

Survey your Customers to improve business

First of two parts

Businesses today need to rely on customer feedback to identify areas for improvement. The information allows the company's objectives to be reached quicker and easier. Often times, the customer has no vehicle for providing the information, so a quick and easy survey can produce great results.

Marc Ankerman, president of Ankerman Training Solutions in Columbus Ohio, www.trainingsolved.com sees information in the form of surveys as a great tool for implementing growth in business. Using www.zoomerang.com is an easy tool for getting started.

Ankerman suggests four steps to using online surveys in your business.

? **Meet with Staff.** Working with his client Broadway Bound (a dance studio in New Albany, Ohio) an initial meeting was designed to develop a set of questions for the survey. The initial meeting is essential to make sure you and your team are prepared to hear the feedback and design questions which relate to the issues (both positive and negative) you are about to hear. Ankerman calls it the blue wall theory. If the customer wants you to paint a blue wall, will you consider it? Not that you have to do it, but what are some of the likely questions and requests your customers may provide you via a survey? This needs to be thought about even before designing the questions.

? **Identify areas for Improvement.** It is great to get compliments and hear about all the good things you are doing for your customers, but what you really want to know is how you can improve. What are the things you can do that are first and foremost on your customer's to do list of improvements? In designing the questions, you need to take some basic feedback you have received and use the survey to get specific details. In doing so, you will even get suggestions which can be implemented and help show your customers you are listening to them.

? **Do teasers.** At Broadway Bound the teaser was to do a "kids" survey first. Although we were mainly interested in parental feedback, the kids survey was a great way to get the parents involved and find out things about both customers. A catch phrase about the survey was created and put up on a bulletin board to let everyone know the surveys were coming: We even created a contest and gave away t-shirts to the kids for turning in their email addresses. Whatever works to get the message out that the information was important. As time passed, the parents we beginning to ask when their survey would be coming!

? **Prepare to Act!** Just like the comment about the blue wall being painted, doing a survey means being prepared to make changes and act on the suggestions. Even if you cannot act on all of the ideas, you must be prepared to consider and respond to the comments and issues raised by a survey. Changing a schedule or buying a new table for your customer waiting area shows you listen. Once you do act, it is not only supportive of "listening:" to the customer, but allows for a great dialog and support that you care about your business and are ready to make changes for the better.

Part two will suggest the 5 advantages from getting these surveys done quickly.

IN SUMMARY:

Meet with Staff- they have the insight and the knowledge for good questions

Identify areas of improvement- know the areas you want to improve and get information

Do teasers - Figure out a way to get excitement and the interest high for the survey

Prepare to Act! - More than just saying you did a survey, identify things you can do to show you listen!

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