

A Short Guide to Customer Experience Feedback

Why Do You Need to Survey?

The most valuable customer is the loyal customer. The one who will choose your business over others. What makes them loyal? What contributes to positive experiences to create repeat customers? This is the purview of the survey. It's not enough anymore to stumble through customer satisfaction. Surveys can help you understand your customer's true experience. More than that, they can help you identify the *cause* of their experience.

Each of your customers has a *feeling* about their experience that falls somewhere between very positive and very negative. That *feeling*, if known to you, provides a significant indication of whether that customer is likely to remain a repeat customer. Here's a simpler restatement: How your customer feels at the end of their most recent visit largely impacts their willingness to do business with you again.

Chances are you're in touch with many of your customers on a regular basis. You keep your ears and eyes open and have a great *feel* for the overall *feelings* of your guests. Or do you? The answer is much more complicated than that, and that's where surveys come into play.

Bias is Rampant in Response

Every interaction affects your customer's attitude, including active and passive components. In the industry, we categorize these interactions into 3 groups, the Three Ps: Product, Product and Place. Product is what you sell, people are your team, and place is the physical environment where sales occur. Your customer has some pre-existing expectations about your 3Ps. Meeting these expectations largely affects the customers feelings, or attitude about your business.

Customer's also come to you with very diverse mentalities. Their current state of mind will significantly impact their experience. Let's face it, a customer having a bad day may enter your establishment and act-out their bad feelings (*i.e. kick the dog*) on your staff. Your customer begins each business transaction pre-loaded with attitude and expectations beyond your control. It isn't until your first opportunity to interact with your customer that you can exert influence. Surveys can help identify when customers are having bad experiences because they ordered the same meal (reassess the menu) or because their car broke down and their cat ran away. Further, identifying these "pre-loaded" customers gives your business a chance to target these customers and turn around their day.

Talking to The Customer Isn't Enough

There are several traps in customer satisfaction that are easy to fall into if you're not wary. Perhaps the most common trap is for the manager or service team to *ask a question expecting a positive outcome*. It's human nature to be generally positive and conformational in our conversations, when a manager asks: "How is everything?" the typical response is "Great, thanks for asking." Let's pursue this even further, let's say that the manager gets a positive response 1 out of 20 times, and in that 5% (1/20) the manager took the opportunity to resolve some dissatisfaction. This is a great practice, and a chance to establish rapport with customers and to deal with some missed satisfaction, but it's not an accurate indicator of your overall customer satisfaction level. Even if you tracked the responses, it's not a reliable

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sample of your customers actual sentiments (human nature). That's not a bad thing, I would rather your managers and staff relate to customers on a personal basis, but it's not a survey system.

Narrow Surveys Don't Show the Whole Picture

Another big trap is the narrowly construed surveys. For example, the popular 'sad face' to 'happy face' survey. These types of surveys are too narrow in scope to give you real actionable information. More important that happy or sad, is what caused that reaction. That's information that you can work with.

Even the ever-popular Net Promoter Score can lull you into complacency. "My NPS is always indicating that my customers are promoters, so I must be doing it right." Actually, the NPS indicates a single dimension of your customer's future intent but not a direct measure of their satisfaction. Of course, there is a high correlation between satisfaction and the willingness to recommend, but co-relation doesn't translate as a 1:1 ratio.

Loyalty Programs Don't Necessarily Equal Loyal Customers

Many businesses have a sign-up loyalty program where the customer signs-up for a 'member-only' benefit. Loyalty programs can be great for driving repeat business, but not all 'loyal' customers may want to sign-up. Customer loyalty is NOT simply a customer who signs-up in your loyalty club. A loyal customer is one who will regularly choose your business over other competitive options because the customer has recent, and perhaps regular, experience that resulted in high-satisfaction.

Perhaps the largest trap is the reliance upon anecdotal feedback as an assurance that all is well with your customers. A well-crafted survey will reveal insights into your customers level of satisfaction regarding your 3Ps. When you are gathering real data through survey systems, you can enhance your 3Ps to provide the best experience possible, whatever that means for you, and for your customers.

AfterWords is an intelligent customer satisfaction software that delivers the most relevant questions for the most relevant responses. We provide actionable data where you need it the most. To find out more, please call us at 1-813-295-8033 or visit our website at AfterWordsCX.com