

Guest *and* Customer Satisfaction: What Can It **REALLY** Tell You?

Customer Satisfaction is something that virtually all businesses have an interest in understanding. A key question though is how well is the information utilized to accurately understand perceptions and their impact on the business.

For clarity, in this article instead of using guest or customer interchangeably, I will use customer referring to both.

Whether you are a large organization that has a structured feedback process based on surveys and in some cases, focus groups, or the corner store where the owner speaks daily to his / her customers, understanding perception is extremely important, or at least it should be. I say, at least it should be because, especially in large organizations, sometimes it's a numbers "game" which is tied to bonuses and may not deliver critical information that is essential to helping improve and grow a business. I would even go so far as to suggest that the corner store conversations may well be more valuable than some of the survey processes in place today.



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However, I digress as my intention here is to focus on when you have substantive data, what can/should it be telling you. Broadly speaking, feedback tells you a couple of critical things: Will the customer return and buy from you again, and even more importantly, will they recommend that someone else buys your "product." So the fundamental part of the perception feedback is whether you continue your revenue stream with repeat business and increase your numbers through recommendations. Pretty obvious! This though only scratches the surface of what customer feedback can tell an organization, regardless of size.

On one side of the usage chart is Marketing. Depending on the nature of the information returned and gathered, a profile of a customer can be discerned, put into a database (CRM), and promotions can be designed in order to garner more business. On the other side of the chart is Operations. It is this operational data that can tell an invaluable story about an organization. The eyes into the soul, or should we say the culture of the business.

In a manufacturing operation, there are quality checks all along the production process and at the "end of the line" there is a final QA check. Sometimes effective, and at times not adequate, considering the number



