leadingedge

helping you better understand your customers and markets

Environmental and Utilities – Research Insights

Customer Satisfaction Surveys in the Environmental and Utility Sectors

Why do it?

Measuring Customer Satisfaction enables a business to identify areas of strength and weakness in its customer service and/or products, and most importantly, helps to identify and prioritise specific opportunities for improvement.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys can then be used to track changes in satisfaction levels over time and in response to specific initiatives. Many companies use Customer Satisfaction Surveys to help identify and exploit weaknesses in their competitor's product or service offering as well as benchmarking their own product and service against a main competitor.

Key points to consider

When setting up a Customer Satisfaction Survey, there are several key areas to consider:

- Customers to contact: Service companies, such as those in the laboratory sector, would want to interview an array of end-users by different markets. In contrast, equipment manufacturers would want to interview a mix of direct customers as well as distributors and, depending on the product, also specifiers or intermediaries. You also need to decide whether you want to interview the person or team who made the "buy" decision or those more involved from an operational point of view who have day to day contact. Typically, a mixture of both is best.
- How to measure satisfaction: There are a number of standard questions that can be used, usually ratings type questions. They will require adapting according to the type of customer and the relationship with them. For example, consider the difference in the customer relationship between an end-user buying a commodity product or service and a client that may be involved in a long-term project where continuous engagement with your company will be a feature.
- How to collect the data: Customers can be interviewed by telephone, face to face or by email. Telephone is usually the preferred means as quite detailed feedback can be collected at a reasonable cost. Face to face interviews are usually used if the feedback is quite complicated or technical or when setting up the overall survey. Email collection will require a good email database and response rate will be significantly lower – however, it works out cheaper per interview. Whichever technique is selected, a good and accurate customer database is essential with up to date phone numbers or email addresses.

How to get started

The first step is to decide on the overall objective of the project and how you plan to use the data. If budgets allow it is best to ask more qualitative type questions in addition to straight forward ratings questions as these provide more detailed feedback and can help explain reasons behind the numbers. This will also depend on the data collection techniques used as you will be able to collect better qualitative feedback by phone or face to face.

You then need to decide on the best way of undertaking data collection, either internally or by speaking to a third party professional. Ideally you should prepare a research brief whether you are doing this internally or externally - a generic template is available to download from the Leading Edge website.

We would always recommend an email to customers to warn them that they may be receiving a phone call or email asking them about their customer experience. This tends to improve response rates and gives them time to think about their answers.

A Customer Satisfaction Survey should be the first stage in improving your service to customers. The results of the survey should then be used to identify an action programme to improve poor performing areas. Follow up surveys can then be set up to measure progress.

If you have any questions please get in touch, we would be more than happy to help.
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