



Listen up!

6 keys to
customer satisfaction,
loyalty & love





Welcome!

Remember the big picture!

We'll talk a lot about specific touchpoints, but 56% of all customer interactions happen across multiple channels. The moral? Don't lose sight of the big picture. If your product or service is disappointing, a heartfelt thank you note or great customer service won't make up for it.

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During our 15 years in the survey business, we've made it our mission to listen to our customers—and to give other businesses the tools they need to listen to theirs.

But when we talk about getting customer feedback, there's a lot more to think about than just surveys. We're talking about being actively committed to listening to your customers at every touchpoint. We're talking about developing an intimate understanding of what customers want and expect, delivering on every promise you make, and building the loyalty, the word-of-mouth, and the positive brand associations that drive growth.

Sounds great, right? Well, this eGuide will show you how to take listening from an abstract concept to a daily practice. You'll learn how to:

- ✓ Identify listening opportunities
- ✓ Choose the right way to listen
- ✓ Create a company culture that encourages listening, and
- ✓ Empower customers to get your ear
- ✓ Use SurveyMonkey if you want to conduct surveys

Whether you're a Silicon Valley startup or a Main Street mainstay, your customers and potential customers know all the secrets to your success. All you have to do is ask them.

**The
Most
Trusted!**

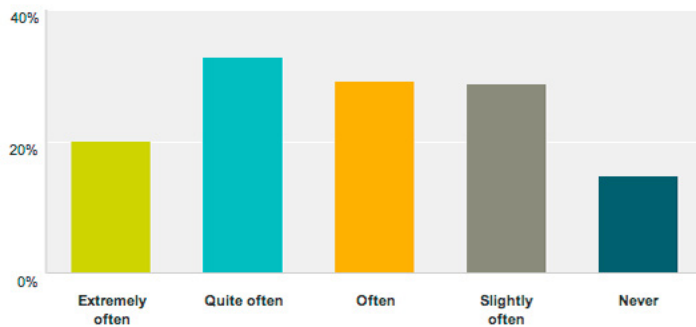
The results are in! Where do you stand?

We asked managers and owners of 300 small-to-medium-sized businesses about how they listen to their customers. Over 83% of companies who described themselves as “successful” actively measure customer satisfaction. Only 65% of companies who don’t measure satisfaction see themselves as successful. It looks like success and an emphasis on customer satisfaction go hand in hand.

To see where you stand, here’s some more about how and when businesses look to their customers for feedback:

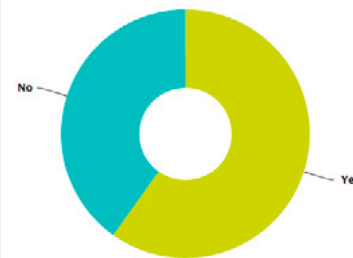
How often are your company's strategic decisions influenced by customer feedback?

Answered: 314 Skipped: 0



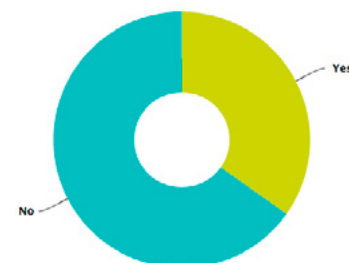
Does your company measure customer satisfaction?

Answered: 314 Skipped: 0



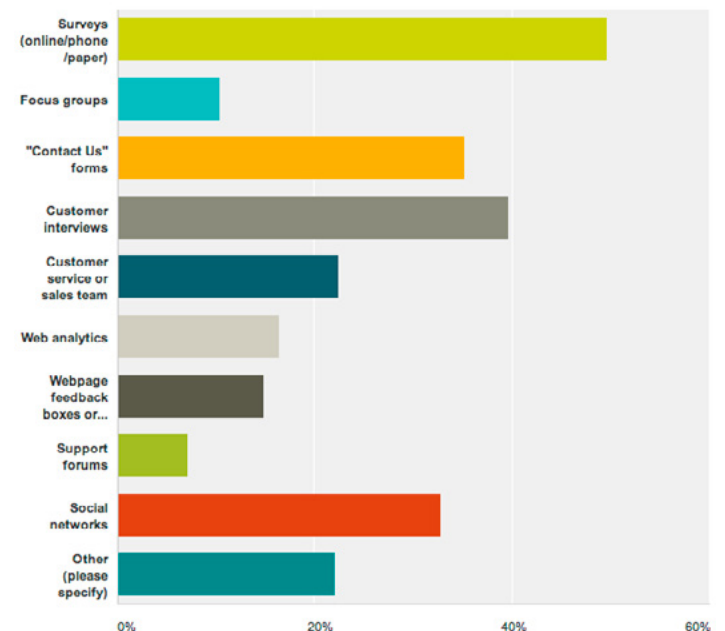
Does your company set specific benchmarks or goals for customer satisfaction? (If yes, please describe)

Answered: 313 Skipped: 1



Which of the following methods does your company use, if any, to get customer feedback? (Select any that apply)

Answered: 293 Skipped: 21



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“Take our survey... Stay on the line at the end of the call... Rate our service.”

How often do you go a week without being asked for customer feedback? As technology makes it easier to reach out to customers, prompts for feedback have become part of the experience whenever you call customer service or complete a purchase.

It's great that more companies are taking customer satisfaction seriously. Heck, we've built our business around it. But not enough companies are taking advantage of all the opportunities they have to listen. Think about what our survey found:

- ✓ Only 60% of companies measure customer satisfaction
- ✓ 95% these companies use customer feedback to make strategic decisions
- ✓ Companies that measure satisfaction are 28% more likely to describe themselves as successful





“Authentic brands don’t emerge from marketing cubicles or advertising agencies. They emanate from everything the company does...”

—Howard Schulz, Author: Pour Your Heart Into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time



To be truly focused on customer satisfaction, you have to think about all the things that affect a customer’s experience. These are your customer touchpoints.

They’re different for every business, but we’ll define a touchpoint as any time your customers come into contact with your brand—before, during, or after they purchase something from you. Some touchpoints are both obvious

and within your control, like the design of a website or the cleanliness of a store. But there are also touchpoints that are a little harder to identify and assess. For example, word of mouth is important, but how do you measure it? And how do you improve it?

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, starts with identifying all your customer touchpoints.



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Here are some examples to help you identify your touchpoints. There can be big differences between businesses that are bigger, smaller, online, and offline, so this is just a general list to get you started:

Before purchase	During purchase	After purchase
Social media	Store or office	Billing
Ratings and reviews	Website	Transactional emails
Testimonials	Catalog	Marketing emails
Word of mouth	Promotions	Service and support teams
Community involvement	Staff or sales team	Online help center
Advertising	Phone system	Follow ups
Marketing/PR	Point of sale	Thank you cards

Each of these examples usually includes several smaller parts, so a customer who comes to your physical store might encounter signage, a parking lot, a greeter, product displays, a checker, a receipt, and a plastic bag. Similarly, someone who visits your website could see the home page, a product page, a checkout page, and so on.

Build a list of your touchpoints by putting yourself in the shoes of a customer, then walk down the path they took as they:

- 1 Have a problem that needs to be solved
- 2 Discover your product or business
- 3 Make their purchase decision
- 4 Encounter your business after purchase

Timeout!

Seriously. It's a great idea to write down your touchpoints. We're happy to wait while you grab a pen.

And if you don't know where to start, try talking to a few customers. Ask them to walk you through the process outlined on the previous page, step by step.



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Which touchpoints are most important?

Does thinking about every detail feel a little intimidating? It can be. And we know you're too busy to worry about everything all the time. The list you create is designed to be a rundown of questions to ask customers whenever you've got the time. Or it's a lineup of potential culprits when you're trying to solve a larger problem.

If you need a straight answer about what's most important, our poll of business managers and owners showed that they usually turn to customers for help with marketing and product decisions. Here are the most common decisions businesses base on customer feedback:

- 1 Pricing (40% of businesses)**
- 2 Marketing methods (36%)**
- 3 Product offerings (33%)**



As a company, we also think customer service should be a key focus because it's so critical for retention. With that said, the touchpoints that are most important to a business can vary pretty widely.





CASE STUDY: Customer touchpoint



Have you ever been in a car accident? Progressive Insurance discovered its policyholders were often troubled by the uncertainty of the complex claims process in the immediate aftermath of an accident. Did they do everything they needed to do to get covered? Was the claims process set in motion properly? Were they going to be taken care of?

Progressive was also looking for ways to reduce fraudulent claims.

They solved both problems by creating a new customer touchpoint—white vans that rush to the scene of customers' accidents. The vans (and the claims agents who drive them) provide customers with peace of mind and a face-to-face chance to get questions answered. Progressive is also able to do a better job of documenting accidents and weeding out bogus claims.

Source: [Harvard Business Review](#)



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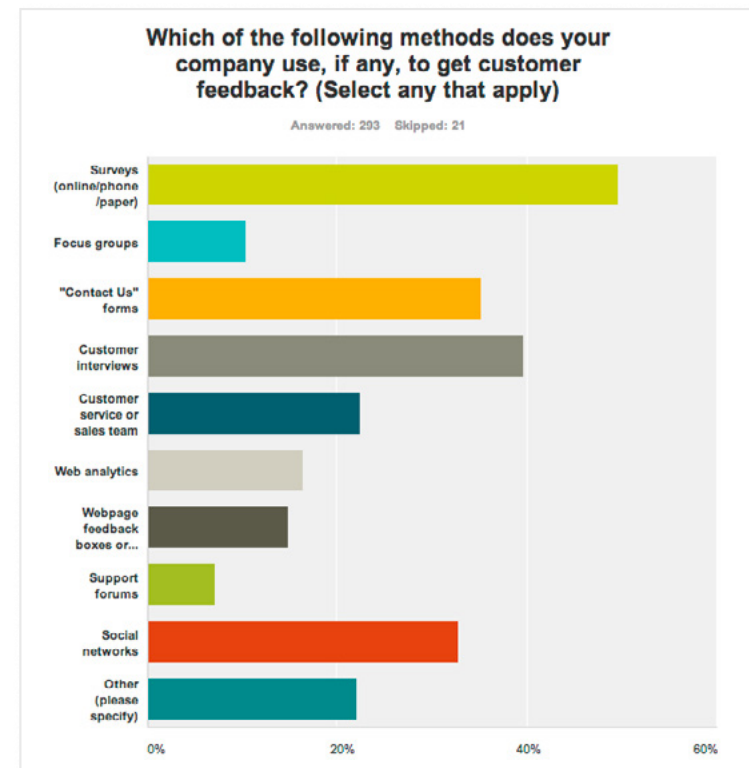
“A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while, he knows something.”

—Wilson Mizner, *Playwright*

So how do you listen? And how do you turn what you hear into smart business decisions? We feel pretty strongly that surveys are one important way, but to be a good listener, you need to have your ears open all the time.

Here are the top ways the businesses we talked to get feedback from their customers: customer interviews, “Contact Us” forms, and surveys.

But the truth is, different ways of listening are better for different touchpoints. Let us explain...





Listening to your customers can start anywhere. And you can use your eyes, your ears, the cash register, or the internet. Here's a list of common methods, though smart businesses often find additional ways to listen:

- ✓ Revenue and sales numbers
- ✓ Web analytics
- ✓ Surveys
- ✓ Focus groups
- ✓ User testing
- ✓ Observation
- ✓ Customer service, sales, or retail employees
- ✓ Social media
- ✓ Communities
- ✓ Email & web forms

Often a particular listening method will naturally go with a particular touchpoint. Other times, you'll have to pick and choose. If you run a website, for example, your traffic numbers will tell you when users are engaged, but they won't tell you why. You may need to ask visitors directly, do user testing, or try another method to understand what's working and what's not.



You can think of different ways to listen as being either implicit and explicit. Pardon our vocabulary!

Here's what we mean:

Implicit methods

show you trends or behaviors, but they generally don't tell you why. It's the why that's implicit. Some examples include:

- ✓ Revenue numbers
- ✓ Web analytics
- ✓ Customer observation
- ✓ Surveys (sometimes)

Explicit methods

ask customers to tell you specifically what they think. Why did they take an action? What did they like? Would they do it again?

- ✓ Surveys (sometimes)
- ✓ Focus groups
- ✓ Customer service
- ✓ Your employees
- ✓ Social media
- ✓ Communities
- ✓ Email & web forms

Think of it as the difference between a doctor taking your temperature and asking you to say "aaah." Implicit methods tend to tell you whether you're sick or healthy, while explicit listening tries to get to a specific cause.





To make it easier to decide how to listen, here's a quick look at all the different listening methods and what they're good for. Check out the chart on page 18 for a quick breakdown.

Revenue numbers

Who can argue with the bottom line? Revenue numbers are the ultimate success metric, but they're also a very general form of feedback. Seeing revenue dip or spike means it's time to listen up some other way.

Web analytics

Web analytics can tell you a lot about what your customers like. Does a page get much traffic? Where does that traffic come from? Where does it go? Using tools like Google Analytics or Adobe Site Catalyst can give you a lot of insight, but your conclusions will all be inferred. If a page performs poorly, it could be a result of the topic, the design, the copy, or other factors.

Want to get to the bottom of things? A/B testing helps isolate individual factors to get answers. Surveys, feedback forms, and user testing can also help.

What about big data?

Big data is cool. At SurveyMonkey we use data to segment, qualify, verify, and analyze performance. Big data drives a lot of our decisions, but it doesn't tell us when a spelling error is the reason an email has a lousy open rate, or if we're losing business because we lack an important feature our customers expect.



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“Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.”

—Bill Gates, Chairman, Microsoft

Customer observation

If you're in a business where you have direct contact with your customers, watching them is a great way to listen. How do they move around a store? What food winds up in the dumpster? How long do they sit in the waiting room? You can see smiles and frowns. You can see when someone decides to purchase and when they decide it's time to go. But like web analytics, you might need to dig a little deeper to understand why they make the choices they make. Observing customers can also be time consuming.

Surveys

We like surveys. They can help you get implicit data by asking for general information. They can also give you the ability to ask for super-specific feedback. The challenges? You've got to ask the right questions to get reliable results, and sometimes it can be hard to find the right people to take your surveys. If you're thinking about creating surveys, we've got some tips in Chapter 4 to help you get it right.



“The more you engage with customers, the clearer things become and the easier it is to determine what you should be doing.”

—John Russell, President, Harley Davidson

Email and web feedback forms

Like surveys, short feedback forms on your web page or in emails are an easy way to follow up with customers. They give you the ability to get input from people who are actively engaged with you. Depending on the sophistication of your analytics, you might even be able to segment feedback based on actions you've seen respondents take. On the flip side, you can only reach the people who come to your site or receive your emails.

Your employees

Do you have a sales team? Customer service? Retail clerks? Anyone who interacts with customers collects all kinds of customer satisfaction data. From observations to complaints to reasons for signing up or cancelling, customer-facing employees hear it all. The one trick is creating a good way for these employees to share their ideas effectively.



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“If you make customers unhappy in the physical world, they might each tell six friends. If you make customers unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell 6,000.”

—Jeff Bezos, Founder and CEO Amazon.com

Social media

When customers have a question, a complaint, or a shout-out, a lot of them go straight to social media. Social listening lets you get all the scuttlebutt about your brand and products—even when it’s not directed at you. Having your own Facebook page and Twitter handle also make it easier for customers to come straight to you when they want to talk about your business.

Communities

Social media isn’t the only place where people talk about you. From reviews to question-and-answer sites to forums, there are a lot of places to get customer feedback. Have a product on Amazon? Check out the reviews. Are you a local business? See what they’re saying on Yelp.





Interviews, focus groups, and user testing

What better way to listen to your customers than sitting down with them and talking? These three approaches offer you different ways to get feedback directly from your customers. **Interviews** are the least structured—just set up some time (or pull an in-store customer aside) for an informal Q&A session. **Focus groups** let you assemble a group of customers to have a conversation about your business. With **user testing**, you can ask customers to use your product in a specific way. As they narrate their experience, you'll learn a lot about what's working and what needs to be improved.

1

2

These methods are great because you get specific feedback, and you get the opportunity to ask follow-up questions when there's something you want to understand better. You also get the freedom to ask about anything you want, which is a great way to learn about touchpoints (like billing or word of mouth) that are hard to quantify in other ways. On the flip side, interviews, focus groups and user testing can be very time consuming and they may not provide a representative sample of your customer base.

However you decide to listen, also make sure to create an avenue for customers to proactively share feedback. Whether it's an online form, a phone number, or a feedback card, you'll learn a lot. It will show frustrated customers that you care. And it may help keep them from going public with their complaints in social media.

3



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QUICK REFERENCE: When and how to listen

Touchpoints	Listening methods							
	Revenue & sales	Built-in analytics	Observation	Surveys & forms	Employees	Social & community	User testing	Focus groups
Social media	Implicit	Implicit		Both		Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Community involvement			Implicit			Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Advertising / PR	Implicit	Implicit				Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Store or office	Implicit		Implicit	Both	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Point of sale	Implicit		Implicit	Both	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Website	Implicit	Implicit		Both		Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Catalog	Implicit					Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Promotions	Implicit					Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Staff or sales team	Implicit		Implicit	Both	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Phone system	Implicit		Implicit	Both		Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Billing						Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Transactional emails		Implicit		Both		Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Marketing emails	Implicit	Implicit		Both		Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Service and support team	Implicit		Implicit	Both	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Online help center	Implicit	Implicit		Both		Explicit	Explicit	Explicit
Follow ups				Both	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit

Note that being in direct contact with your customers gives you the ability to ask about any touchpoint. That's why listening methods like social media, user testing, and focus groups can help you learn about so many different topics.



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HOW WE DO IT: Questions and complaints on social media

If a customer goes social with a question or a complaint, we see it as an opportunity to learn while showing off awesome customer service. It starts by sharing the social media reins with our 24/7 customer support team. When they see someone who needs help, they'll always be in position to jump into action.

The result? New customers get help with making decisions, existing customers stay happy, and we get to offer help in public where everyone can see.

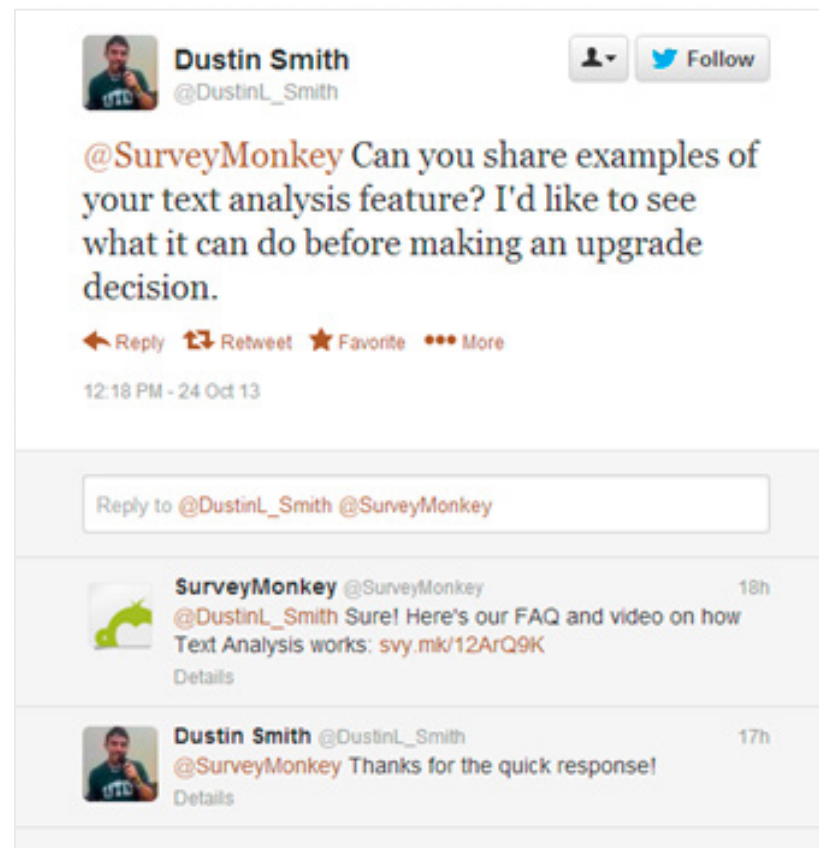
We also take the lessons we learn through our social efforts to heart. In the example above, we learned that people needed more info to make purchase decisions. So here's what we added to our upgrade message:

PRO FEATURE

Create unlimited rules (FILTER, COMPARE, and SHOW) to dive even deeper into your data.

Upgrade

[Learn more »](#)



Voila!



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CHAPTER 3: 7 steps to get from satisfaction to love

Now that we've convinced you that measuring customer satisfaction is important and shown you all the tools, it's time to get to work!

Well, almost. While you can (and should) expend a lot of effort trying to understand how best to serve your customers, it can become a full time occupation if you're not careful. Getting bad information from customers can also lead to bad decisions on your part. Here are six steps to make sure you really learn something from your customer feedback efforts.

1

Set baselines

2

Look for feedback online

3

Share information internally

4

Keep your employees engaged—and in the feedback loop

5

Enable customers who have something to say

6

Follow up and take accountability

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STEP 1: Set baselines

Start out with NPS Scores

Developed by Satmetrix, Net Promoter Scores™ (NPS) are a popular method for setting customer satisfaction baselines. Your NPS is calculated by asking customers one question: how likely they are to refer you to a friend. Sound cool? [Learn more.](#)



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Measuring customer satisfaction doesn't always give you the answers you need. Imagine you asked every customer to rate their experience on a scale from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied). After collecting responses for a few weeks, you tabulate the results and learn that the average score is 7.2.

Is 7.2 good or bad?

In the abstract, there's no way of knowing. However, you can give context to that 7.2 by using it as a baseline to compare with future satisfaction scores. You can also ask your customers to rate competitors to see how you compare to the field.

Once you've got a baseline, ask customers to rate you on a regular basis. Compare results over time to get a broad view. Or move toward more actionable results by asking customers to rate different parts of your business (product quality, customer service, price, etc.).

While numbers are great, be sure to give customers an opportunity to give more specific feedback, too.

7.2
& up

When it comes to understanding your customers, think of the of the internet as a complaint line, help center, and focus group rolled into one. But how do you filter through all the noise and to find feedback that has an impact?

Alert yourself: We recommend setting up a [Google alert](#) based on your company or product names. Every time Google finds a new mention of you, you'll get an email about it.

Listen to the tweets: Are people crowing about you... or should you be eating crow? Search Twitter for your name and terms closely associated with your company to get up-to-the minute feedback. There are also a lot of tools to help you keep an eye on the Twitterati. Check out services like [Hootsuite](#) to make social listening more manageable.

**But I'm
too busy!**



Find your communities: Certain communities can mean a lot more to your business than others. If you're a local business, keep an eye on Yelp or Angie's List. If your business is online, do Google searches to find blogs or Q&A sites where your core audience goes to gab.

Chime in: Responding to online complaints is an important place to start, but you can also be proactive. Answer questions in forums and Q&A sites. Create and moderate groups on LinkedIn or Reddit. Reach out to potential customers on Twitter. You'll show off your expertise and maybe win some new business in the process.

If you don't have a team to offer continuous support, we recommend setting aside 20 to 30 minutes every day or two. Put it on your calendar to make sure you get to it.



People in different positions around your company have different exposure to customers. Your sales team may have a better understanding of what motivates customers than the marketing team. Your customer service team might get a lot of feedback that your product team will find useful. Front-of-house employees may see and hear things that help folks behind the scenes do a better job.

Make sure all these perspectives have an impact across your whole organization by setting up lines of communication. Here are a few ways to make sure information gets around:

- ✓ Set up a central repository where anyone can access market research and customer studies
- ✓ Hold monthly meetings for managers from different functions to share their learnings
- ✓ Create an online feedback form or a suggestions box to allow employees to share their ideas without feeling intimidated
- ✓ Offer behind-the-scenes employees ride-alongs with retail, sales or customer service teams to give them a chance to interact with customers directly

These are just a few ideas—the key is making sure there's a smooth flow of information between people who don't necessarily work together every day.

Make it informal!



Setting up formal methods for employee feedback may seem daunting, but all you really need to do is get people in the same room. Try using pizza as your proverbial carrot to get groups of employees together to talk about customers over lunch.



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STEP 4: Keep your employees engaged—and in the feedback loop

According to a Gallup study, 70 percent of American workers are either not engaged or actively disengaged. Do you think those employees give good customer service? Are they likely to pass customer feedback up the chain?

Probably not. In fact, numerous studies have tied poor employee engagement to low customer satisfaction. Improving employee engagement can have a lot of moving parts, but we have two important recommendations to get you started:

- 1 Create employee incentives:** Identify customer feedback all-stars and reward them publicly for their efforts. Whether you set it up as a quarterly goal or a one-off achievement for surfacing a particularly important piece of feedback, creating a material incentive (like a bonus or gift card) will encourage employees to think of customers first.
- 2 Start measuring engagement:** See where you stand and start addressing major problem areas by keeping an eye on employee engagement. From compensation to professional growth, you'll get an in-depth look at what employees think—and what drives them.

But how do you measure employee engagement?

We've worked with the Society of Human Resource Management to make it a little more understandable. The short answer: ask your employees about all the facets of their employment, like whether they feel empowered and whether there are advancement opportunities. For the long answer and some sample survey templates, check out our [employee engagement page](#).



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STEP 5: Enable customers who have something to say

When a customer decides to tell you what they think, chances are they'll find a way. So why not make it easy?

An online feedback form or survey can help you gather, compile, and review feedback without doing much heavy lifting. You can help customers find your forms and surveys by offering a link to them at any customer touchpoint. You can even add the URL or a QR code to printed materials or in-store signage.

If it makes more sense try sharing an email address or customer service phone number the same way. Many stores and restaurants get feedback by offering printed cards or suggestion boxes that customers can fill out while they complete their order or pay the check. Online businesses can do the virtual equivalent with a well-placed link.

Starbucks: Super-caffeinated customer feedback



Have you ever had a cake pop at Starbucks? How about a hazelnut macchiato? In the five years of its existence, Starbucks' feedback site, MyStarbucksIdea.com, has been the conceptual birthplace of close to 300 tasty products. The site collects feedback and suggestions, but it also creates a community of coffee lovers who draw attention to their favorite coffee innovations by voting on them.

Source: [Digital Spark Marketing](#)



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STEP 6: Follow up and take accountability

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When you collect feedback, give customers the option of leaving their contact information. And if they tell you how to reach them, be sure to follow up.

Following up is a great way to create a deeper relationship with customers. At the very least, you'll give them the satisfaction of knowing they've been heard. But there's also a good chance that addressing their issue will make them more loyal.

Mea culpa!

In follow-up communications, be sure to respect customer's opinions, and be humble enough to take responsibility for any customer issues—especially when you know you're wrong.

How to apologize



In 2009, Amazon earned comparisons with Big Brother when it deleted copies of George Orwell's 1984 from customers' Kindles without any warning. CEO Jeff Bezos handled the misstep head on, earning thousands of positive responses on Amazon's website:

"This is an apology for the way we previously handled illegally sold copies of 1984 and other novels on Kindle. Our 'solution' to the problem was stupid, thoughtless, and painfully out of line with our principles. It is wholly self-inflicted, and we deserve the criticism we've received. We will use the scar tissue from this painful mistake to help make better decisions going forward, ones that match our mission."

The moral? Own up to your mistakes—and don't forget who's always right!



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CHAPTER 4: How surveys improve decision-making

As long as you make a point of listening to your customers, there's no right or wrong way to do it. We recommend thinking carefully about each customer touchpoint and finding the most appropriate way to get feedback.



With that said, surveys give you an easy and efficient way to collect feedback about any touchpoint. They let you gather implicit data, like whether someone has done business with you. And you can learn the explicit reasons why you are (or aren't) in customers' good graces. Online surveys (like, ahem, SurveyMonkey's!) give you the added benefit of keeping responses organized and easily turning all that data into insights.

Bottom line, surveys can help you in more ways than most other methods. They'll never do a better job of assessing site performance than web analytics, and they might not replicate the look you see on a customer's face during user testing, but if you do them right, you can expect to learn a lot.



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We make it easy for people to design surveys, get responses, and analyze the results. Here are resources on SurveyMonkey.com that make it easy to get useful feedback from your customers.

[Customer Satisfaction Surveys](#)

Find survey ideas, best practices, and expert-certified survey templates—all in one place.

[Targeted Responses](#)

Need to find the right people to take your surveys? SurveyMonkey Audience can help. Give us your criteria, and within a few days we'll get responses from people who meet them.

[Help Using SurveyMonkey](#)

When you've got a question about how to use SurveyMonkey to create effective surveys, our help center has all the answers.

Get feedback with SurveyMonkey

- ✓ **Easy question creation:** Build custom surveys or rely on expert templates
- ✓ **Send surveys to anyone:** Use email, the web, or social media—it's up to you
- ✓ **Smart reporting:** Turn data into insights and create custom reports

[Get started now!](#)

