

Are Your Customers Satisfied?

By Roger Bostdorff

Companies hire me to help them figure out a way to better drive sales or increase profits. I do this by first completing, with the client's input, an assessment of what are they doing today and how the process is working. Every time I do a client assessment, I ask this question. "Are your customers satisfied?" Every time I have asked that question the customer has answered either "Yes" or "Absolutely." However, my next question is one that generally creates a blank stare or at a minimum a little bit of a pause. I next ask my clients, "How do you know?"

During my 30 years with IBM I was taught many important lessons. One of the most important lessons learned is that whatever you do that is important in business needs to be measured. I cannot think of anything more important for a business than having satisfied customers. Customer Satisfaction is not binary. It is not necessarily, either yes, the customer is satisfied or no, they are not, but rather to what degree. You may have a customer that says they are satisfied until your competition explains how they handle a particular situation differently or better. I am dealing with a client right now where our strategy is to point out that hot dogs taste pretty good, if you have never tasted steak. Our strategy regarding growing market share from the competition is to ask the following questions in regards to the company that is currently providing the service that my client would like to provide:

1. Are you happy with your current provider?
2. If yes, why? If no, why not?
3. If they are happy, we are asking the customer if there is anything that the current provider could do to make this prospective customer even more satisfied.

Each of these questions is an attempt to understand the current situation and find a chink in the armor of our competition. If my client's competitors are building very satisfied relationships, we will have no success. If they are not, we will grow our market share at the expense of our competition.

When was the last time your company decided to ask your customers if they were satisfied? What bad things would occur if you asked for their feedback? You might find out that they are not as satisfied as you think they are. Wouldn't you rather know if that is the case as opposed to finding out after your customer went to your competitor? There are many more good things that could occur if you ask...

- You may find out that your customer has an idea that will help you make many additional customers very satisfied
- You may find another area that you could be providing a service or product, thus driving more revenue for your company.
- At a minimum you will make your customer feel like you care

By the way, the strategy that my client is using is working quite well, they are grabbing market share based on focusing on their competitor's lack of satisfied customers. Are they taking your customers?

Roger Bostdorff is the President of B2B Sales Boost. He spent over 30 years with IBM in sales and sales management. B2B Sales Boost is a consulting company helping organizations improve their sales and overall business processes. You can find more about B2B Sales Boost on the web at www.b2bsalesboost.com or calling 419-351-4347.