The Art of Receiving & Using Customer Feedback

Everyone always talks about getting customer feedback. There are posts about how to create a survey, what survey questions to include, questionnaire tips and examples, and even how to build a strong customer feedback culture in your company.

We've got those bases covered. However, what do you do once you actually get that feedback? How do you begin implementing it into your company? And how do you respond to the customer?

These are the questions we've been pondering on this end, as well. But, first, we wanted to outline the difference between useful and useless negative feedback.

Determining Useful Vs. Useless Feedback

It can be difficult to decide whether a customer's feedback is actually geared towards helping you improve your business or if it's simply an attempt to bash your company. Here are the ways you can tell the difference between these two kinds of negative feedback. For an explanation of the specific kinds of negative feedback, read this presentation from Customericare.

Useful Feedback

1. It points out an actual pain point or problem.

This feedback has a point. A customer has faced an issue with your product or service and is reflecting on it. There is something for you to mend or improve in this situation.

2. It would benefit others to implement this feedback.

This feedback isn't solely the opinion of an individual customer. Typically, it reflects the thoughts of several customers, some of whom may not have spoken up about it. Taking this feedback into consideration would improve the experiences of many of your customers, and, thus, might be a good investment to make.

3. It's fairly long or detailed.

This feedback shows time and thought. It's clear the customer carefully crafted their feedback, which means that they care about your business's growth. This is a tip-off that their feedback could really improve your product or service.

4. It may suggest one or two improvements, but not a complete change.

This feedback isn't suggesting that you reconsider your entire company strategy, mission, or industry. Instead, the customer is offering some opportunities for growth or improvement that can be easily tweaked within your overarching company strategy.

5. It generally veers on the polite side.

This feedback is relayed in a fairly kind manner. The customer doesn't feel any need to attack your company or be aggressive. They simply want to relay their thoughts in the hopes that you'll consider them for the future.

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Useless Feedback

1. It doesn't have a clear pain point or problem.

This feedback doesn't have a specific issue for you to track and take into consideration. There is no way for you to try to "solve" a problem for this customer and improve their experience.

2. It differs from the feedback others are giving.

This feedback is bringing up a brand-new point. It doesn't seem like any other customers or prospects are facing a similar experience with your product or service.

3. It's on the shorter side.

This feedback could potentially be a short burst of angry typing. It doesn't include a lot of details on the situation and doesn't show signs of clear-headed thought.

4. It suggests you change your entire company strategy.

This feedback advises you to make large-scale changes to your company. Implementing such changes would not only be a huge financial investment for you, but it would also take an extended amount of time and require rebranding.

5. It's rude.

This feedback is relayed in a harsh way. There doesn't seem to be a basic appreciation for your company. This customer or prospect simply wants to criticize your business without being constructive.

We've compiled the following list of steps to take after receiving both negative and positive feedback.

How to Respond to Negative Feedback

1. Review the feedback carefully.

Upon receiving negative feedback, you should take the time to read it over carefully. This first glance-over can help you determine whether or not the feedback is useful and how, then, you should respond to it.

Consider, too, the platform by which the customer or prospect submitted the feedback. Was it on a public channel, like Yelp or your social media? Or was it sent privately via email, live chat, or a direct message on social media? If the feedback is public, you may want to speed up your review process and craft a response as soon as possible.

2. Ask for reinforcements.

Depending on the level of negativity in the feedback, you may want to call for backups. It will be beneficial for you to run the feedback by a coworker or manager and get their thoughts. Being the person you directly received the feedback, you might be feeling angry and frustrated, and it's helpful to have a third-party individual to ensure you don't respond with aggression.

Others can also help you determine the best plan of action based on the usefulness or uselessness of the feedback.

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3. Aggregate feedback.

Is this feedback normal? Are others reaching out with similar ideas? Or is this on a case-by-case basis? By bringing together recent feedback and analyzing it, you can come to these conclusions and generalize your responses to all similar feedback.

4. Craft an appropriate response.

After you've cleared your head and gotten all the information you need on the matter, you can begin drafting a response. You want to remain polite and get your point across as efficiently as possible.

If the feedback is on a public platform, try to move the conversation on to email or phone. No matter what, you want to keep your company in a good light and say nothing that could tarnish your reputation. For more information on responding to customer complaints, check out this post on customer service email templates.

5. Consider their feedback.

If you've determined their feedback qualifies as useful, you won't want to have the interaction end with the response. Although negative, the feedback was meant to improve both customers' experiences and your company. Think about the ways in which you can implement their feedback to make a stronger, more customer-centric front.

It's up to you and your company to determine whether the profits outweigh the loss in this instance. Creating customer-advised changes will consume time and money and will run the risk of failure. However, if you want a mutually-beneficial relationship with your customers, you have to put some faith in them, too.

How to Respond to Positive Feedback

1. Review the feedback.

Just because it's positive doesn't mean you can read it once and throw a celebration. Positive feedback should still be reviewed for key takeaways. What exactly does the customer or prospect love about your company?

Even positive feedback can offer some advice for improvement. Take advantage of their positive, polite approach and take their recommendations into consideration. Note them down to be passed off to the appropriate team.

2. Thank them and throw in a company promo.

Of course, your first order of business should be to thank them for their lovely feedback. According to HubSpot Research, only 23% of customers have sent a positive email to a company, and only 20% have written a positive online review. So, clearly, it's rare that customers directly offer positive feedback to companies.

Since you know that they're a fan of your brand, why not throw in a small promo? Maybe add in that you're releasing a new product soon, or that you're having a big sale next month. Treat these customers as brand evangelists, and, hopefully, they'll spread the word.

3. Consider sharing the feedback.

If the feedback isn't already public, and the customer is comfortable with it, it could be a great badge on your online presence to publish their feedback for the world to see. You could post it on your website and social media and send it out in your email newsletter.

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Your customer will love their time in the spotlight. But, even more so, your prospects will get a taste of what your business has to offer. Customers trust the word of other customers, and sharing positive feedback is a great way to keep that loop going.

4. Pass the service-qualified lead onto sales.

Now that you've confirmed that they are interested in your brand, find out whether or not they are a current customer. If so, hooray! Your company is exemplifying extraordinary customer loyalty and, thus, retention.

If they aren't, this is a perfect opportunity for your sales team to tackle. First, confirm whether they are a service-qualified lead. Then, hand-off their information to the sales team and have them work their magic.

After all, the best way to exercise inbound marketing is by attracting strangers, who turn into visitors, who are then converted into leads, who are then closed as customers, and who then are delighted so much that they become promoters. This is just one step in that whole process, but still, a key step.

5. Ask for referrals.

You can probably assume that these customers are going to be brand evangelists. However, to make the most of this interaction, consider asking them directly for referrals.

Customers who are having a positive experience with your company will want the same for their friends, family, or colleagues, even if they don't outright make that connection in their minds. So, make the connection for them. Phrase it as a way to improve the experiences of their close ones, not as a means for you to gain more customers. And, make it easy to ask for referrals by offering your customers an email template they can send directly to others.

Source: Swetha Amaresan, HubSpot

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