



A Rough Guide To Getting Customer Feedback

Firstly, let's clear up the jargon. Customers, clients, service users, beneficiaries and members all mean the same thing. They are the people/organisations using your services. Any organisation that is committed to delivering high quality services will have an interest in how the people using the services feel about them. However, it's not unusual for organisations to feel too caught up with the day-to-day task of delivering services, to make time to stop and ask their 'customers' if they are getting what they want or need.

By requesting feedback from customers, organisations get a better understanding of the needs and expectations of their users. This is vital information for an organisation wanting to deliver the best possible service. Furthermore, it will save you time in the long run. So here is a rough guide of things you may want to consider in order to get your **customer results**.

Who should I ask?

Before you can begin to ask for feedback, it is important to consider who your 'customers' are. Your organisation has a range of customers. For example, a community centre might provide different services for different members of the community, rent space to other organisations and receive funds from funding bodies. These are some of their customers. It's also worthwhile to think about how different people use the same services in a different way.

Once you have identified your different customers, you'll need to work out what you want to know, and how to get feedback. Approaching each customer group separately can help to really focus on their particular needs.

What should I ask?

A useful way to think about this is to ask yourself 'What will be most important aspects of the service to each type of customer?'

- ✘ **Image** – including first impressions, openness, reputation, positive values, physical appearance of the premises and the people.
- ✘ **Products and Services** - Are products and services up to scratch, well priced / good value, flexible enough? Do they reflect the values of the organisation?
- ✘ **Delivery** – The way you deliver your products and services and care for your customers. Are they provided in the right way or at the right time of day? Does communication work well? Do both staff and volunteers provide a good service?

- ✘ **Loyalty and attachment** - The willingness of a customer to continue using the service and recommend it to other people is key to the sustainability of any organisation. However, customer loyalty and satisfaction are not the same thing. A customer may be happy with your service, but may not necessarily be loyal because he or she may be able to get a similar service elsewhere. Loyalty comes about when your service users are exceptionally satisfied, return for repeat service/products or when they have a particular emotional attachment to the organisation.

Conducting a Pilot Survey

A pilot survey of a sample of your customers will help you find out your key areas, before carrying out a broader survey.

How to ask?

Think about how your customers will feel about participating. You don't want to burden them with anything too time consuming or complex. Here are a few methods you could consider:

- ✘ Suggestion Box.
- ✘ Questionnaires (by post / face to face/ email or telephone).
- ✘ Interviews (either structured or semi structured).
- ✘ Feedback / Evaluation Sheets.
- ✘ Focus Group.
- ✘ Complaints Procedure.

When to ask?

It's possible to collect information on an ongoing basis from your customers. Think about 'good' times to ask questions. The following list suggests some different points in time. You could use a combination of these. A good time to ask for feedback may be:

- ✘ When you are developing a new service or activity
- ✘ When you first meet your customers
- ✘ At regular intervals, using a regular format of survey or interview. This could be monthly, quarterly, or annually for example.
- ✘ Continuously (ie. A comments book or suggestion box)
- ✘ At the end of a project, activity or specific training.

What kind of information to collect?

There are two main types of information you can collect. Firstly, information that gives you countable facts and figures (quantitative). For example, this might be how many people use your services and how often. Secondly, you can collect information which is more about people's opinions (qualitative).

It's also useful to gather information about who is using your service. For example

- age, ethnicity, gender, any special needs which your customers may have. Only ask for personal details if it's absolutely essential and be clear that the information will be treated anonymously.

What do I do with the results?

Once you have measured how satisfied your customers are, you need to make use of the results in order to improve your services. You could consider the following:

- ✘ Set up a system to ensure your results get used in planning new services.
- ✘ Set targets each year within your plans, to work towards improving your customer results.
- ✘ Compare results over a period of time so you can spot trends.
- ✘ Let your customers know about your results. This in itself can help improve relationships with your customers.

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