

Customer Satisfaction Measurement: A Look into the Future

by Karen Blakeman



As you review your key indicators for the month — oil changes per day, average ticket, etc. — do you ever wish you had a crystal ball to see how you'll be performing on these same measures four or five months from now?

Customer satisfaction measurement is no crystal ball, but it does provide a window into your future. It gives you the opportunity to measure not just backward-looking metrics like "How satisfied were you with your experience today?" but also forward-looking measures such as "How likely are you to return?"

Why Measure Customer Satisfaction?

There are lots of great reasons for measuring customer satisfaction. At the top of the list is the link between customer satisfaction and ticket. Customers with the highest satisfaction scores spend more than those who score lower. Return visits also are higher for those with higher satisfaction levels.

Problems rise to the surface quickly when you start measuring customer satisfaction. This is a good thing! A complaint from a customer is a gift to the manager who cares enough to earn the customer's repeat business.

Compliments flow freely, too, when you open the door for customer feedback. Front-line employees love to hear these compliments, especially when the customer mentions them

by name. It's a great opportunity for you to recognize a team member's hard work.

Why You've Put It Off Until Now

There are lots of good reasons to measure customer satisfaction, but let me guess what you're thinking:

"Who fills out these surveys anyway? I've never completed a survey in my life." As manager of the customer satisfaction program for 800-plus Valvoline Instant Oil Change centers, I'll tell you who fills out those surveys: Customers who are mad. Customers who have noticed a decline in service levels at one of our stores. Customers who want to give us a second chance after we've screwed up. Customers who want to thank an outstanding employee. Customers who want us to succeed. Isn't it impor-

tant to give those customers an avenue for feedback?

"I'm an owner-operator, and I'm in my service centers every day. I don't need a survey to tell me if my customers are satisfied." Here are two things to think about: First, a customer satisfaction program helps you measure consistency. Is the customer experience just as good when you're not in the service center? Second, though your customers may appear "satisfied," how likely are they to return? The great thing about measuring customer satisfaction is that it gives you a window to customer loyalty.

Pitfalls to Avoid

You're a quick lube operator, not a market researcher, so it's a good idea to seek help measuring customer satisfaction. Here are some things to keep in mind:

When your customers are rating your performance, understand that "Good" isn't good enough. "Satisfied" doesn't guarantee a return visit. To earn your customers' loyalty, you need to deliver an experience that is better than what the customer can get elsewhere.

Pressure has no place in a customer satisfaction program. Be careful how employees talk to customers about the survey.

Don't solicit customer feedback if you aren't going to act on it. You need to respond to complaints, share the feedback with your employees, analyze trends and hold service center managers accountable for customer satisfaction.

Peering Into the Future

You know that customer loyalty is critical to your future growth. So what's standing in the way of increased customer loyalty at your service centers? Is it employee turnover? Limited Sunday hours? Extended wait times? A well-structured customer satisfaction program will tell you what you need to do to increase your customers' likelihood to return — and their likelihood to recommend you to friends and family.

You don't need a crystal ball to see how your business will be performing in four or five months. With customer satisfaction measurement, you can have something better: a tool to help your business perform better. ♦

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