



## Beyond Customer Satisfaction

Until a few years ago, satisfaction measurement was reserved for large companies with deep pockets. Now that electronics have made it cheaper and more convenient to collect consumer's feedback surveying is proliferating.

Finally, many consumers may believe that their voice will be heard now.- Well, not quite yet!

Too many companies are easily satisfied with their customers' satisfaction. Most of the time, results from such surveys are misinterpreted. Satisfaction scores in many surveys are merely another expression of customers having nothing else to say.

But when you have ever had a bad, or lets say less than perfect experience with any company, or forbid an excellent experience that really cheered you up, where was the survey to record it? Apart from lack of convenience and simplicity to respond, many will abstain to provide feedback, lacking of confidence it will make any difference. This is the reason, why only one out of ten customers express their dismay in form of complaints!(1)

But this is exactly the information a company should actively search for to be able to build or maintain its competitive edge! Since consumer preferences are shifting with ever smaller margins of differentiation, **it is the little things that make the customers decide for or against you.**

When you look at the reasons, why companies are negligent towards collecting real feedback, you get the same answer everywhere. First, it is considered impossible to collect this info efficiently. Second, there is concern with statistical significance.

Modern telecommunication options open totally new avenues to collect feedback from customers in the very instance the motivation is highest for the individual to provide it. And if you react to it in a timely manner, the propensity of customers to enter into a dialogue will exponentially increase!

As far as statistical significance is concerned, you need to ask yourself who you want to learn from: the highly satisfied or dissatisfied or the ones that can't remember anything worth telling?

Even more concerning in current practices is the fact, that there is little or too slow reaction to findings. Despite the long questionnaires, little actionable information is available – and worst of all, you cannot go back to customers with “idiosyncratic” experiences and ask them in more detail, what really went wrong and how they felt about it.

Therefore, traditional satisfaction surveys need to be modified to deliver what you really need. Characteristics of such new approaches are:

- Continuous non-anonymous surveying
- Few questions
- Real time (electronic) collection
- In-depth follow-up with extreme responses
- Internal feed forward to origin of problem
- Fast change due to internal accountability

Such **Customer Response Concepts** organise the feedback process and eliminate inefficiencies with other business intelligence or complaint systems. The best companies even put this feedback and incidents into their CRM schemes to be able to customize their communication appropriately.

So how can you avoid that customer surveying is becoming a necessary exercise instead of the key source of operational excellence?

First, it is the insight, that higher excellence actually means lower cost, not higher. Second, that excellence (or lack thereof) is generated by people that are proud of what they are doing. What is more rewarding to anyone than pushing his/her own limits? There is no difference to your customer facing employees, if you make it fun and fair!

Third, you should **be obsessed with the idea to generate more feedback** and then really forward it to the parts of the organisation that need to take responsibility for it. This requires a **new feedback culture, that is not based on “blame and shame”, but on a common effort to become excellent.** For this to happen, you need players willing to play, a scoreboard and clear rules that are enforced in a fair process.

Then you will get what every employee is looking for: a fun and challenging place to work!

Guess who needs to make the first step?

(1) “The ultimate Question”. Fred Reichheld