



Food For Thought: Week of April 14, 2014

How Are You Doing? Ask!

In just about every sales training scenario I've ever participated in, there's been focus on benchmarking, either directly or indirectly. A good seminar presenter will typically reserve the last 10-15 seconds to ask his/her audience to take a moment to complete a quick "How did I do?" survey that was resting near the water pitcher on the table. Another example, just about every one of my hotel stays is followed up with an email a few days later to ask for feedback on the quality & conditions of the room, property & staff. Here's another: Websites that require several levels of navigation often include a quick survey at the end of the road. Progressive Insurance offers a great survey at the end of each session. I say "great" because it's short & simple, but also includes space for detail after asking the perfect question: "How could we do better?"

Regardless of our projects, whether remodeling the store, revamping our website, retooling our branding, rethinking our merchandising or renewing our print advertising, as the authors/composers/artists of the content, we take that final step back, look upon our creation and say to ourselves, "Yep, that's it. That's the final version." However, just as important it is to seek a fresh set of eyes & ears during the creative process & revisions, it's equally important to get ongoing feedback after the rollout and beyond. How will you ever truly know how you're doing if you don't ask your audience, your end-users, your customers?

Surveys: A Business Owner's Best Friend

Surveys take on a variety of shapes & sizes. They can be formal & lengthy, short & sweet, via email, by phone, in-person and in writing on a 3x5 card, depending on what information you want to collect. Let's say you recently rolled out a radio spot, a television ad, a Facebook promo and a local paper press release, all at the same time. It would be of great value to know what combination of strategies brought new customers into your store. In this case, you could simply take a sheet of paper, tape it to the back of your counter display near the register, train your sales staff/cashiers to ask the question, and place hash marks near each strategy. Fast, easy and cheap. Here's another example (and real-world): One of our Affiliates is being shut out of a local district and after much deliberation, we simply do not know why (other than the decision-maker just favors the other folks). Nonetheless, we really do want to know if there's a problem so we can fix it. After gathering the email addresses of all the teachers in the district, we used Survey Monkey to ask 10 simple questions, left space for additional comments and offered a \$5 Starbucks card just for taking the time to help. The survey was posted this morning and we've already received several responses. Those who do not respond via email will be followed up with phone calls. Those we can't reach will be asked during the next weekly service call to the school by the Affiliate. This particular online service, Survey Monkey, offers a number of programs to suit any budget (from absolutely free to several hundreds of dollars per year, depending on your needs). The free version allows you to ask ten questions and receive 100 responses. Not bad! We chose the first paid level (unlimited questions, layouts, export responses, etc.).

The Bottom Line

The only way to get an accurate portrayal of your customer's perspective is to ask them about their experience, how they would compare your offerings to those of your competitors and most importantly, how you can do better!

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