

“Effective Communications Through Customer Satisfaction Surveys”

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A satisfied customer or client is a company's most valuable asset. Pete Drucker, the father of modern management said, “The role of a business is to create a customer.”

One of the most effective methods to maintain and grow a company's customer base is to communicate with customers through a customer satisfaction survey.

The customer satisfaction survey should be conducted every 12 to 24 months for the purpose of receiving valuable strategic feedback.

The core of the customer satisfaction survey is the questionnaire. The following is a list a guidelines that should be followed for the purpose of implementing an effective questionnaire.

Segment the questionnaire into three types or categories. These categories include:

- 1) Rating Questions
- 2) Yes/No Questions
- 3) Open-ended Questions

Rating questions are defined as rating from the numbers 1 through 10, one being poor through 10 being excellent. The items generally rated are factors such as price, quality, service etc.

Yes/No questions are used whenever short answers are required such as “Would you recommend our company to a friend?”

Finally open-ended questions are used when more detailed answers are required such as “What do we need to do differently to improve our business?”

The most effective way to conduct a customer satisfaction survey is to engage an objective independent third party to conduct the survey. This will help insure objectivity. Furthermore, most customers are more open to convey their thoughts to an independent third party.

Market Development Group, Inc. (MDG) has helped numerous clients increase their sales and profits through objective customer satisfaction surveys. Here are some examples of success stories summarized below:

- A client used the results of their customer satisfaction survey to sell the business to a Fortune 500 company because the buyer was impressed with the strong customer loyalty. This translated into a high ROI for the seller.
- Another MDG client was able to determine that the company was missing out on several alternative revenue opportunities from his clients. The company's sales and profits significantly increased within 6 months.
- There was an MDG client that discovered a major customer was in the process of looking for alternative suppliers. After receiving this feedback, the client was able to take corrective actions and was able to save his customer relationship.

Jack Welch, retired CEO of General Electric believes that a successful business should measure at least three factors. These factors are 1) cash flow, 2) employee satisfaction, and 3) customer satisfaction.

In summary, conducting customer satisfaction surveys are paramount to having a long-term successful business.

Eric W. Wiedenmann has held executive marketing and business development positions at Masco, Avery Dennison, British Petroleum and CBC Industries. He founded MDG (www.marketdevelopment.net) in 1998, which is based in Danville, California. MDG clients include Fortune 500 companies, mid-sized and startups nationwide. Mr. Wiedenmann received a B.S. in Economics and Marketing at Ashland University and an MBA from Northwestern University Kellogg Graduate School of Management. He is a lecturer at Ashland University and has published numerous articles. Mr. Wiedenmann has given business development speeches to various CEO and COO advisory groups. He lives in Danville, California with his wife, Anne, and son, William.