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Understanding Customers Better: How to Design a Customer Satisfaction Survey

We all know customer orientation is essential to the survival of our businesses. In markets with intense competition, there is a tremendous difference between the loyalty of merely satisfied and enthused customers. The degree of customer satisfaction is a strong predictor of customer retention, customer loyalty and product repurchase. Therefore, understanding how to improve customer satisfaction can make a huge difference to your bottom line.

But how do we find out whether our customers are enthused? The best way to find out is to ask them.

The path to customer orientation success requires significantly deeper customer insight. Well-crafted customer questionnaires allow companies to develop voice of the customer programs that provide ongoing and continuous access to customer insights. To achieve quantifiable feedback about customer attitudes your customer satisfaction survey should follow certain rules:

1. Keep your survey questions absolutely clear and simple. Respondents often do not read long introductions, directions, or questions completely.
2. Find out what is really important to your customers. Ask respondents to rate importance as well as performance in every area that's being evaluated.
3. Use a precise measurement scale. An ideal scale usually contains from seven to ten points (from "very poor" to "excellent") plus a no-opinion option. The fewer the response categories, the cruder the measurement.
4. Segment your customers. All customers are valuable, but all customers are not equally profitable. Completely random surveys tend to over represent the opinion of small customers. Possible kinds of segmentation are by key accounts, industry or distribution channel.
5. Benchmark the competition. High satisfaction scores can be misleading if your competition is performing at an even higher level. The best way to compare your performance results is with an anonymous survey of the customers of your major competitors, preferably using a third-party consulting firm. The results can identify your company's key areas of competitive strength and weakness.
6. Make the results actionable. Data from a satisfaction survey should always have some impact on your company (e.g. review of distribution channels, change of product design or higher investment in sales training). Your customers' feedback allows you to identify Key Performance Indicators (KPI), helping your management define and measure progress toward organizational goals. Especially important: Link

employee bonuses and recognition programs to "objective", measurable improvements in satisfaction scores.

The key to the success of your business is held by your customers. Only by understanding them better will you be able to unlock your business's future potential. Independent experts can assist your management designing a customer satisfaction survey that delivers actionable results. This will enable you to set your priorities for improvement so that you know you are putting your energies into those areas that are of the highest importance to your customers.

MFB Resultants – We Deliver Results.

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