



# How to Leverage All Your Data, Not ‘Just’ Survey Feedback, to Meaningfully Improve Customer Experiences

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These days, it seems like you can't buy anything without getting some sort of survey right after the fact. Surveys are powerful tools for gathering insights and have been for many years, but between their intense proliferation and younger shoppers' reluctance to complete them, response rates have declined significantly in recent years. This presents a data collection challenge for the brands that want to hear back from their customers and create Experience Improvement (XI), one that technologies like SMS and QR codes can only go so far to solve.

Organizations can (and should) attempt to solve this problem by constantly reevaluating their survey design, but there's another avenue to pursue here, and that's going beyond

traditional surveys and feedback gathering methods to get to know your customers as people. Focus on this goal instead of improving response rates, and you'll have a greater amount of better data with which to gain a holistic view of your customers. In other words, the end result of going beyond surveys is more human connections and a stronger bottom line. Let's take a closer look at four powerful sources of non-survey data:

1. **Location-Tracking Data**
2. **Purchasing Data**
3. **Web Searches**
4. **Social Media & Online Reviews**



## 1. LOCATION-TRACKING DATA

Location-tracking data has quickly become one of the most popular sources of unsolicited information for brands to use in getting to know customers. At first, this data was used mostly to track customers who came to a brand location—the best Experience Improvement platform vendors, though, allow organizations to know which competitors their customers are visiting. Closer to home, this technology has become sophisticated enough to track customer movements around a store. Taken together, these capabilities can yield invaluable intel on not ‘just’ what your customers prefer, but *why*.



## 2. WEB SEARCHES

Web search data is incredibly useful to understanding both your existing customer base and potential customers you need to acquire. Similar to location and purchasing data, you can use web searches to identify what your customers are searching for within your industry, your brand, and your competitors. What sets web search data apart, though, is its especially powerful ability to illustrate which trends in your vertical are changing. Identifying trends is part and parcel with customer experience (CX) programs, but incorporating web search data into that initiative will make it even more granular.



## 3. PURCHASING DATA

This seems like an obvious one, but there’s more to gathering purchasing data than what your customers are buying. The best-in-class analytics can pinpoint which, if any, loyalty cards your customers might be using, as well as how often they’re leveraging promotional offers, coupons, discount codes, and more. These capabilities can help you assess how effective those efforts are, as well as data that helps prove ROI.



## 4. SOCIAL MEDIA & ONLINE REVIEWS

These two sources of unsolicited data are the final pieces of this entire puzzle, and they’re also where modern customers’ growing reluctance to complete surveys comes back into the conversation. In the face of lower survey completion rates, social media channels and online reviews, while always important to most organizations to some degree, have become especially pertinent in this age of survey reluctance.

## SETTING YOURSELF UP FOR DATA COLLECTION SUCCESS

Now that we've reviewed a few of the unsolicited data sources that you should be leveraging if you're not already, it's time to get into how to do so. A lot of experience platform vendors say that the best way to go about this process is with cutting-edge technology; that's certainly helpful, of course, but achieving Experience Improvement-level data success depends on another element besides 'just' technology: *human expertise*.

More specifically, whether you've been running an experience program for some time or are just getting started, ensure that your initiative is designed with the end in mind. In other words, don't just turn on a bunch of listening posts and gather unsolicited data indiscriminately; take some time to consider which sources your audiences frequent (based on operational data, financial data, and whichever customer

profiles you happen to have), and then activate listening posts in those areas.

This sort of careful consideration is part of the human expertise element I mentioned earlier. Technology is essential to a great Experience Improvement program, but expertise and consulting can help you *aim* it toward the unsolicited data most pertinent to your business goals and, ultimately, more meaningful connections with the customers, employees, and marketplace that keep everything running.

Taken together, this blend of unsolicited data, the tech to access it, and the expertise to steer it can do far more for your Experience Improvement efforts than make up for declining survey completion rates. Indeed, it can shift your organization's entire feedback collection paradigm. As I mentioned before, surveys should still be a part of efforts like that, but especially as these landscapes continue to change, it's important to stop and take stock of which other data sources your efforts depend on and why.

## A HOLISTIC IMAGE

As you can see from what we've discussed, becoming aware of and leveraging these data sources is important for achieving the real-time versatility you need to deliver for customers and stay aware of your marketplace. Declining survey rates are an important obstacle to circumnavigate, of course, but we've assembled quite a list of what else you can accomplish with non-survey and other unsolicited data—tracking customers' visits to competitors, tracking the effectiveness of loyalty incentives, identifying trends, etc. This data can also help you identify all of this and more with more precision than surveys, which is essential to achieving a stronger bottom line, meaningfully improved experiences, "and gaining grander marketplace knowledge.

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