



INMOMENT POINT OF VIEW

How to Achieve Meaningful Listening Through Surveys

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HEARING THE WHOLE PICTURE

Listening to customers is one of the best ways for brands to gather rich data about the experiences they provide, but listening *meaningfully* demands more than just putting an ear to the ground.

Traditional forms of listening usually involve long-winded surveys that focus on single points within brand channels. These surveys may also take a spray-and-pray approach, asking about everything the brand cares about but that customers may not. Finally, brands may also spend too much time focusing solely on solicited customer feedback, which results in fragmented data.

Fortunately, brands can be more versatile when it comes to collecting feedback. Here's a succinct look at how to achieve meaningful survey listening.

1. LIVE IT UP

A book-like survey packed with questions doesn't exactly scream excitement.

One of traditional survey design's biggest drawbacks is that it emphasizes gratuitous length, an impersonal voice, and, frankly, uninteresting questions.

Additionally, brands that inundate customers with multiple surveys risk triggering survey fatigue, inadvertently compelling those individuals to give up on surveys altogether. Finally, these surveys tend to focus more on qualitative metrics than simply conversing with customers.

Rather than rely on these ideas, brands should embrace more versatile design principles that are much more effective at soliciting quality feedback from customers. Multimedia feedback, for example, is an *essential* element of any modern survey. This functionality enables customers to provide richer, more personalized feedback via uploaded images and video. This type of feedback is a win-win—customers can more easily express feedback in their own terms, and brands can more easily see what went wrong or what customers love about an experience.



Modern surveys should still make use of written questions, of course, but it pays to keep them short. Organizations that keep their questions succinct are much more likely to receive feedback than companies that don't. Using a lively writing tone helps, too!

2. INCLUDE EVERYONE

Too many surveys focus on a specific point within a customer experience (CX), which results only in a skewed, isolated view of what customers think about their interactions with a brand. Organizations that employ this strategy miss out on an opportunity to build a more holistic, all-encompassing understanding of that journey.

Brands can combat this problem by acknowledging that customer journeys are as individual as customers themselves, and that a survey designed to accompany those individuals throughout their journeys can procure valuable data. Additionally, brands must build surveys that incorporate feedback from a wide variety of multi-channel sources, including non-buyers. Brands must also make peace with the fact that feedback is part of the customer experience, so don't be afraid of it.

Though casting such a wide net may sound challenging.

Brands that perform the hard work of including everyone in their feedback strategy will understand every facet of every interaction that customers undertake with them.

They can transcend learning about one stage of an established customer journey to understand, for example, why some would-be buyers go elsewhere, or why long-term customers remain loyal to a brand.

Organizations that arm themselves with this understanding will be much better equipped to address potential issues in their experience or learn more about why existing customers enjoy it. These learnings can be used to achieve meaningful change and, ultimately, transformative success. That's why it pays to include everyone in a survey strategy.

3. GIVE CUSTOMERS A REASON TO CARE

As we discussed in section one, many modern customers find surveys unpalatable if they come jam-packed with questions. As if that problem wasn't formidable enough, brands risk compounding a long-form survey's unattractiveness if all its questions are only about things that the brand cares about.

Fortunately, the fix here is relatively simple. Brands need to enclose open-ended questions about what *customers* care about. Sure, figuring out what customers care about can be challenging, but surveys attuned to those concerns stand a far greater chance of garnering meaningful feedback. A survey aimed squarely at customer concerns demonstrates to those individuals that a brand cares about what they care about, compelling them to feel engaged and that they can make a difference.

A leading car dealership in the UK put these principles to use while redesigning its own feedback system. By asking open-ended but succinct questions about customers' chief concerns, the dealership was able to identify and solve deep-rooted customer journey weaknesses and increase its unit sales by 25 percent.

Once organizations gather this feedback, they should take action on that intel and execute initiatives that move the needle in a meaningful way.

Valuable insights are helpful, but companies can only make something of that feedback if they take action.

Doing so can both improve the experience that brands provide and signal to customers that the brand is, in fact, listening to them.

This is why it's important to let customers express what's important to them in their own words.

4. BRING IT ALL TOGETHER

As we briefly touched on up top, another danger that traditional listening methods bring to brands is an exclusive focus on feedback solicited from customers. Ultimately, this approach results in disparate and, frankly, incomplete data sets. While companies can still focus on improving CX metrics with this approach, brands will have a much harder time linking those metrics to business outcomes this way.

It's time for companies to opt for something more comprehensive: centralized aggregation. Rather than keep their data siloed, brands should pour all of their customer, social, employee, CRM, financial, and operational data sets into a single location. This approach may sound messy at first, but consider that putting all of this data into one place makes it far easier to gain a complete view of a company's CX efforts.

It's important for brands to build surveys that are tied to desired data sources. If a company is trying to gauge its sales team's performance, for example, that brand could design a survey that

measures selling standards. Companies can also use this method to incorporate the context unique to any business goal or situation into a survey.

This approach also enables CX practitioners to prove an outcome crucial to continuing an experience initiative: business impact. It can be challenging enough to prove a CX project's ROI without siloed data—putting all of a brand's info in one place enables practitioners to link data sets to each other to prove their initiatives' impact and the ROI therein.

THE ART OF INTENTFUL LISTENING

The best surveys aren't set in stone. Rather, effective surveys are limber. They incorporate context, business goals, and encourage customers to share what they care most about. Surveys

are at their most effective when they're fluid and can be adapted to multiple business goals and objectives. This also allows brands to have a much easier time establishing the business impact of their programs (and for practitioners to more readily prove ROI).

By adopting these ideas into their survey design, companies can better know which issues are holding their processes back and what compels loyal customers to keep coming back. They can arm themselves with specific findings that better enable them to take action and achieve transformative success, and they can stop asking questions they already have the answers to. All of this starts with effective listening, and effective listening starts with more flexible, contextual, and inclusive survey design.

