

PARAMARQ

An Introduction to Customer Surveys: Types of Survey

Paramarq Ltd
18b Charles Street
Mayfair
London W1J 5DU
T: 020 7667 6350
F: 020 7667 6550
E: info@paramarq.com
W: www.paramarq.com

1. Why Survey Your Customers?

There is increasing research to show more successful businesses have better customer relationships.

Retained clients have lower management and running costs . They can also, if genuinely satisfied provide, via recommendation, a source of high quality sales leads, from whom it is easier to win new business.

Unfortunately, though, research has shown one dissatisfied customer has a more powerful, negative effect than nine happy customers.

Customers surveys are carried out to asses the causes of both customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction and to ensure the problems exposed are addressed.

2. Types of Customer Survey

There are several forms of customer survey.

2.1. Email / Web Based Surveys

Email and web based surveys are comparatively inexpensive and large numbers of customers can be surveyed rapidly. Software packages exist to then automatically collate this information into standardised reports with statistical information, which is breakdown data into various categories. Essentially they are an automated version of mail and fax based surveys

The problems with this approach are that:

- Response rates are low
- The survey respondents are likely to be biased towards the relatively junior, less pressured, individuals.
- Anti-spam software may recognise your company as a source of spam so future emails are blocked.
- The responses are likely to be more superficial as respondents do not feel their participation in the survey will benefit them, as they believe the survey size is relatively large.
- The approach once set up, essentially tends to be robotic and inflexible most questions require simple answers and it is difficult for context to be considered.

2.2. Telephone Surveys

Telephone surveys are more expensive than web based surveys.

They are best suited to gaining access to numbers of relatively low value customers, especially where the customer base is geographically diverse.

There are two major different types of telephone survey robotic and intelligent.

2.2.1. Robotic Telephone Based Customer Surveys

Robotic customer surveys are the least expensive form of telephone surveys. Interviewers are in essence little more than talking “web pages”.

Large numbers of customers are contacted requesting relatively simple information, by staff often operating in a call centre environment,

The interviews are quite short with some more “productive” interviewers achieving over 30 interviews per day.

These types of surveys are best suited to lower grades of staff, for surveys seeking single word responses to each question.

2.2.2. Intelligent Telephone Customer Surveys

Intelligent surveys require the use of experienced staff who are able to talk intelligently to customers at all levels of the organisation. As a result steps are taken to ensure interview staff are credible to senior management. Before contacting customers they need to be fully briefed on your organisation: its products, culture, systems and shared values.

Interviews tend to be semi-structured to ensure that issues from one interview can be carried over to others and that discussions can be a little more detailed.

Questions are more open in nature. Normally 4-10 customers are interviewed per day and as a result a telephone survey can identify important issues.

The main problems with this type of interviews are that:

- They can be subject to many disruptions
- The time made available by customers to complete telephone surveys may be quite limited
- Over the telephone It is more difficult to gain access to more senior staff, gain their confidence, and discuss openly relatively complex issues.

2.3. Field Surveys

Field surveys can interview more senior customer staff, normally at their offices and build upon the intelligent telephone survey approach. It is particularly suited to conditions where:

- Customer numbers are relatively low
- Customers are relatively important
- Interviewees are more senior
- Information has a higher value
- Information is required in depth

These are designed to ensure a thorough understanding of the perspective of your customers. Interviews normally last about an hour, though they can take up much longer. Questions tend to be open ended and semi-structured requiring detailed information gathering and reporting.

Interviewers need to thoroughly understand the business and the pressures upon it before talking to customers so that assertions can be gently and intelligently probed.

The results of this approach though the most costly are likely to yield more detailed and valuable information.

3. Conclusion

No one type of survey is the best – the method used should reflect the importance of the information required.