

Monitoring Customer Satisfaction

ISO9001:2008 requires, in section "8.2.1 Customer satisfaction", organisations to monitor customer's perceived satisfaction.

Here are some thoughts on monitoring Customer satisfaction, without mentioning the word "questionnaire", which has lingering memories of BS5750 and all those supplier questionnaires!!

1. **Telephone survey** by the company or an independent body.
2. **Sales Reps and Tele-Sales** to ask for feedback in what appears to be in an informal way, but has some structure. A different facet each month?
3. **Accounts Departments**, the missed resources! Why are people slow paying their bills. Harvest the data. Credit Controllers record the various excuses for non-payment.
4. **Credit notes**. How many credit notes raised and why. Code the reasons for analysis in the NCR's.
5. **Customer returns for re-stocking**. Why are the products returned?
6. **Warranty claims**. Analyse the reasons and feed back to the designers. What proportion of Sales?
7. **Complaints**. What do you call a complaint? If it is in writing? If the customer says it is a complaint?
8. **Niggle Tally Sheet**. Run a weekly tally sheet for busy Tele-Sales with columns marked with the typical recurring problems, e.g. Miss-Picking, Shortages, Wrong Price, Wrong Discount, Late Delivery, Wrong Advice. They are happy to tick a box, but too busy to fill in a complaint form.
9. **Lost and new customers**. Are you gaining more new customers than you are losing?
10. **After sales follow up calls**. Shows you care, and you may pick up new business too.
11. **Service calls**. Why the call out, how are we doing, any new equipment required? Also a selling opportunity.
12. **Market research** and other peoples Market Research that is in the public domain.
13. **Focus groups** of customers, on-line forums or user groups who get together over a glass of wine to give you honest feedback.
14. **Trade and accreditation organisations**. First-Point for the oil industry, where a database is maintained of what the Customer and Supplier thought of each others performance during a contract. This is available to all subscribing parties.
15. **"Mystery shopper"** from your company or independent organisation who tries your products or service.
16. **"Which"**. Consumer organisations may have reviewed your company and products.
17. **Benchmarking**. Sounds good but can be difficult get confidential information. What are your competitors publicly stated performance objectives and how do you compare? Next day delivery, call out times, returns policy, complaints handling, etc.
18. **Trade shows**. Ask people what they think of your company. Also do this undercover and make a note of the results.
19. **A feedback section on the company web site**.
20. **CRM Web Sites and Programmes**. Each customer has their own log-on and can place orders, track orders, view their account, see the names of their contacts, fill in on-line comments, send messages, suggestions and complaints. Not on the web? Then there are programmes to track and record all customer contacts.
21. **Err..... I didn't mention questionnaire!** Seriously, Questionnaires are very useful but, the questions should be focused and meaningful to you. Select your sample of customers and prospects carefully. Make sure it goes to the right named people and it should be from a 'neutral' person in your company. Try to keep them short and do it by phone, email, prepaid return envelope or fax-back number. Act on the results and go back to the customer and advise on action taken, where applicable.

The first problem is to sell to your staff why they would wish to monitor customer satisfaction. Needs a 'No blame no shame' culture. We all know how to cook the data for the ISO9000 Assessor. After all, how many approved suppliers lists are ever seen by anyone other than by the Auditor?

Companies should want to capitalise on their good points and address areas of deficiency. This is the very, very early warning system that there is a problem in the market place. Just keeping your eye on the bottom line is too late. You should have reacted a year ago!