

2014 Town Centre Shopping Audit

1. Executive Summary

Fifty-five Town Centre shops were mystery shopped, and audited, against a set of standard customer service criteria, between Saturday 18th October and Friday 31st October 2014.

The average Customer Service score for the units surveyed was 73%; with the range of results between 33% and 97%. This compares with an average score of 68% for the same units surveyed in October 2013.

The improvement in average performance is encouraging but might still be considered below the performance target of 80%; set after the previous audit. Like 2013 the spread of results from the lowest to the highest performing units remains large and is a concern.

2. Introduction

On the 17th October 2014 the Economic Development Department released its Interim Retail Development Plan. The Plan sets out a numbers of measures and investment to support the retail sector over the coming months. The Plan focuses primarily on three areas of activity; Marketing and Promotional support, Digital Integration, and Customer Service Development.

In October 2013 the Department commissioned a local Mystery Shopping firm to undertake an audit of Town Centre retailers and cafes. One year later the Department has commissioned the audit to be re-run in-order-to:

1. Identify changes in performance from the 2013 audit
2. Benchmark independent local retailers against larger UK franchises trading in St Helier
3. Identify product and service provision gaps
4. Identify staff training gaps
5. Identify gaps in selling opportunities
6. Measure the 'customer ordering experience' i.e. the ability for customers to order items that are not in stock
7. Understand if there is a difference between the weekday and Saturday experience

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3. Methodology

- The audit was carried out between Saturday 18th October and Friday 31st October 2014
- A sample of fifty-five town centre establishments were audited - 47 retailers, 6 cafes and 2 take away outlets
- With the exception of one establishment the sample was the same as for 2013. The sample was selected to ensure a good geographical spread across the Town Centre
- The sample was broken down into groups as follows:
 - Small businesses (1-5 staff) - 31
 - Medium businesses (5-10 staff) - 19
 - Large business (>10 staff) - 5
- 8 of the sample were UK businesses, or franchises, and 47 were local businesses
- 50% of the audit was carried out on a Saturday and the rest spread evenly from Monday to Friday
- The audit was undertaken by 13 professional assessors of different age ranges using a common marking and appraisal system. 8 of the assessors were used in the 2013 audit.

4. Customer Service Areas Reviewed

The audit focused on three specific areas of measurement:

1. General Approach
 - First impressions
 - Acknowledgement
2. Service
 - Café (for selected)
 - The Member of Staff
 - The Check Out Process
3. Sales Opportunity
 - Establishing Needs
 - Product Knowledge
 - Customer Ordering
 - Selling Skills

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5. Understanding the Scores

The audits are scored out of 100%. 100% would indicate outstanding customer service with all the areas covered successfully. 0% would indicate failure on every point audited.

Score	Performance
0 - 40%	Poor
41 - 60%	Below Average
61 - 80%	Average
81 - 90%	Good
>90%	Outstanding

A target of 80% was suggested as the benchmark for Jersey retailing following the 2013 audit.

6. Overall Performance

The average Customer Service score for the fifty-five units surveyed was 73%; with the range of results from 33% to 97%. This compares with an average score of 68% for the same units in 2013.

The improvement in average performance is encouraging but might still be considered below the recommended performance target of 80%; set after the previous audit. Like 2013 the spread of results from the lowest to the highest performing units remains large and is a concern.

7. 2014 Summary Performance

Details and breakdown of the overall Town Centre Customer Service performance for the three areas of General Approach, Service, and Sales Opportunity are shown in the Appendices.

Appendix A compares the 2013 and 2014 Overall Customer Service Performance scores. There is an encouraging improvement in General Approach and Service but the Sales Opportunity score has shown only a very small improvement; remaining a concern and opportunity for improvement.

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The overall St Helier experience could be described as average, certainly not great.

- General Approach performance
 - Shop first impressions remains very strong and is a key positive feature of the Town Centre customer experience
 - Only 50% of shoppers were acknowledged when first entering the shop. This is an improvement on 2013 but remains a significant area for attention
 - However, Assistant Approachability when engaged with the shopper was outstanding at 96%
- Service performance
 - The performance of the member of Staff is encouraging with outstanding results for attire. A score of 75% for attitude may be considered acceptable but is an area to be reviewed
 - There remains strong opportunities as part of the Check Out process certainly with regard to 'anything else you need today' type engagement and 'positive comment' on exit.
 - The average performance of the Cafes audited improved from 75% in 2013 to 81% in 2014
- Sales Opportunity performance
 - Average performance is rated at 60%
 - Product knowledge remains strong but let down by average Customer Ordering engagement and below average Selling Skills
 - Within Selling Skills only 45% of opportunities mentioned 'price matching' options and only 20% of engagements asked if shoppers would like any 'additional products'.

Overall performance is improving and members of staff are generally helpful and engaged but not yet delivering consistently good Customer Service. Shops are therefore missing opportunities to build relationships with customers and to 'upsell' to shoppers. Overall, there remains room for Customer Service improvement which will help to increase sales and performance in the retail sector.

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8. Targeted Performance Results

Saturday v Weekday

The average result for a Saturday visit is the same as for a weekday visit at 73%.

Business Size

Content	Average result (%)	Branch count
Large	78	5
Small	73	32
Medium	72	18

UK v Local

Content	Average result (%)	Branch count
Local	74	47
UK Chain	69	8

9. Sample of Overall Comments

Lowest - Poor performing

"The shop window was dressed to a very high standard. Very trendy, very attractive. A pleasure to look at and it really pulls people in. As soon as I entered the store, the shop in front of me looked very bad, crammed, over stuffed, large card boxes cluttering the aisles. An overall impression of an un-kept warehouse. It took me a while to see people inside. When I finally saw a man sitting at his computer I approached and said: " Hi. I'm looking for a jacket but I'm not sure yet what exactly I want". The Agent said something I could not understand and rotate his chair to face the computer again. The service provided was beyond appalling. No questions asked, Do you want the jacket for the rain, for the wind, what sort of activities or sports. No attempt to show around some of the items in store. No inquiries what price I had in mind. I felt ignored, neglected and unwelcome. His replies to my questions were: No price matching. "you won't find any cheaper anywhere" No refunds but items can be exchanged. They can order only if

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the item is not on the website. No "can I help" No attempt to smile. No "Thank you" All in all, very cold. Based on my visit I will not recommend to anybody."

Below average performance

"I found some nice products but did not enjoy being served in the shop today unfortunately, it was not very friendly. I probably easily could have been persuaded to buy more but she did not even attempt this."

"I walked into the store and was only acknowledged when I looked at the man at the till. There was Portuguese/Spanish music playing loudly which was off putting. I approached the woman and asked where the t-shirts were, she pointed to a section. I went to look and while browsing, she came over to the section but didn't say anything until I asked her a question. She came back again and I asked her where to try the items on. She had to ask me to repeat myself as she wasn't paying attention to what I was saying. I tried to engage her in conversation a few times but this was met with a few words or a brief answer then she walked away. I felt like I wanted to get out of there as felt watched and not very welcome."

Average performance

"The entrance to the shop was clean tidy and attractive. The windows were nicely dressed and inviting. All fixtures were tidy and very well laid out, allowing space to walk and close interaction with the props full of interesting items. On my entrance staff seemed initially busy with a customer and gave me plenty of leeway to browse. Possibly slightly too much time unapproached. When finally I approached an assistant and said I was looking for a pair of trousers and a jacket to match, she demonstrated remarkable charm and genuineness to be of service. She did all within her powers to help. Nevertheless she missed the opportunity of a sale by forgetting that I had gone in for a jacket as well. The Assistants together, informed that the store does not observe Price Matching, does not order items, there is no brochure and no website to consult. I understand the need for such conveniences, nevertheless, I felt valued and well attended to during my visit."

"I was impressed that the assistant did accompany me to the items I was looking for. However, disappointingly his first words were 'this is all we have'. He repeated a similar sentiment later in the visit. He did though make a brief effort to suggest how one item might suit my needs. I was

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pleased by the offer of a reduction in price even though this seemed to be a practical 'procedure' with little real interest in the problem. Generally the visit met my expectations.”

Good performance

“I was very pleased with what I bought for my supper plus the extra suggested. I left with plenty of information on how to order platters for Christmas, when I would have to order and what options were open to me. Plus I was given information on Christmas opening hours. I would definitely visit again and think we are very lucky to have such fresh excellent products on our doorstep.”

“I felt that the layout of the shop was welcoming and appealing, especially for a small shop, and there was a good range of products on offer. I did have to wait for assistance as there were other customers in the shop when I arrived. However once I had the attention of the assistant, I did receive very good customer service. The assistant was genuinely interested in establishing my needs and helping me to find a suitable item. She offered advice on the products and was also knowledgeable on the designer and the item's features and style. When it was established that the size and style I wanted was no longer available, the assistant did attempt to offer alternative items and also offered to take my name and telephone number to notify me when they had a new order arrive in the store. Overall, I was very pleased with the service provided.”

Best - Outstanding Performing

“I would describe my experience in visiting this store as outstanding, it totally exceeded my expectation. The quality of the customer service was impressive. The clear and concise information given in a very easy to understand and I didn't feel that the assistant was overtly trying to sell to me or push me in a certain direction, but genuinely trying to guide me in choosing what would be exactly right for me.”

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10. Next Steps & Future Opportunities

Through the actions set out in the Interim Retail Development Plan the Department is continuing to support the retail sector and is funding Jersey Business to support retail development; in particular the delivery of a Customer Service programme in 2015 targeted at retailers and further mystery shopping audits.

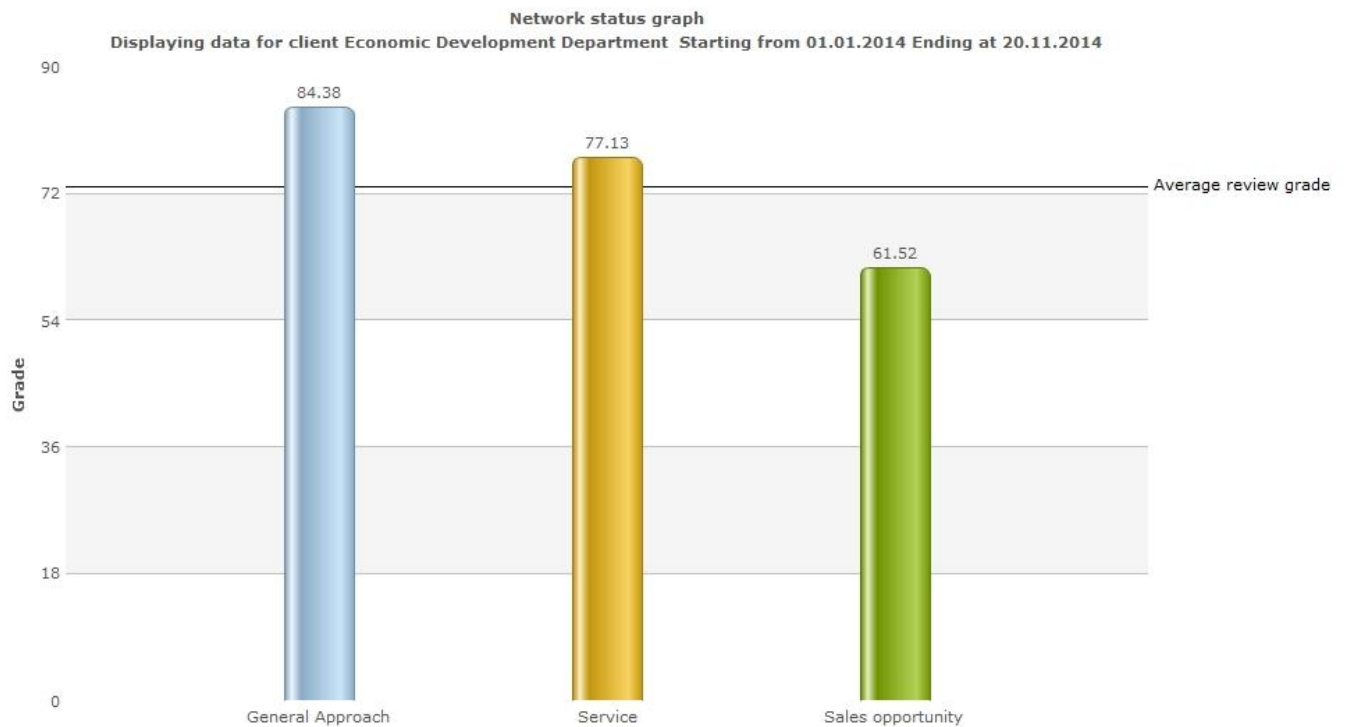
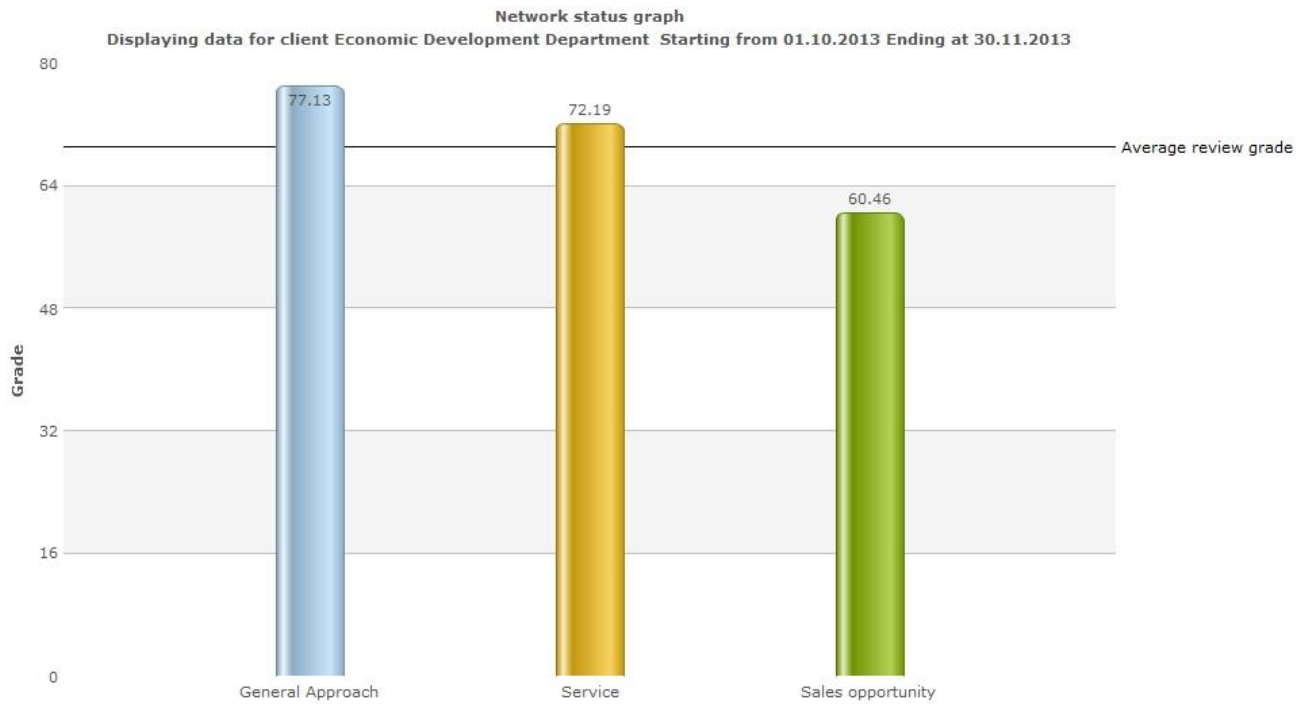
Following the 2013 audit it was clear that there were many retailers delivering great service, but perhaps no one that could be held up as delivering outstanding service. To start to address this, in October 2014 the Department funded Jersey Business to deliver the Retail Ambassador - World Host Programme to over 90 individuals in the sector.

Areas highlighted for future development

- Improvement in initial customer engagement
- Maximising the sales opportunity. Very similar result to 2013 where this area continues to underperform. This is a large opportunity for retailers to engage further with shoppers to present cross-sell and up-sell products
- Work needs to be carried out to reduce the range of service performance across St Helier. Improvement in the performance of the poorer performing units will ensure a more consistent level of customer service.

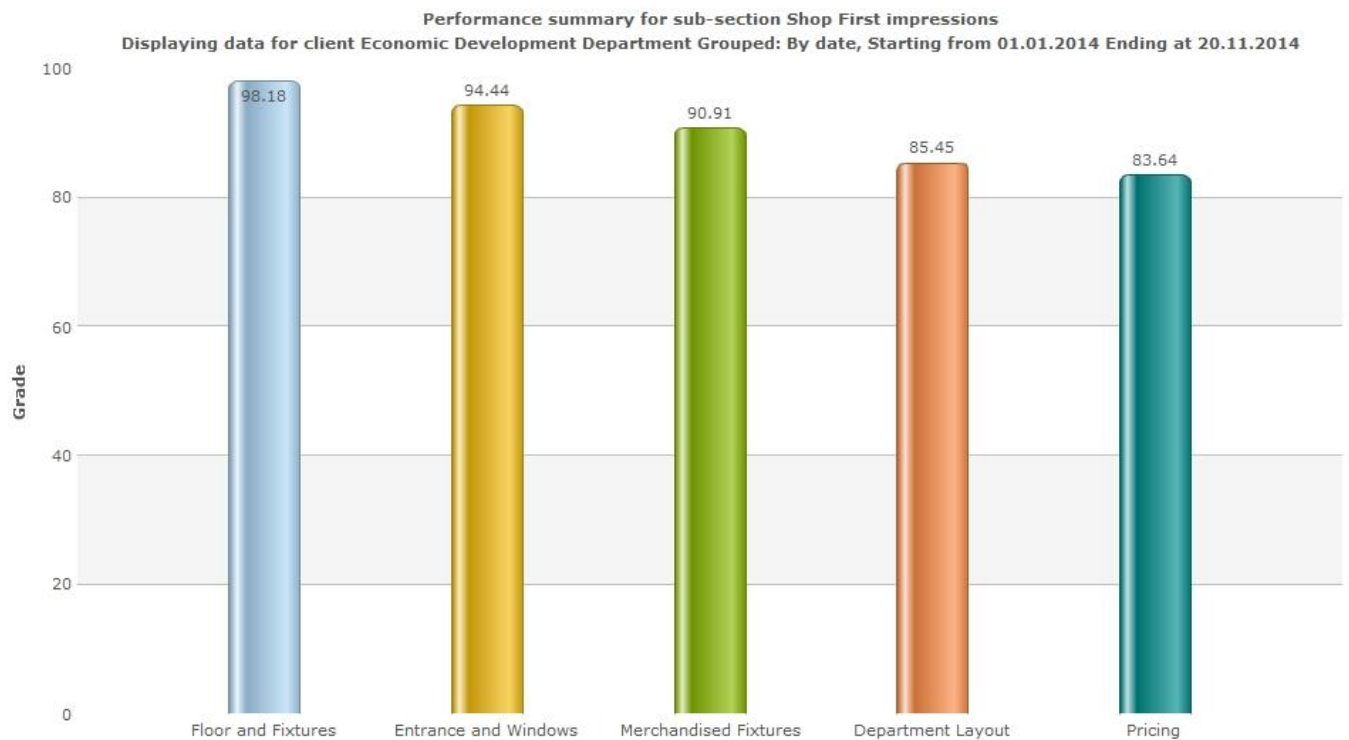
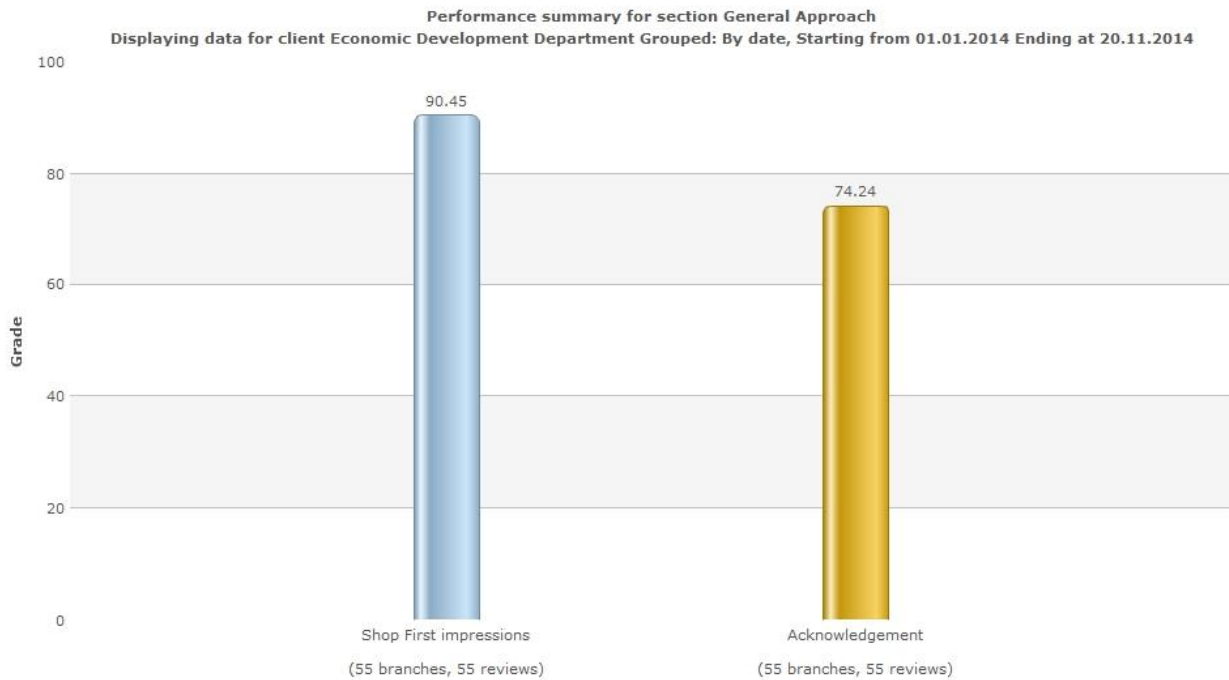
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Appendix A - Comparison of the 2013 and 2014 Overall Customer Service Performance

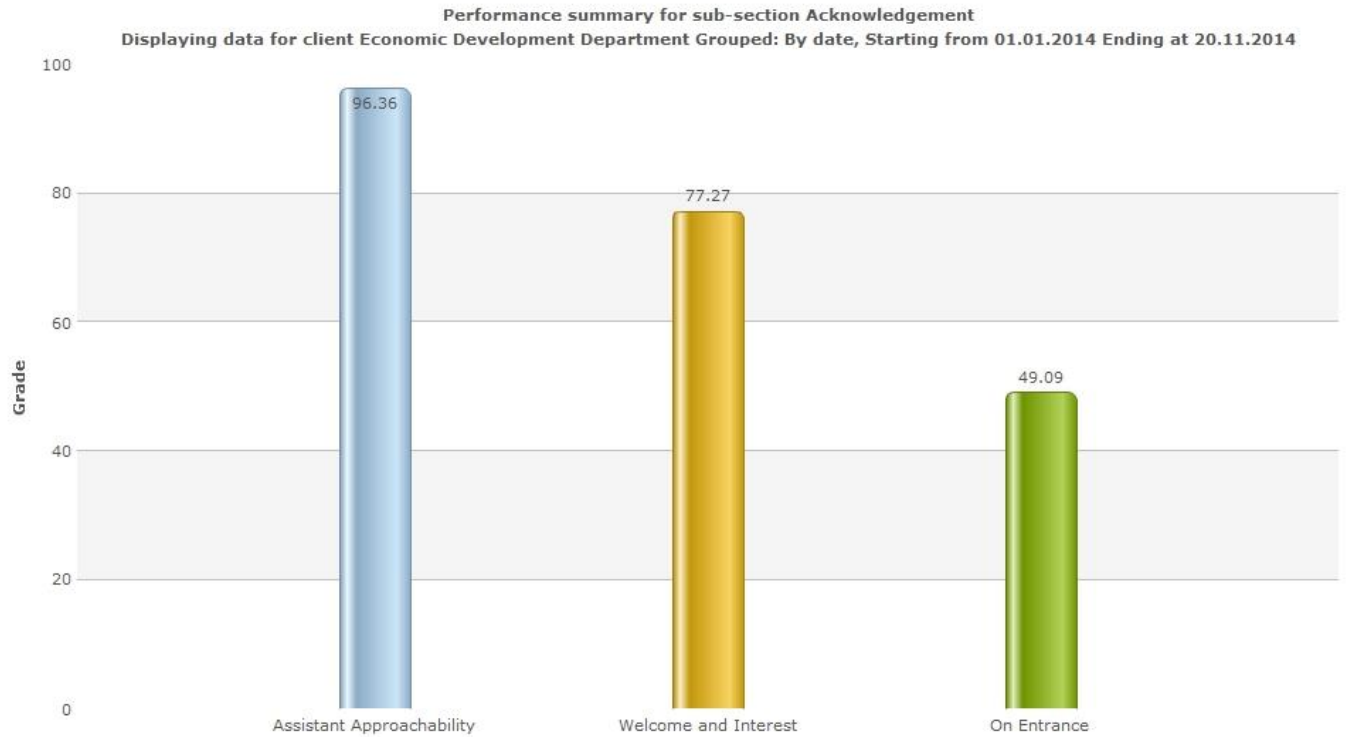


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Appendix B - October 2014 Performance Summary & Details for General Approach

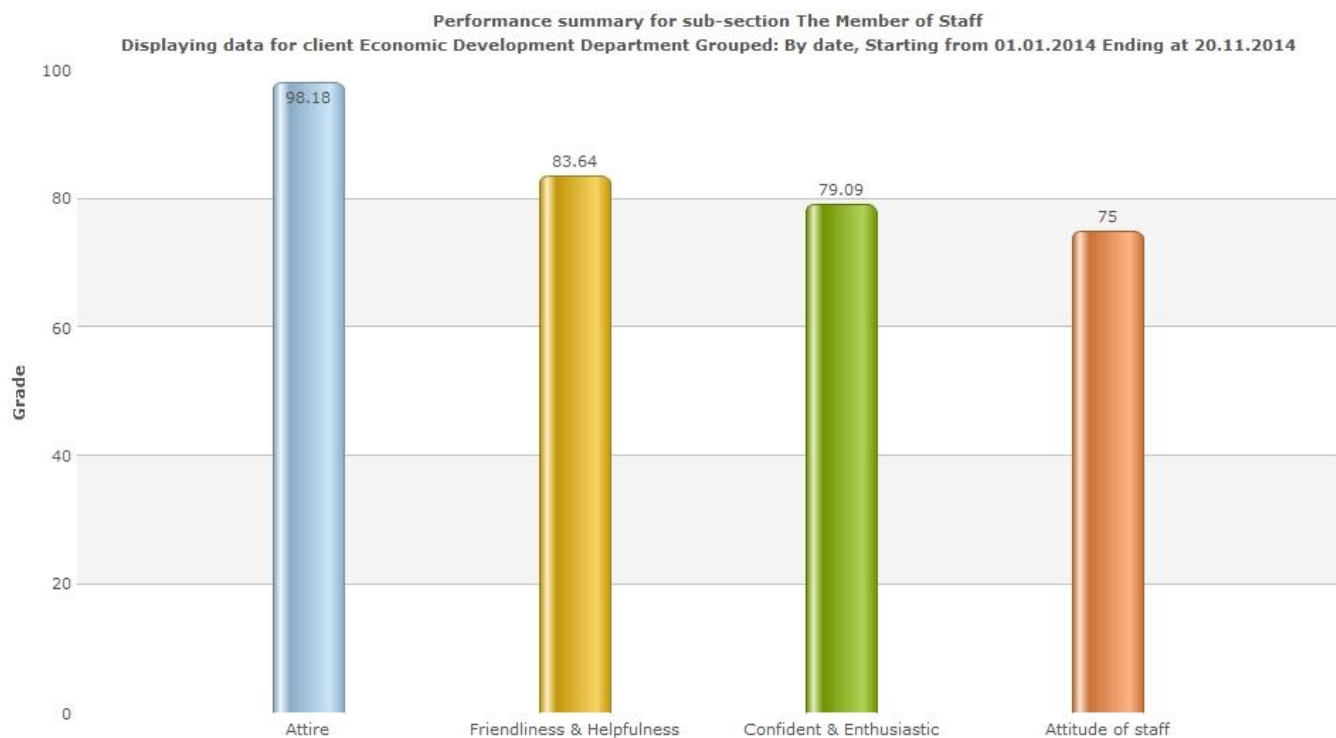
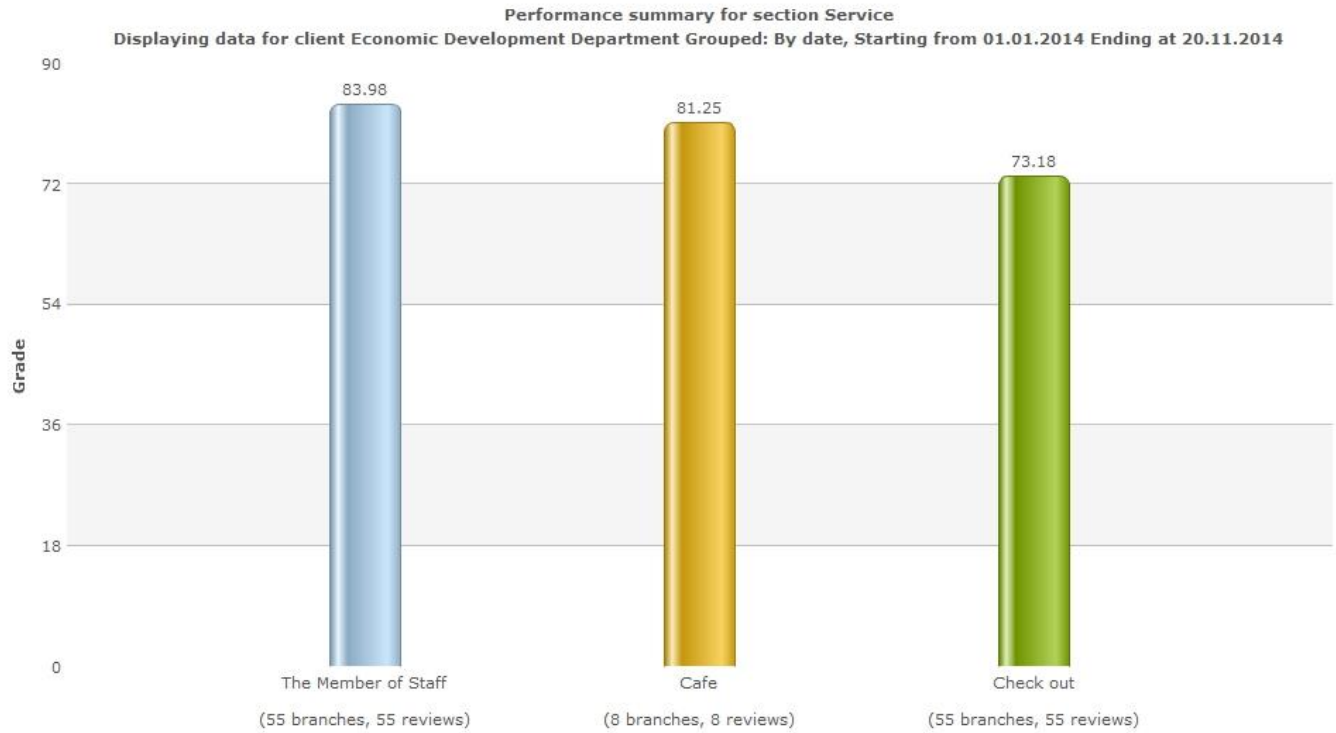


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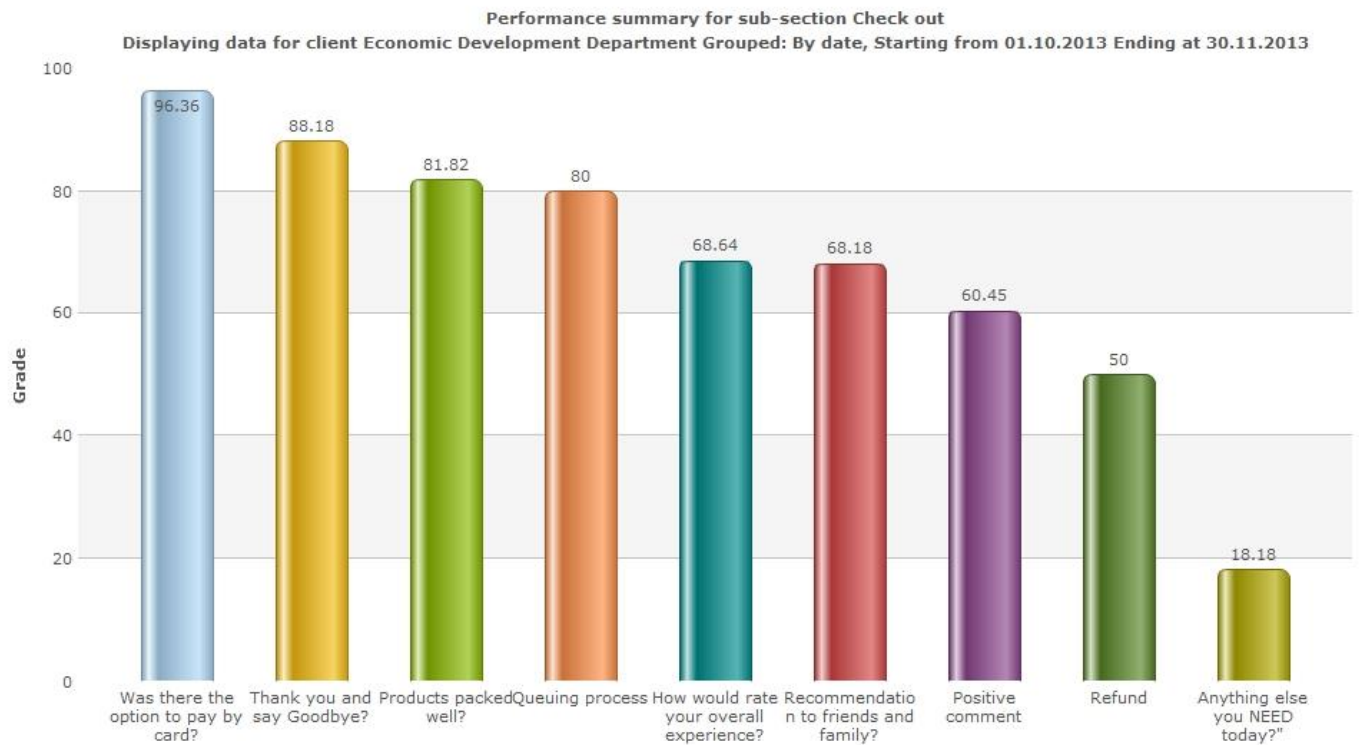
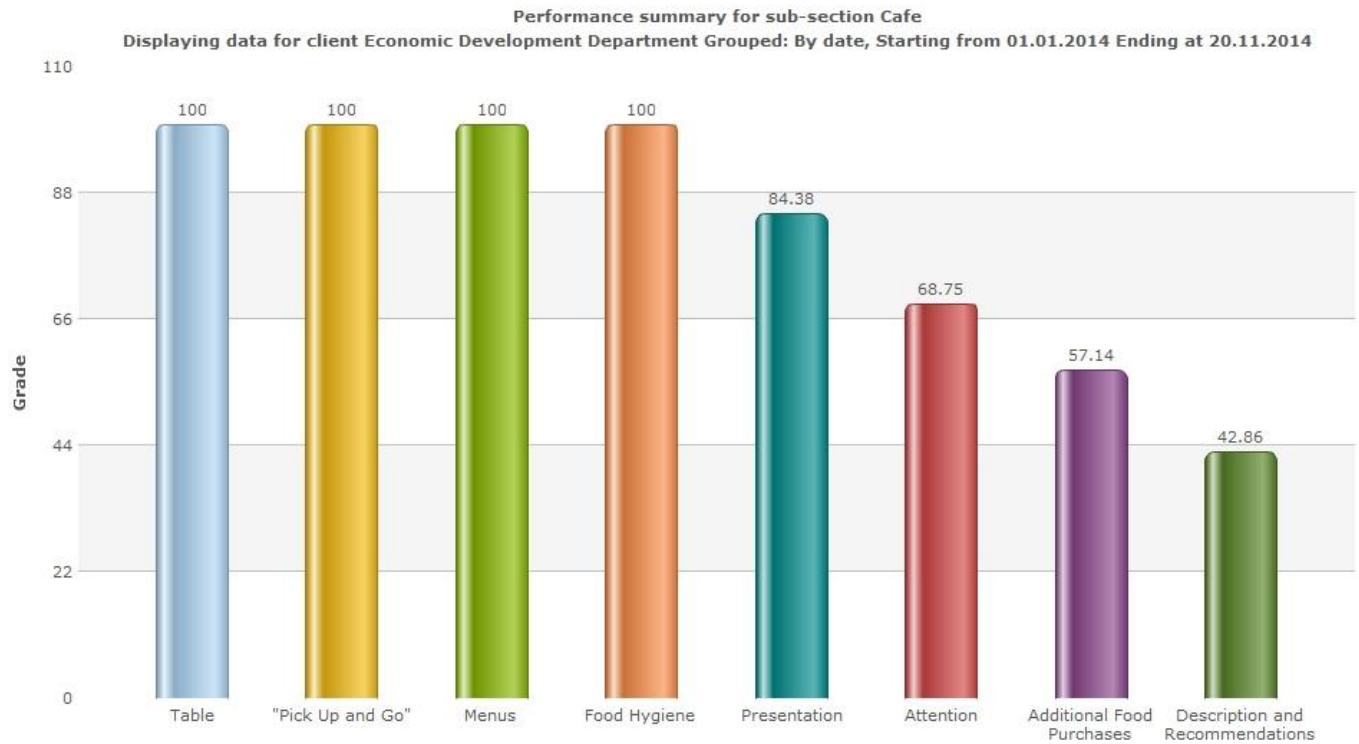


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Appendix C - October 2014 Performance Summary & Details for Service

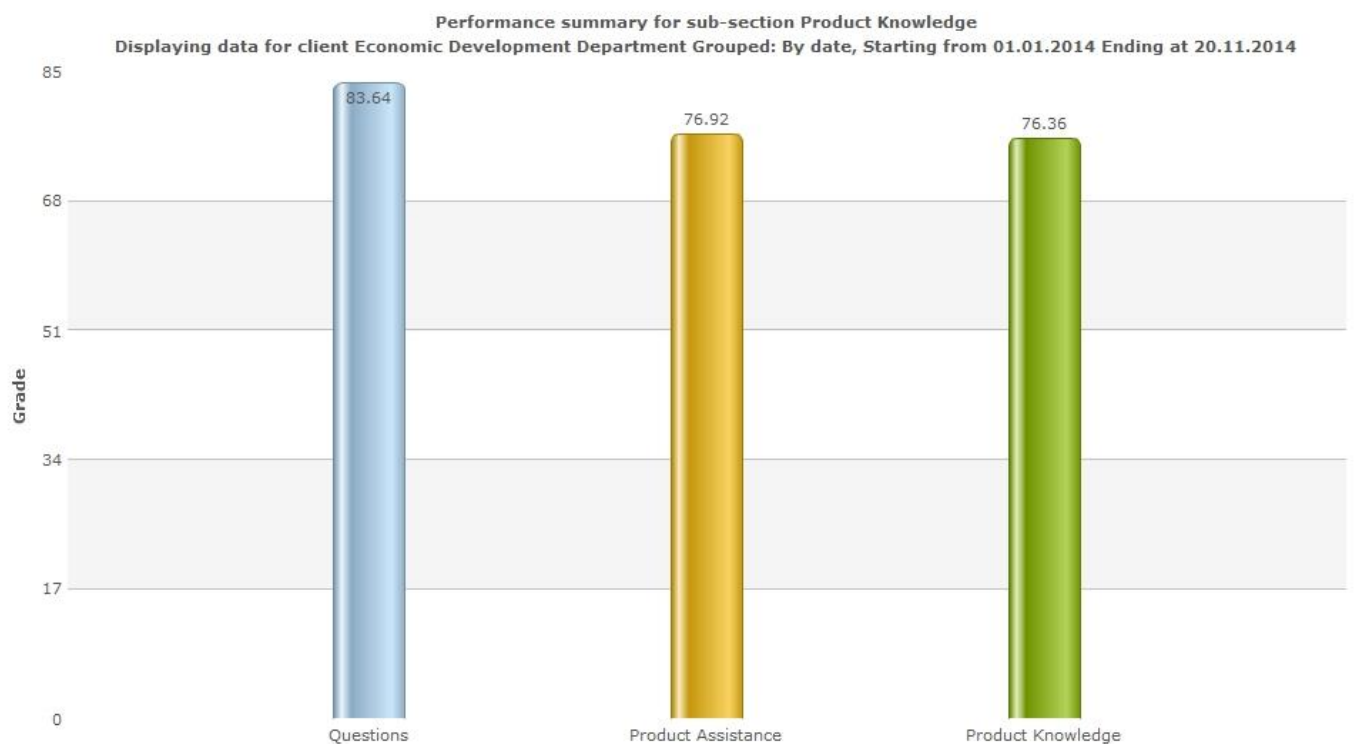
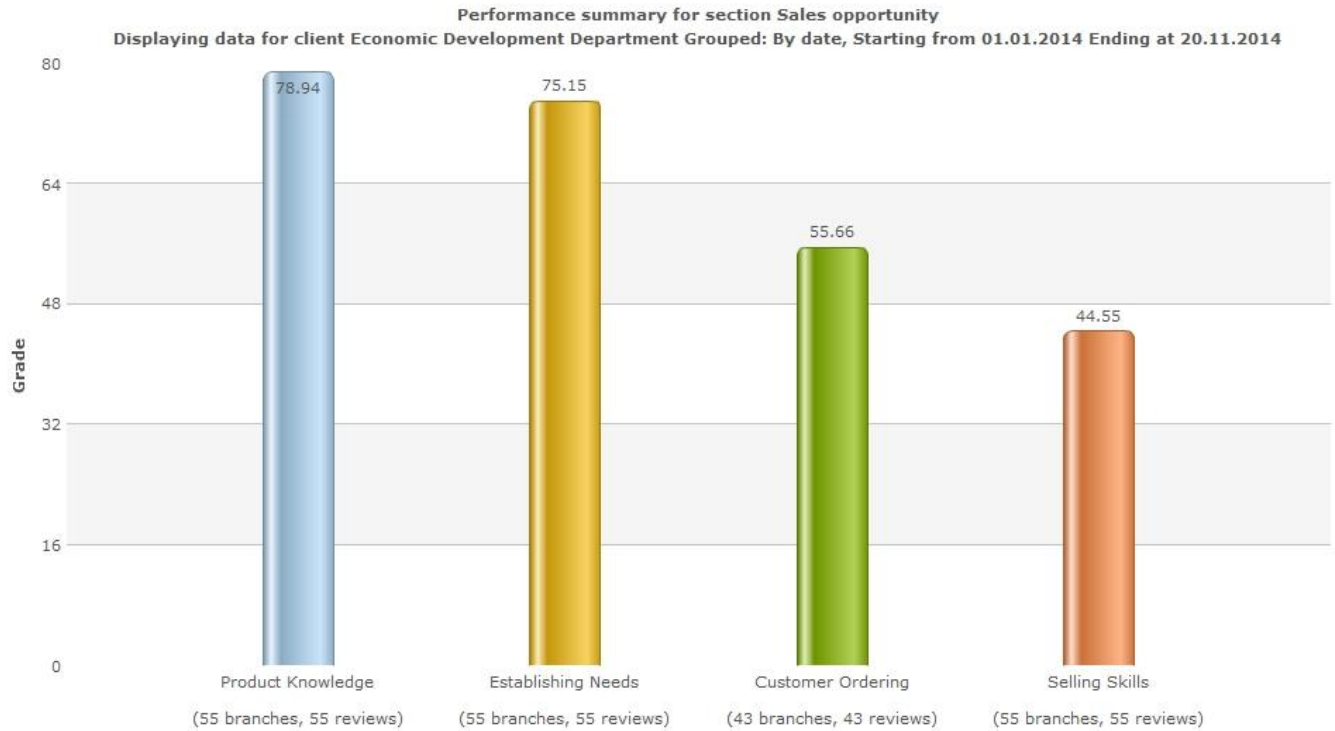


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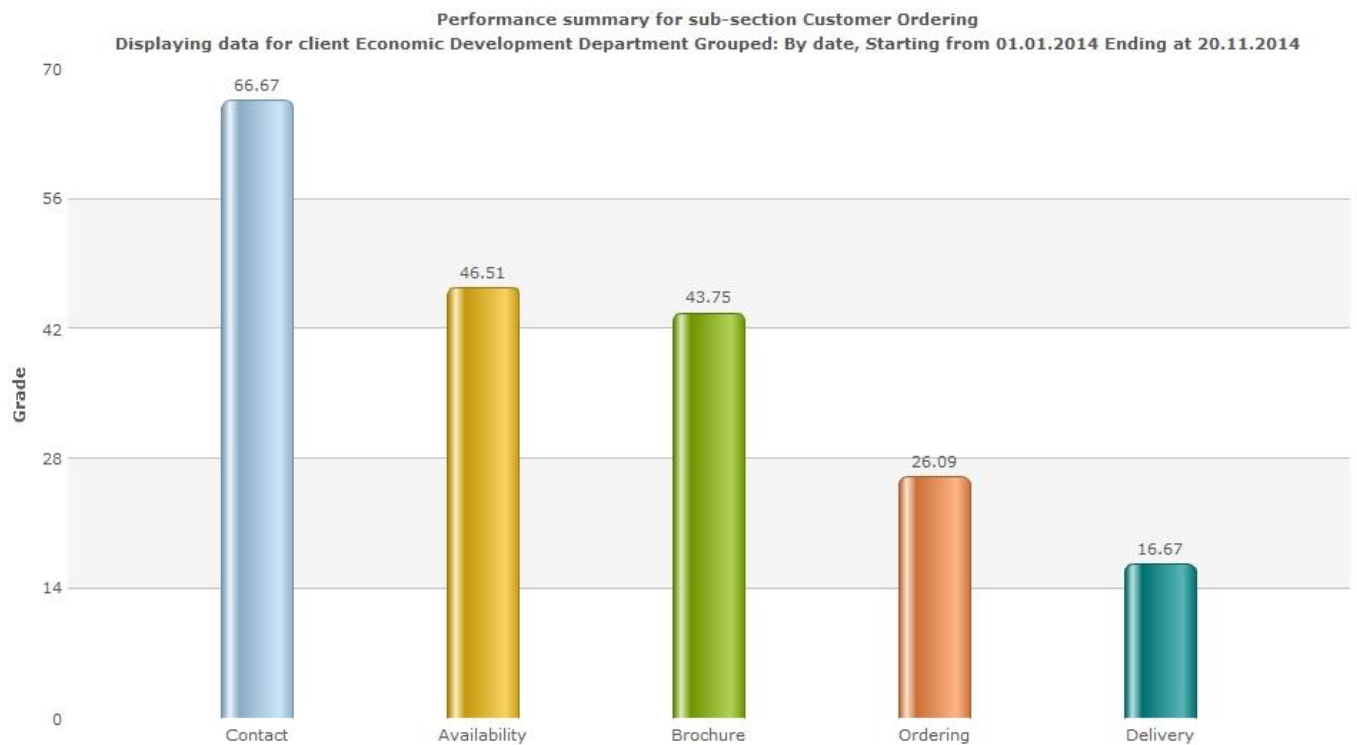
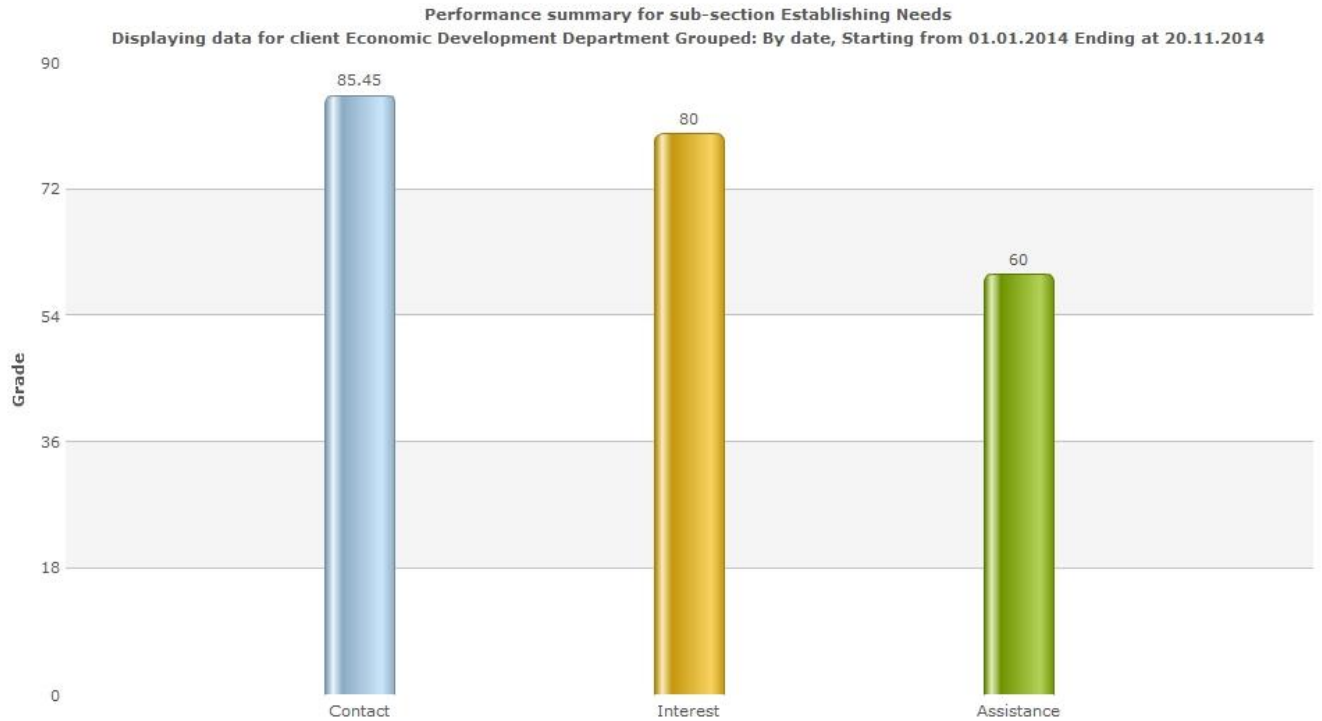


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Appendix D - October 2014 Performance Summary & Details for Sales Opportunity



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