



Business



Customer Surveys - 10 Great Reasons to Conduct Surveys

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Do you know what your customers think of your business? Have you ever asked them? In a survey of 140 large Canadian companies, it was found that only 35 did any measurement and analysis of their interactions with their customers. Only 25 percent had information on how their customers felt about their products and services and these were big companies!

Conducting customer surveys is essential if you want to keep your existing customers and attract new ones. Surveys provide an opportunity to identify and resolve any outstanding issues that your customers may have.

Dissatisfied customers will usually call you if something goes wrong. But the vast majority of “indifferent” customers just go away and you never know why. In fact, a study of thousands of customers by one Canadian survey company found that:

- More than 40 percent of those who have a problem never tell the company about it;
- On average, 70 percent of customers defect due to service/quality problems that, if known, would have been relatively easy for the company to fix; and
- Customers who don't experience problems are twice as loyal as those who do.

Here are ten reasons you should conduct customer surveys:

1) Make Your Customers Feel Special - People love to give their opinions and it makes them feel like you genuinely care about their business. You are asking so that you can help serve them better in the future. Conducting surveys shows that you care about their business and yours.

2) Find Out What Is Important To Them - Do you know what your customers value most about your products/services? Are you focusing on the proverbial best mousetrap ever built that no one would ever buy? In surveys, you can look at the importance of product/service attributes in addition to the quality of these attributes.

3) Uncover Potential Problem Employees - How do your sales and customer service people treat your customers? Do they respond in a timely manner, resolve problems effectively and act in a friendly and professional way? Some customers may not feel comfortable confronting an issue and escalating a problem. In fact, as the prior statistic pointed out, 40 percent of customers don't raise a complaint. A survey is a gentle way to help you identify any issues before they become damaging or unmanageable.

4) Measure Product/Service Quality - Do you have a system in place to track product or component failure rates? Or the quality of your services? If you ask for customer feedback in a survey, you can collect this information. Then you can make improvements or find alternative suppliers if needed. Again, you can identify any issues before they lead to lost sales.

5) A Great Reason to Talk to Them - Communication with existing customers helps

nurture the relationship and keeps your customers coming back. A survey will not only gather invaluable information, but is another reason to contact them and keep the communication flowing. You might also want to call your best customers periodically and do an informal check in. You'd be surprised at how appreciative customers are to hear from the owner - you are making them feel valued.

6) Get an Objective View of Your Business - We all get so wrapped up in our day-to-day business operations that sometimes we need to take a step back and get an objective view of our business operations. Customers will give you objective data about your business. All you need to do is ask.

7) Find Missing Products/Services - What if a customer said, "I like Company A, but they don't have this one product I need. Therefore I go to Company B, because I can get everything I need." Surveys can help you identify the gaps or opportunities to introduce new complimentary products and services.

8) Measure Sub-Contracting Quality - Does your company sub-contract work to other companies? If you do, now your reputation and quality rests in the hands of someone else. Do you have a process in place to track the quality of their work? Or internal quality controls or service level agreements? Again, customer surveys are an effective way to monitor the quality of work done by others.

9) Uncover Missing or Inconsistent Processes - What if you had one employee who had your company pay for shipping products and you had another that didn't? How would a customer feel if they were not charged one time and then charged the next time? Surveys can identify inconsistencies like this. They can even have possible cost saving implications for your company as well.

10) Get a Feel for Future Business - Two questions can help you get a feel for whether your customers are satisfied and will buy from you again. First, you can ask them directly, "How likely is it that you will buy products/services from us in the future?" And/or you can ask, "How willing are you to recommend us to a friend or associate?" The answers to both of these questions will tell you who your "promoter" customers are and which ones are indifferent or not-so-happy. They can help you understand future repeat business and prioritize which customers have concerns that need to be addressed.

Utilizing surveys will help you find out what's going on with your customers, increase loyalty and keep them coming back! It's relatively straight forward to conduct a survey yourself, if you are willing to devote the time, energy and patience. With the new technology available, it's much easier to do surveys online with automated data collection. However, if you need assistance you can also have a professional do it for you.

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