



Cooperative Management Series

Conducting Customer Satisfaction Surveys

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<http://osufacts.okstate.edu>

A cooperative has to be able to communicate with their customers in order to guarantee customer satisfaction. The easiest way to find out what the company is doing “right” and what the company is doing “wrong” according to their customer is to have them fill out a survey. The survey does not have to be long and contain unnecessary information. In fact, the survey just needs to contain questions that will obtain the cooperative information that will be useful in finding out who their competitors are and how they need to improve or stay steady to keep going strong.

Statement of Objectives

The key to a successful customer-satisfaction program is the survey guide. To create an effective survey guide you must first determine specific goals and objectives for the research. The goal of the customer-satisfaction program is to develop a set of actionable strategies that will improve repeat customer sales. A survey cannot cover every topic, so choose your objectives with care. A few examples of specific project objectives:

- To determine overall customer satisfaction with our products or services
- To identify customer perceptions of “key areas of weakness” and “key areas of strength”
- To measure and prioritize areas where improvement will most affect customer satisfaction
- To identify key competition and determine competitive position
- To determine the extent pricing affects repeat customer sales
- To develop a means to measure over time, the effect that increased customer satisfaction has on repeat customer sales

Being able to figure out a statement of objectives will serve for both an outline for the survey guide and as a framework for analyzing the results of the survey. Make sure that the cooperative has a specific goal at which they are trying to obtain by having their customers fill out a survey.

Project Scope

Once the “Statement of Objectives” has been developed then you will need to define the scope of the project. The “Project Scope” should answer some very important questions.

What group of customers you will interview? Are you concerned with new customers, strategic customers, or all customers? When will you interview them and how often will you interview them? Will this be the only time you interview your target group? Will you do it on an annual basis or a bi-annual basis?

How you will segment (group) the customers you interview? Customers can be grouped by geographic region, by sales volume, by industry, or by another category. How many of your customers you will interview? How you will interpret the results? (What type of results will you produce.) What special considerations need to be reviewed? Will the interviews be identified or anonymous.

The “Statement of Objectives” provides you with an outline for developing the survey guide, the “Project Scope” provides you with a framework of completing the project. The better the foundation the greater the likelihood of success; take time to craft a clear and concise project objective and a well-defined project scope.

Project Methodology

With this next step it allows you to measure your progress against a specific set of goals and time line. Breaking it into phases helps to define the specific tasks that will be completed. The three phases at which this project can be completed is:

Phase 1 — Project Kickoff

- Task 1: Meet with the project team to review the project objectives, project scope, and to assign key project tasks
- Task 2: Develop the content of the survey guide
- Task 3: Create a final form
- Task 5: Test the survey guide and collection process
- Task 6: Identify the source and availability of customer names and mail and e-mail addresses

Phase 2 — Survey Implementation

- Task 1: Conduct a live pretest of the survey with team members
- Task 2: Distribute the survey invitation to respond to the survey to the customers
- Task 3: Monitor survey progress
- Task 4: Distribute reminder notifications if required

Phase 3 — Results Collection and Reporting

- Task 1: Collect the survey results and build the results database
- Task 2: Clean and re-duplicate results
- Task 3: Analyze survey results and produce final report
- Task 4: Provide feedback of process for improvements with next survey

With a well defined set of objectives, scope, and methodology, it is time to start implementing the research. Two of the most important steps are the creation of the survey guide and the analysis of the survey results.

Creating the Customer Satisfaction Survey Guide

Customer-satisfaction guides will, and should be, different for each business. An example of a framework for developing your own survey guide:

Section A: Customer Information

1. Customer name and address
2. Products or services being used
3. Account manager and/or service representative
4. Length of time we have been providing products/services to customer

Section B: Customer Satisfaction

1. Customer perceptions of our “key areas of weakness”
2. Customer perceptions of our “key areas of strength”
3. Identify areas where improvement will most affect customer satisfaction
4. Prioritize areas where improvements will most affect customer satisfaction
5. Measure overall customer satisfaction

Section C: Factors Determining Future Business

1. Effect of pricing levels and pricing structure
2. Competitive landscape
3. Likelihood to continue purchasing products/services
4. Key factors affecting future buying decisions

Section D: Closing

1. Thank you for participating
2. How results will be used
3. Inform time frame for next survey
4. Thank for continued support

The first section includes customer demographics, so you want to make sure you capture information you will need to group your customers when you analyze the results. The second and third sections focus on customers requirements and/or expectations.

In measuring satisfaction, you will need to have a base line against which to measure your performance. Another option is to compare the satisfaction of your customers to their satisfaction with a competitor. The measure of satisfaction over time or benchmark performance of a particular function of another industry is some more options. Any individual option or all of them together can be used when measuring customer service.

Analyzing and Reporting the Results

Analyzing and reporting the results can often be the most difficult task, but it should be straightforward if the correct steps had been taken. When analyzing customer satisfaction remember to keep your goal in mind. Increasing customer satisfaction is not the goal the goal is to increase repeating business. The first step in developing these actionable strategies is to identify what part of the customer relationship is affecting repeat business. We can then prioritize these based on a number of factors including:

- Our ability to develop an effective response within an appropriate time frame
- The effect that the response will have on our objective
- The cost of developing/ implementing the response

There are many different ways at which to analyze customer satisfaction, but keep in mind that the complicated techniques are available and might provide more insight.

The Feedback Loop

The feedback loop is critical to continue the improvement necessary to achieve ongoing success. With customer satisfaction research this means developing a process that continually measures the effectiveness of the customer satisfaction programs put in place as the result of the survey.

The objective of the survey is educate yourself about customer satisfaction and how to repeat customer sales. With brainstorming among your colleagues you can come up with the major issues to research and target customer groups.

Conclusion

Overall, a customer satisfaction survey is the easiest way to develop an actionable strategy that will improve repeat customer sales. Having repeat customer sales should be the company’s goal. Just remember to follow the outline:

- Statement of Objectives
- Project Scope
- Project Methodology
- Creating the Customer Satisfaction Survey Guide
- Analyze and Report the Results
- The Feedback Loop

Make sure that there are funds available for a customer satisfaction survey. Decide if you are going to design and manage the survey yourself or outsource it to a qualified market research company. Alert your management, customer service staff, and field sales reps that a survey is underway. Finally, prepare an action plan for dealing with survey findings.

**Anytown Cooperative Association
Member Survey**

1. How many acres do you farm? _____ Total acres _____ Cultivated acres
2. How many years have you been farming? _____ Years
3. What is your age?
 ____ 20-29 ____ 30-39 ____ 40-49 ____ 50-59 ____ 60-69 ____ 70-79 ____ 80 or above
4. How would you classify yourself? _____ Full-time farmer _____ Part-time farmer
5. Do you have on-farm grain storage? _____ No _____ Yes _____ Capacity _____ Bushels
 If yes, what percentage of your grain do you store on-farm in a typical year? _____ %
7. Do you expect to increase your on-farm grain storage capacity in the next five years?
 ____ Yes ____ No ____ Maybe
8. What percent of your grain do you typically deliver grain direct to a terminal or river elevator? _____ %
9. Which Cooperative location do you use most frequently?
 ____ Location A ____ Location B ____ Location C ____ Location D ____ Location E ____ Location F
10. What percentage of your inputs do your purchase through Anytown Cooperative?
 _____ % Fertilizer _____ % Chemicals _____ % Fuel
11. What percentage of your grain do you market through Anytown Cooperative? _____ %
12. For each business area please indicate Anytown Cooperative's major competitor and rate our cooperative's performance.

Grain Handling-Major Competitor: _____

Anytown Coop Rating	Better	Similar	Worse
Board Price			
Location			
Unloading time			
Grading and discounts			

Fertilizer-Major Competitor: _____

Anytown Coop Rating	Better	Similar	Worse
Price			
Variety of product available			
Timeliness of application services			
Accuracy of application services			

Chemicals-Major Competitor: _____

Anytown Coop Rating	Better	Similar	Worse
Price			
Variety of products available			
Timeliness of application services			
Accuracy of application services			

Seed Cleaning-Major Competitor: _____

Anytown Coop Rating	Better	Similar	Worse
Cost			
Timeliness			
Quality			

Overall-Major Competitor: _____

Anytown Coop Rating	Better	Similar	Worse
Employee attitude			
Employee knowledge			
Condition of facilities			
Overall service			

13. Do you use any of the following services?

- Bulk fuel
- Service station (oil change, etc)
- Tire repair
- Card-troll/key-troll

14. If the cooperative determined that the service station/tire services revenues are not covering costs would you recommend:

- Increase charges to cover costs
- Discontinue service station/tire operations

15. What do you like best about Anytown Cooperative?

16. What do you like least about Anytown Cooperative?

17. What could Anytown Cooperative do differently to earn more of your business?

Thanks for helping us serve you better. Please feel free to provide any other suggestions or comments in the space before. We want to earn your business!

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