>9. “Another telling statistic, Dawson said, relates to household goods claims for loss and damage. This year, to date, there has been a claims satisfaction rate of 41%.” (Jowers, 2023f)</p> <p>10. “In the past, there were instances when alcohol was shipped in containers and either spoiled due to the high temperatures during shipping, or there was damage caused by broken glass containers and spilled liquids, said Capt. Joseph Butterfield, a spokesman for Marine Corps headquarters.” (Jowers, 2019c)</p> <p>11. “In addition, moving company representatives indicated that they have minimal issues packing alcoholic beverages inside the same containers as the household goods,” he said. (Jowers, 2019c)</p> <p>12. “The contract is aimed at fixing military families’ long-standing problems with damaged household goods and other frustrations with movers puts management of the moving process in the hands of a consortium of private companies.” (Jowers, 2020d)</p>
Moving company	<p>1. “The company in charge of the move, Suddath Van Lines, offered \$1,596 to settle the claim, partly because there was no documentation for some of the items, such as the gems and gold.” (Jowers, 2015a)</p> <p>2. “Prescott was convicted of one count and one specification of attempted larceny of an amount greater than \$500 from the moving company Total Moving Management, a violation of Article 80 of the UCMJ.” (Losey, 2020)</p> <p>3. “As a result of Norquist’s order, U.S. Transportation Command ordered moving companies ‘to take no action on scheduled pick-ups and pack-outs</p>



	<p>of household goods’ and directed service members to work through their chain of command if they believe they should be eligible for a travel waiver.” (Shane III & Gresik, 2020)</p> <p>4. “While we understand labor constraints facing suppliers — to include those operating in the Defense Personal Property Program — a customer should never be ‘ghosted’ by their moving company,” said Scott Ross, spokesman for U.S. Transportation Command. (Jowers, 2021c)</p> <p>5. “We recognize the fierce competition for moving crews and drivers, but effectively stranding a service member, not returning calls, or otherwise leaving families guessing as to what is going to happen with their shipment is about as disrespectful as it gets,” he said. (Jowers, 2021c)</p> <p>6. “For example, technology such as smartphone apps will allow the company to be more responsive, communicating with service members in ‘near-real time.’” (Jowers, 2021i)</p> <p>7. “The customer satisfaction rates are at least 20 percentage points lower than the rates reported in past years — generally above 90%... Moving companies are no longer allowed to handle or disseminate customer satisfaction surveys. Service members are told they will get an email directly from the government with the survey.” (Jowers, 2023f)</p> <p>8. “Because these delays cause hardships for military families, they have the option to file an inconvenience claim with the transportation service provider — the company that was awarded the shipment.” (Jowers, 2018d)</p>
Permanent change of station	<p>1. “The Johnson family had moved valuable items inside their two safes without incident several times before, sending them on a truck during permanent change-of-station travels.” (Jowers, 2015a)</p> <p>2. “My husband will be deploying, and we had to settle on a place and now pay \$600 out of pocket” for rent each month, she said. They were also turned down by some landlords because they don’t earn three times the monthly rent, she said. (Jowers, 2021d)</p> <p>3. “Is it so much to ask our elected officials to step in and protect our service members from the headache and heartache during a PCS?” the petition states. (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>4. “Lt. Col. Deric Prescott, the former staff judge advocate at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota, will be dismissed from the Air Force after he was convicted at court-martial of attempted larceny during a permanent change-of-station move and making a false official statement.” (Losey, 2020)</p> <p>5. “TRANSCOM officials are in the early stages of developing a plan to contract out the core function of managing military moves to a private company, with a current timeline of having the transition completed by the beginning of peak summer season in 2021.” (Jowers, 2019a)</p> <p>6. “In the days following the Army’s decision to suspend travel in and out of the regions more heavily impacted by coronavirus, more and more soldiers and their families have found themselves without housing, vehicles or their</p>



	<p>personal items as their plans to make permanent change-of-station moves to and from Italy or Korea were put on hold.” (Jowers & Myers, 2020)</p> <p>7. “But those outside groups have also noted that the new military travel rules may have left some military families with two housing payments: one at the location where they were planning to move, and one at the bases where they have been required to remain for now.” (Shane III, 2020)</p> <p>8. “Daniel Bradley, director of government and military relations for the International Association of Movers, said the announcement earlier this week that all permanent change of station moves would be postponed until at least mid-May was ‘not coordinated with the moving industry’ and will have tremendous effects beyond the military community.” (Shane III & Gresik, 2020)</p>
NavyTimes	Quotes
Dissatisfaction	<p>1. “After all the problems service members had getting their personal vehicles shipped during overseas permanent change-of-station moves in 2014, U.S. Transportation Command officials intend to avoid a repeat in 2015.” (Jowers, 2014)</p> <p>2.”Troops reported problems with delayed deliveries, difficulty getting information about their vehicles’ statuses, trouble accessing the online tracking system and difficulty reaching anyone at the company’s headquarters.” (Jowers, 2014)</p> <p>3. “Later Feb. 8, the service outlined its travel-reimbursement backlog problems, which involved, at the time, 7,500 unpaid claims and an expected completion window more than double the 30-day standard.” (Lilley, 2018a)</p> <p>4. “An NPC Facebook post blamed a ‘perfect storm of problems’ for the delays; the news release cited an influx of PCS-related claims at the end of the fiscal year, worker furloughs, technical failures and weather-related closures as reasons for the backlog.” (Lilley, 2018a)</p> <p>5. “Maybe there was a scratch, dent, or shatter. Maybe you arrived at your new duty station with slightly fewer boxes than you had at your point of departure. Maybe the movers took ‘handle with care’ as a suggestion, instead of an order.” (Lilley, 2018c)</p> <p>6. “Military families on the move put the need for greater financial support far ahead of other permanent change-of-station concerns, per a new survey.” (Lilley, 2018b)</p> <p>7. “Service members and their families across the country are feeling the sting of the hot housing market as they move to new duty stations.” (Jowers, 2021d)</p> <p>8. “Many are paying out of pocket for longer stays in temporary lodging, waiting longer for on-base housing and paying hundreds of dollars more per month for rentals than their housing allowance covers, if they can even find a rental.” (Jowers, 2021d)</p> <p>9. “This has been our worst move in over 18 years, and we do not have any hopes of it getting better.” (Jowers, 2021d)</p>



	<p>10. “In a lively question-and-answer session, families asked officials about problems related to the accuracy of the moving companies’ weighing of their household goods; financial costs incurred by families when they have to leave their homes because of mold and other health issues; how the Army holds moving companies and housing companies accountable; the cumbersome claims process for PCS damage or loss.” (Jowers, 2019f)</p> <p>11. “Col. Carlene Blanding, commander of Eisenhower Army Medical Center at Fort Gordon, Ga. said when she moved this summer, it took seven days to pack up and load her family’s belongings... ‘I’ve had bad moves, but this was the absolute worst. This was very emotional.’” (Jowers, 2019f)</p> <p>12. “Whether it’s being charged for the overage, or having to get rid of some of their property to meet the limit, ‘It’s something we don’t want our service members to have to do,’ Russell said.” (Jowers, 2021b)</p> <p>13. “Increased quality assurance inspections of household goods moves. The goal was 75 percent of all moves, but officials are now at 95 percent of moves being inspected.” (Jowers, 2021b)</p> <p>14. “In July, Military Times reported on the difficulty troops and families have been facing as they move to new duty stations, with some paying hundreds of dollars more per month for rentals than their housing allowance covers, if they can even find a rental.” (Jowers & Winkie, 2021)</p> <p>15. “Since you and your family are being relocated, it makes sense to expect all your PCS charges to be covered. That’s not always the case. In fact, some experts suggest say that service members spend an average of \$1,725 in non-reimbursable costs during each PCS.” (Navy Federal Credit Union, 2016)</p> <p>16. “Now, troops can seek reimbursement for costs related to mandatory microchipping, quarantines, boarding, hotel service charges, virus immunity testing and pet licenses at the new duty station.” (Jowers, 2024)</p>
Household goods	<p>1. “The Johnsons contend there should be more of an investigation when items go missing from household goods shipments.” (Jowers, 2015a)</p> <p>2. “Mia Reisweber said delays in her Army husband’s move forced them to use savings to move her early from Hawaii to Missouri. They packed their household goods and put them in storage in Hawaii because they couldn’t afford to make rent payments in two places.” (Jowers, 2015c)</p>
Moving Company	<p>1. “And Air Force Lt. Col. Christopher Johnson and his wife, Nicky, are not too happy with the indifference they say they’ve endured from the moving company in trying to track down their missing property.” (Jowers, 2015a)</p> <p>2. “From the start, Nicky Johnson said, all they heard from the moving company was, ‘File a claim, we can’t help you, we don’t want to help you.’” (Jowers, 2015a)</p> <p>3. “‘Is it so much to ask that moving companies take a little more care in handling our memories?’” (Reiley, 2019)</p> <p>4. Due to the backlog from the stop movement order, expect an extended moving season, possibly into the fall and winter, with moving companies receiving “peak season” rates longer to accommodate the increased workload. (Jowers, 2020b)</p>



	5."You can decide if you want to conduct a Personally Procured Move (PPM) or opt for a government-arranged move, which is when a contractor packs and ships your belongings to your new location." (Navy Federal Credit Union, 2016)
Permanent change of station	<p>1."The Johnson family had moved valuable items inside their two safes without incident several times before, sending them on a truck during permanent change-of-station travels." (Jowers, 2015a)</p> <p>2. The Navy announced a new plan Friday aimed at reducing the stress of short lead times for permanent change of station moves." (Ziezulewicz, 2017)</p> <p>3."We understand the impact that compressed PCS lead times have had on sailors and their families preparing to move," Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Robert Burke said in a statement. (Ziezulewicz, 2017)</p> <p>4."One of the most dreaded experiences for military families is permanent change of station (PCS) season." (Reiley, 2019)</p> <p>5."Over the course of my 20-plus year active duty career as a Marine, I executed 10 PCSs." (Reiley, 2019)</p> <p>6. "After brutal PCS season, thousands sign petition to hold moving companies accountable for loss, damage." (Reiley, 2019)</p> <p>7."Lt. Col. Deric Prescott, the former staff judge advocate at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota, has been charged with stealing and trying to steal money from two companies that moved his household in different permanent change-of-station moves." (Losey, 2020)</p> <p>8. "Military families would get some extra flexibility during permanent change-of-station moves — allowing them to leave up to six months before or after the service member's reporting date to the next installation — under a bipartisan bill introduced Tuesday in the Senate." (Jowers, 2015c)</p> <p>9. "Regardless, not every permanent change-of-station move goes smoothly." (Lilley, 2018c)</p> <p>10. "Shrinking lead times for sailors' permanent-change-of-station moves could impact the Navy's readiness, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (SG/SW/IW) Steven Giordano warned Congress during a March 8 hearing." (Faram, 2017)</p> <p>11. "One of the concerns I've seen is the permanent change of station lead times ... when the lead times are short notice this becomes an increased stressor in their family's lives and households. This places a significant distraction on our sailors and may negatively impact our competitive edge in our continuous efforts to maintain maritime superiority." (Faram, 2017)</p> <p>12. "The availability of contracted movers will have an effect on how quickly every PCS can get underway, Nowell said, so DOD is encouraging more do-it-yourself moves, which can be reimbursed on the back-end." (Myers, 2020)</p> <p>13. "The Surette family with their dogs Soju, left, and Winter. The dogs died during a Patriot Express flight from South Korea to Seattle as the family was making a permanent change of station move." (Jowers, 2023c)</p>



	14. “Transporting pets during PCS moves has become increasingly difficult and expensive for military families over the past few years.” (Jowers, 2024)
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<i>MarineCorpsTimes</i>	Quotes
Dissatisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “How do I tell her that special little figurine we got to commemorate that special day ... is gone?” (Spencer, 2018) 2. Bill Weir and others have called this year’s move the worst they have experienced, indicating a significant level of dissatisfaction with the PCS process and the moving companies involved.” (Spencer, 2018) 3. “This really is a bad year,” and her mention that once-isolated problems are now “across all branches, all locations,” underscores the widespread nature of the dissatisfaction among military families regarding their PCS moves.” (Spencer, 2018) 4. “Unfortunately, not every move is perfect,” acknowledges that the military is aware of the dissatisfaction but also highlights the challenges in ensuring a smooth PCS move for all service members.” (Spencer, 2018) 5. “There were intermittent access issues to the system, not complete denial of services, but absolutely some frustration that affected all systems users,” – Air Force Lt. Col. Todd Jensen.” (Jowers, 2017b) 6. “The fear is that DPS remains an unstable platform and that many of the problems we have been experiencing will raise their ugly heads during the summer,” – Charles White, International Association of Movers. (Jowers, 2017b) 7. “During last year’s moving season, a number of military families complained about problems such as delays in delivering their household goods, damage to their belongings, and lack of accountability of the moving companies.” (Jowers, 2019b) 8. “The planned contract...is aimed at fixing military families’ long-standing problems with damaged household goods, and other frustrations with movers.” (Jowers, 2020e) 9. “Many have said they are taking a large financial hit, having to pay out of pocket for extended hotel stays as they wait for housing.” (Jowers, 2021f) 10. “Due to housing shortages, delayed moves and other factors, this year’s PCS season has been more costly than usual for many service members and their families, That’s why military relief societies have stepped up to help in a variety of ways — from helping with pet transportation costs to expenses related to extended hotel stays.” (Jowers, 2021g) 11. “The relief societies have provided more than \$216,000 in loans or grants to help service members unexpectedly hit with few options other than spending thousands of dollars to transport their dogs and cats to or from overseas.” (Jowers, 2021g)



	<p>12. “Army Emergency Relief is providing assistance to soldiers and families to help pay their hotel bills when their temporary lodging entitlements end. The assistance is provided as a zero-interest loan in anticipation of cost reimbursement from the Army.” (Jowers, 2021g)</p> <p>13. “Military families have had fewer options for transporting their pets to and from overseas, and because of the reduced capacity for pet transportation on commercial flights, shipping costs have increased.” (Jowers, 2021g)</p> <p>14. “Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society officials report that their pet program is ‘going strong,’ and they’ve provided more than \$86,000 in pet transportation assistance over the past several months.” (Jowers, 2021g)</p> <p>15. “This year has been what many have called the worst moving season of all time, due to the gross negligence of moving companies,” said Megan Harless, an Army spouse. (Jowers, 2018f)</p> <p>16. “What is the Army’s plan to hold these companies accountable in order to keep the moving season from being a financial burden for military families?” (Jowers, 2018f)</p> <p>17. Army Chief of Staff Mark Milley stated, “This has been a consistent theme, that household goods movement is all hosed up.” (Jowers, 2018f)</p> <p>18. “An untold number of military families have been victims of thefts or mistakes that sent some of their belongings to who knows where during moves between duty stations.” (Jowers, 2015b)</p> <p>19. “In retrospect, they admit they would have been better off taking their valuables with them, even though the safes had made it through household goods moves before.” (Jowers, 2015b)</p> <p>20. “So what do you do about valued items that don’t fit in the family car — like that heirloom antique chair or the prized China collection? Should we all accept these incidents as a potential part of military moves and just ‘file a claim,’ as this couple was encouraged to do by the moving companies?” (Jowers, 2015b)</p> <p>21. : “After untold numbers of complaints by military families about their household goods moves this summer, more than 41,000 people have signed a new petition asking military leaders and members of Congress to hold military moving companies accountable.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>22. “Military families are tired of how things with the current moving system are being handled,” (Jowers, 2020c)</p> <p>23. “She cited a claims process that is ‘long and tedious with companies only paying pennies on the dollar for something that is supposed to be protected’ under DOD regulations.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>24. “The problem this summer hasn’t been limited to one company or one area. Rather, the situation has been a convergence of problems that’s created a ‘perfect storm’ for military moves.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>25. “Is it so much to ask our elected officials to step in and protect our service members from the headache and heartache during a PCS?” (Jowers, 2018e)</p>
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	<p>26. “From what she’s seen this year, she said, ‘There really is no middle ground. It’s either that you have a really great move, or you’re going to have some issues,’” said Megan Harless (Jowers, 2019d)</p> <p>27. “These three military families have been battling with their privatized housing companies, trying to get their mold problems addressed. Now they – and an unknown number of other military families – are finding the problems of mold are reaching further into their lives. (Jowers, 2019e)</p> <p>28. “According to TRANSCOM, if mold is identified before household goods are packed or picked up, it’s the responsibility of the resident to have a mold remediation firm inspect and clean up the property.” (Jowers, 2019e)</p> <p>29. “We instruct the movers, that if they identify something that appears to be mold, not to load it, because we could end up with significant liability for home cleaning or medical issues caused by that and we didn’t do anything to cause the mold to begin with,” said Scott Kelly (Jowers, 2019e)</p> <p>30. “If this is happening to a field grade officer, I can only imagine what’s happening to the young enlisted families,” said Becky Vinales (Jowers, 2019e)</p>
Household goods	<p>1. “Foot traffic has picked up drastically. Marines are coming in to set up shipments for July and August already,” – Brian Imler, Headquarters Marine Corps. (Jowers, 2019b)</p> <p>2. “DOD formed a cross-function team bringing together representatives from the services’ personnel and logistics arenas, to identify gaps and make improvements to the household goods movement process,” – Heather Babb. (Jowers, 2019b)</p> <p>3. “DOD has a new requirement that at least 50 percent of moves must be inspected for quality assurance in person at the home.” (Jowers, 2019b)</p> <p>4. “The government is back on the road to outsourcing the management of military household goods moves.” (Jowers, 2020e)</p> <p>5. “Following a heavily contested contract awarded earlier this year, U.S. Transportation Command is now reviewing several revised proposals for a new contract to manage household goods moves worldwide,” – André Kok, spokesperson for TRANSCOM. (Jowers, 2020e)</p> <p>6. “TRANSCOM ‘remains committed to reforming the household goods movement experience while adhering to all federal laws and regulations,’” – André Kok. (Jowers, 2020e)</p> <p>7. “This year, a number of service members have complained about not being able to get their moves scheduled, and those moving from overseas, especially, have complained about delays in delivering their household goods, which has cost families money.” (Jowers, 2021i)</p> <p>8. “This year, even more financial incentives are sweetening the pot for those who do these moves, which are now called Personally Procured Moves, and were previously known as Do-It-Yourself, or DITY, moves.” (Jowers, 2021e)</p>



	<p>9. “If you’ve got a permanent change-of-station move coming up, you might be considering moving your household goods yourself.” (Jowers, 2018a)</p> <p>10. “Many military families moving this summer have experienced hardships because of unexpected delays in pickups or delivery of their household goods.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>11. “Truckers, drivers are a key component of the household goods process. It’s been problematic, and I would say it won’t be any different this summer,” said Dan Bradley. (Jowers, 2024)</p> <p>12. “Service members and families are being moved this moving season under the household goods process that’s been in place for years, not the new Global Household Goods contract.” (Jowers, 2023b)</p> <p>13. “The new contract, worth a potential \$17.9 billion if DOD exercises all contract options over the next nine years, aims to fix military families’ long-standing problems with damaged household goods, missed pickup and delivery times, and other frustrations with movers.” (Jowers, 2023a)</p> <p>14. “For two weeks, the computerized system that is the backbone of the entire household goods moving process has been ‘almost at a dead stop,’ causing a traffic jam of sorts for service members who needed to get their moves scheduled,” said John Becker. (Jowers, 2019d)</p> <p>15. “An Army staff sergeant at Fort Meade, Md., said he has been waiting for more than a month for confirmation that his family’s household goods will be packed up and moved,” (Jowers, 2019d)</p> <p>16. “In those areas, military service officials use alternative ways to get service members’ household goods moved,” Dunn said (Jowers, 2019d)</p> <p>17. “Army wife Becky Vinales got the news: their moving company was refusing to move their household goods because of the mold contamination in their house at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.” (Jowers, 2019e)</p>
Moving Company	<p>1. “He kept asking me, ‘Are the movers mad at me? Did I do something wrong?’” (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>2. “With the amount of tonnage that is handled in a short time during peak season, which is summer, there are going to be service failures,” provides an explanation from the moving company’s perspective but also indicates an acceptance of service failures as part of the process.” (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>3. “The people they hire, they need to put a little more thought into it,” (Spencer, 2018)</p> <p>4. “There have been some persistent issues with the moving industry lacking enough truck drivers, packers and other personnel to load and unload trucks – problems that industry experts said will continue.” (Jowers, 2017b)</p> <p>5. : “There also have been issues with installation access for some moving companies... Each base has its own background check policy... causes an accordion effect” – John Becker. (Jowers, 2017b)</p>



	<p>6. “The selection of a single company to arrange military moves worldwide will improve every part of the process for service members and their families, from scheduling the move to filing claims for loss and damage,” (Jowers, 2021i)</p> <p>7. “Our whole strategy is to reward the highest quality movers. They’re going to have a score card, and those that perform better, provide a better moving experience to the military service member, and meet the required pickup and delivery time frames, will get more work.” (Jowers, 2021i)</p> <p>8. “U.S. Transportation Command officials acknowledge that there is even less than usual capacity in the moving industry, and note that some service members are having to wait four to six weeks for moving crews if the government is arranging their move. There’s also a shortage of rental trucks in many areas for those who want to move themselves.” (Jowers, 2021e)</p> <p>9. “Then there’s the shortage of moving companies, which struggle to find workers, deal with shortages of equipment and other issues in a busy moving season, causing delayed or canceled moves for service members.” (Jowers, 2021g)</p> <p>10. “Esper said officials may look at the possibility of posting a report on the Army website that lists which moving companies have been given a warning letter or suspended.” (Jowers, 2018f)</p> <p>11. “That puts a strain on the moving industry. Military moves compete with corporate moves, which are also concentrated in the summer, and this year has seen a critical shortage of truck drivers.” (Jowers, 2018f)</p> <p>12. “First, moving companies are required to give service members or their representatives an opportunity to identify, in writing, high-risk or high-value items, or offer the option of using a high-risk or high-value inventory.” (Jowers, 2015b)</p> <p>13. “If you have questions about what the moving company is doing, or what they’re telling you, check with your household goods/transportation office.” (Jowers, 2017a)</p> <p>14. “There have been complaints about the quality of work, too, which has resulted in loss and damage for some families.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>15. “Among the solutions she offered is to have move coordinators and quality assurance inspectors properly trained in being a mediator between the military family and the moving company and its crews.” (Jowers, 2018e)</p> <p>14. “The shortage of truckers has persisted for years, long before the pandemic.” (Jowers, 2023b)</p>
Permanent change of station	<p>1. “When service members of any branch try to book a move weeks ahead instead of 90 days or more ahead, it makes it more difficult to get the desired move date.” (Jowers, 2017b)</p> <p>2. “This year, service officials are giving military members earlier notice of those PCS orders, which allows them to schedule their moves to their</p>



	<p>next duty station earlier,” – Heather Babb, DOD spokeswoman. (Jowers, 2019b)</p> <p>3. “We’ve exceeded the capacity of our civilian counterparts to do moving for our soldiers. It’s not just an Army problem, it’s a Defense Department problem,” said Sergeant Major of the Army Dan Dailey. (Jowers, 2018f)</p> <p>4. “But there have been improvements in the rules for making a permanent change of station move, relating to replacement costs for items lost or destroyed and the handling of lithium batteries, privately owned firearms without serial numbers, gun safes, electronic products and other items,” according to officials with the U.S. Transportation Command. (Jowers, 2024)</p>
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APPENDIX B. GAPS MODEL: DEFINITIONS, FACTORS, AND SPECIFIC ILLUSTRATIVE ISSUES

Table 6. Gap 1. Source: Zeithaml (1990, p. 53)

Factor and Definition	Specific Illustrative Issues
Marketing Research Orientation: Extent to which managers make an effort to understand customers' needs and expectations through formal and informal information-gathering activities.	Is research conducted regularly to generate information about what customers want? Does the marketing research a company conducts focus on quality of service delivered by it? Do managers understand and utilize the research findings? Do managers mingle with customers to learn what is on their minds?
Upward Communication: Extent to which top management seeks, stimulates, and facilitates the flow of information from employees at lower levels.	Do managers encourage suggestions from customer contact personnel concerning quality of service? Are there formal or informal opportunities for customer contact personnel to communicate with management? How frequently do managers have face-to-face contact with customer contact personnel?
Levels of Management: Number of managerial levels between the topmost and bottommost positions.	Do too many managerial levels separate top managers from those responsible for dealing with and serving customers?



Table 7. Gap 2. Source: Zeithaml (1990, p. 73)

Factor and Definition	Specific Illustrative Issues
Management Commitment to Service Quality: Extent to which management views service quality as a key strategic goal.	Are resources committed to departments to improve service quality? Do internal programs exist for improving the quality of service to customers? Are managers who improve the quality of service to customers more likely to be rewarded than other managers? Does the company emphasize its sales goals as much as or more than it emphasizes serving customers? Are upper and middle managers committed to providing quality service to their customers?
Perception of Feasibility: Extent to which managers believe that customer expectations can be met. Does the company have the necessary capabilities to meet customer requirements	Does the company have the necessary capabilities to meet customer requirements for service? Can customer expectations be met without hindering financial performance? Do existing operations systems enable customer expectations to be met? Are resources and personnel available to deliver the level of service that customers demand? Does management change existing policies and procedures to meet the needs of customers?
Task Standardization: Extent to which hard and soft technology are used to standardize service tasks.	Is automation used to achieve consistency in serving customers? Are programs in place to improve operating procedures so that consistent service is provided?
Goal-Setting: Extent to which service quality goals are based on customer standards and expectations rather than company standards.	Is there a formal process for setting quality of service goals for employees? Does the company have clear goals about what it wants to accomplish? Does the company measure its performance in meeting its service quality goals? Are service quality goals based on customer-oriented standards rather than company-oriented standards?

Table 8. Gap 3. Source: Zeithaml (1990, p. 92)

Factor and Definition	Specific Illustrative Issues
Role Ambiguity: Extent to which employees are uncertain about what managers or supervisors expect from them and how to satisfy those expectations.	Does management provide accurate information to employees concerning job instruction, company policy and procedures, and performance assessment? Do employees understand the products and services offered by the company? Are employees able to keep up with changes that affect their jobs? Are employees trained to interact effectively with customers? How often does management communicate company goals and expectations to employees? Do employees understand what managers expect from them and how to satisfy those expectations?
Role Conflict: Extent to which employees perceive that they cannot satisfy all the demands of all the individuals (internal and external customers) they must serve.	Do customers and managers have the same expectations of employees? How often do customer-contact employees have to depend on other support services employees to provide quality service to customers? Do employees have more work to do than they have time to do it? Does the number of demands in employees' jobs make it difficult to effectively serve customers? Do too many customers want service at the same time? Do employees cross-sell services to customers in situations where it is inappropriate?
Employee-Job Fit: The match between the skill of employees and their jobs.	Do employees believe that they are able to perform their jobs well? Does the company hire people who are qualified to do their jobs? Does management devote sufficient time and resources to the hiring and selection of employees?
Technology-Job Fit: The appropriateness of the tools and technology that employees use to perform their jobs.	Are employees given the tools and equipment needed to perform their jobs well? How often does equipment fail to operate?
Supervisory Control Systems: The appropriateness of the evaluation and reward systems in the company.	Do employees know what aspects of their jobs will be stressed most in performance evaluations? Are employees evaluated on how well they interact with customers? Are employees who do the best job serving customers more likely to be rewarded than other employees? Do employees who make a special effort to serve customers receive increased financial rewards, career advancement, and/or recognition? Do employees feel appreciated for their contributions?
Teamwork: Extent to which employees and managers pull together for a common goal.	Do employees and managers contribute to a team effort in servicing customers? Do support services employees provide good service to customer-contact personnel? Are employees personally involved and committed to the company? Do customer-contact employees cooperate more than they compete with other employees in the company? Are employees encouraged to work together to provide quality service to customers?

Table 9. Gap 4. Source: Zeithaml (1990, p. 118)

Factor and Definition	Specific Illustrative Issues
Horizontal Communication: Extent to which communication occurs both within and between different departments of a company.	Do customer contact personnel have input in advertising planning and execution? Are customer contact personnel aware of external communications to customers before they occur? Does the salesforce interact with customer contact personnel to discuss the level of service that can be delivered to customers? Are the policies and procedures for serving customers consistent across departments and branches?
Propensity to Overpromise: Extent to which a company's external communications do not accurately reflect what customers receive in the service encounter.	Is there increasing pressure inside the company to generate new business? Do competitors overpromise to gain new customers?



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