

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PARTNERS

## The Commoditization of Satisfaction, Part 2



Two weeks ago we observed how the ubiquity of satisfaction monitoring programs appears to be undermining the authenticity of this very important customer-listening tool. We identified many of the foibles of current methodology. It seems only fair to revisit the topic, this time with eight constructive suggestions.

**1. Create an Action Plan:** No customer ought be contacted, nor any data collected without a process in place to act on the insights gained. Going under the title, Action Planning, such programs pre-assign measured items to department “owners”. This way as improvement is suggested, it is clear who will undertake the changes.

**2. Conduct a Census:** When a satisfaction questionnaire is distributed to only a sample of customers, it fails to communicate the business’s desire to hear from its all of its customers. While packaged goods manufacturers may be hard-pressed to conduct a census, for producers of: durables; specialty items; and services it’s not only achievable, it’s highly desirable.

**3. Measure Continually:** A satisfaction process that is conducted on an ‘event basis’ (only periodically) sends multiple messages – all detrimental. Employees may become “trained” to perform especially well during measurement periods, only to relax in off-times. Employees may also question how committed management is to only express concern on a periodic basis.

**4. Drive the Questionnaire with Your Database:** Far too many satisfaction programs are conducted isolated from the customer database. This results in the demeaning, typical first question: “Which of our products do you own?” If any part of a satisfaction process is targeted to strengthen relationships with customers, those become immediately undone with this one, flawed question.

**5. Disaggregate Your Results:** Reporting averages not only hides low scores, it also turns attention away from the percentage of truly delighted customers. And, need we remind ourselves, there is no average...it’s an imaginary median. Better to focus on the extremes; minimize dissatisfaction, maximize satisfaction.

**6. Communicate Your Findings:** The communication of satisfaction results is a broad field with many options. The ideal is to communicate results not only to employees but to customers as well. By involving customers in the reporting process a business ‘validates’ its processes. It demonstrates that the information is actually being analyzed and acted upon.

**7. Celebrate Results:** Results shouldn’t be rolled out in a punitive way. Even poor results can be announced in a way that coaches improvement. And, the tonality of the report flavors exactly how employees begin to feel about the total process.

**8. Solve Problems Raised by Individual Customers:** Don’t treat the process as simply data-gathering. Respond to those customers who identify real problems, providing them a solution.

Indeed, if properly practiced, satisfaction surveys can align a business to the needs and wants of its customers making the conduct of its business a “win-win” situation; both the business and customers benefitting. We know how to design effective, award-winning satisfaction measurement programs.

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