



# Unstructured Customer Feedback: The Key to Unlocking the True Voice of Customer



# Say What You Want

When designing customer experience (CX) programs and the individual surveys involved, we CX professionals tend to spend a lot of time thinking about the questions we will ask or the metrics we will collect. And, of course, these elements are important because we want to connect customer—and employee—feedback to the business and to business outcomes.

While these more structured aspects of surveys ensure that we receive feedback about areas that are important to the organization, what about the moments in the experience that matter to our customers and employees? In that case, it is really the unstructured feedback from open-ended questions that truly conveys the voice of customer (VoC).

Open-ended questions give customers the opportunity to share details about their great experiences, to recognize or reward employees who created great experiences, or to provide more details about their previous ratings. On the flip side, open-ended questions also allow customers to complain about experiences that did not meet their expectations or share reasons why they are not happy with a brand.

Either way, unstructured questions provide opportunities for brands to capture the true voice of the customer—customers' own topics, tone, and words. That's why we'll be walking you through best practices for collecting unstructured customer feedback, understanding the value of that feedback, and then taking action to ultimately improve experiences. Let's get started!



# Sources of Unstructured Feedback

Unstructured feedback gives us the opportunity to broaden our horizons and consider additional sources of information. Social media and the unsolicited complaints that a company receives bolster the fact that your customers are willing and able to provide feedback through any channel available. So, we don't have to limit our use of unstructured feedback only to the open-ended questions within surveys. We can consider both solicited and unsolicited sources of unstructured feedback.

We provide a summary of great sources of true Voice of Customer in the graphic below.

## Unstructured Feedback Sources:

### SOLICITED



**Responses to open-end questions within surveys**



**Intercept comment boxes (i.e., feedback buttons within websites)**

### UNSOLICITED



**Social media**



**Complaints—to your organization or to a regulatory organization (e.g., CFPB for Financial Services organizations)**



**Call recordings/ call notes**



**Video recordings**

It's important to remember to think beyond opportunities for your organization to solicit the voice of customer. You also need to build opportunities into your CX strategy that allow you to listen to customers where they are—and on the platform they are using to share their voice.

# Harnessing the Power of Unstructured Feedback

## True Voice of Customer

There is no greater opportunity to understand how well your organization is delivering for customers than through unstructured feedback. As previously mentioned, open-ended survey responses and unsolicited feedback allow customers to express themselves and use their own words to provide praise, describe their experiences, voice a complaint, or make recommendations for improvements. So, listen to your customers!

Don't forget to encourage your leadership to listen to customers, too. Audio and video customer recordings are a great way to share intelligence with your greater organization. Allowing your organization to see and/or hear customers' voices makes everything more real.

## What's Missing

One downfall of having exclusively structured surveys with closed-ended questions is that there is always the possibility that you may be missing something. A well-worded, well-placed, and open-ended question can help fill any gaps and pick up on things a structured survey might miss.

When given the opportunity, your customers will provide feedback about any impactful experience—whether it was great or terrible. Don't limit yourself to the questions that you can think to ask; leave it up to your customers to provide the feedback they need to provide.

## Emerging Trends

One important benefit of listening to the true voice of customer through unstructured responses is the opportunity to identify and track emerging issues, trends, or additional focus areas. Organizations that truly listen to their customers and categorize their responses through text analytics are able to identify when uncategorized issues or new types of comments are being provided.

In the same way that it can help you identify what you're missing through structured surveys, unstructured feedback can help highlight when an organization should start paying attention to a particular issue that may influence or impact experiences.

A great example of this benefit is when a company learns that customers' expectations have shifted based on the experiences they have had with another brand, or when website functionality is broken because of a recent modification



to the platform. In both cases, the company learns that it needs to start taking action to match the experience of its competitor or alter the underlying platform issue.

## Impact

When you use text analytics to mine unstructured feedback, you get intelligence from two powerful indicators:

1. The tone or sentiment of comments
2. The magnitude of the comments being provided.

Together, these pieces of information indicate the impact of the comments open-ended questions can gather. If a larger number of comments (magnitude) are being made about the new company logo, and those comments are mostly negative, the company has evidence to support a change or redirection. If an organization can track sentiment and the magnitude of comments received along the customer journey, it will give itself

an effective way to leverage strengths and address pain points to ultimately improve experiences.

## Root Cause

Let's say that your NPS has dropped, scores are trending downward, and your customers are not happy—where is the first place you should look? True voice of customer data through unstructured feedback—whether solicited or not—helps highlight the culprit(s). Using your unstructured feedback can isolate the reasons behind score changes, regardless of whether you're utilizing text analytics or not. To fully support a continuous improvement process, organizations need to understand the reasons why issues or problems exist and isolate their root causes. This allows them to understand the best approach toward transforming experiences and thus improving.

# What's Needed to Recognize Value

Unstructured feedback is valuable in and of itself, as it contains customers' words and tone. But understanding and actionability can only come from unstructured feedback via a few key tools.

- 1. Text Analytics:** Text analytics provide structure to unstructured data. They should provide sentiment (tone), an indicator of magnitude (summary of categorization), and fully cover the intent of customers' comments. For example, a customer may provide both negative and positive feedback in the same response. We don't want to miss out on any of what is said.
- 2. Journey-Based Classification:** Viewing unstructured feedback from the viewpoint of the customer journey can help identify whether you are exceeding, meeting, or falling short of customers' expectations at any point in their journey. For

example, if a customer provides negative feedback about a call center experience, maybe it's because they first tried to self serve through a digital channel. Understanding the customer journey and the feedback being provided will help you know whether you are fixing the right things for the right customers.

- 3. Themes:** Categorization via text analytics is very insightful, but when you pair unstructured feedback categorization with ratings of the structured aspects of surveys, you can start to develop broader themes that warrant improvement. For example, if your organization receives low ratings for "responsiveness" and top customer comments relate to "time spent waiting in line" and "layout of the store," you know what aspects of responsiveness may relate to how the store manages crowd control.



Remember, having all the right tools in place will only get you part of the way there. Your tools are only as effective as your ability to take action with them. Your goal in understanding your unstructured feedback is to make necessary transformations, then realize improved experiences for your customers—and the business benefits those improved experiences bring!

# Large Hotel & Entertainment Company Leverages Unstructured Feedback to Prevent Churn

One of our clients, a large hotel and entertainment brand, noticed that it was receiving lower scores from guests at a specific location after those guests had checked out. But because of the nature of the simple metric, the chain could only see that guests were unsatisfied with their stay, not why they were so unsatisfied. In order to tackle this problem head-on, the brand decided to dig deeper into its unstructured data.

Using InMoment's industry-leading text analytics, the brand was able to pinpoint the issue in its unstructured data. It turned out that an air filtration issue was allowing smoke from the casino to enter specific rooms. With the culprit identified, the brand was able to take swift action to repair the filtration problem so that future guests would have clean room air and leave feeling refreshed after their stay.

If the brand hadn't had the ability to dive into its unstructured data, it could have risked even more disgruntled customers, which would've led to increased customer churn rates, lower referral rates, lower bookings, and, ultimately, revenue loss. But with text analytics tuned to monitor customer comments, the brand was able to get to "the why" and turn things around!





# Getting Started with Stories

At this point, you know that the power of unstructured data cannot be understated. But how do you get started?

Our team of experts is here to help you tailor your text analytics and strategy to best fit your organization. Chat with us today or take a look at the following assets to learn more:

- [Understanding to Improve: Getting the Most Out of Customer & Employee Data with World-Class Text Analytics](#)
- [How You Listen Matters: Modernizing Your Methods & Approach to Customer Feedback](#)
- [How to Leverage Your Experience Ecosystem to Achieve Desired Outcomes](#)

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