

Increase Employee Engagement White Paper

# Customer and Patient Feedback Management

*Are You Training TO Survey Data?*

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The primary purpose of a business should be to enrich the lives of its customers.

This is a statement where agreement abounds. But ... agreement does not necessarily mean fruition of that statement within organizations.

Customer feedback management should be a catalyst for employee development. How true is this for your organization? Why does it matter?

**Consider this one question to assess the depth and effectiveness of your organization's ability to enrich the lives of your customers:**

## How frequently and openly is your customers' feedback discussed with your employees?

**F**red Reichheld of Bain & Company says, "Good profits are earned with customers' enthusiastic cooperation." The good news is, depending on the questions asked on your organization's customer surveys, customers are telling you what will create their enthusiastic cooperation. Want your employees to be more engaged in fostering this customer loyalty? Disseminating, discussing, and listening to customer input in **productive ways** focuses and energizes your employees. This is customer feedback management. When employees know how they contribute to enriching customers' lives, they feel empowered to show up and interact with customers in ways that capture and enhance their appreciation and loyalty. Every employee contributes to the customer experience, and their awareness and understanding of this can boost employee engagement.

Employee engagement increases when individuals know they are doing meaningful work and see their connection to the organization's purpose. Harvard Business Review reports "Research consistently shows that people experiencing meaningful work report better health, well-being, teamwork and engagement; they bounce back faster from setbacks and are more likely to view mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failures. In other words, people at work are more likely to thrive and grow when they experience their job as meaningful." Customer feedback management is an important part of this ongoing process.

Your employees want to make a difference. Genuine exposure to customer feedback gives employees critical insight into how they make a difference. And, as a result, your organizational culture benefits with this type of transparency. It motivates employees to use their discretionary effort to serve customers.

In his book "The Ultimate Question 2.0," Fred Reichheld says, "...feedback must make intuitive sense to frontline employees, not just to statisticians, and this information must be systematically compiled and communicated throughout the organization so people can take action and track their results. Otherwise, what's the point?"

So how do you provide meaningful exposure and gain productive action around customer feedback? How do you realize the benefits to employee engagement and company culture? In the corporate world where busy is an understatement in describing the whirlwind of daily activity, how can sharing such feedback become a mainstay within the organization? The answer to these questions is to:

**Use existing communication vehicles and established training activities as avenues to foster customer feedback management.**



## Let's examine how

Employee development is defined as the **action** of teaching a person a particular skill or type of behavior. The **action** of development or training has many forms. Customer feedback can be used to ensure that training, in any form, is reinforcing the right behaviors. The right behaviors fall into two buckets of skill sets. How employees use these two skill sets determines the customer experience.

- The first bucket is technical skill. Can your employees **explain** what something means or the steps in a process? Their knowledge is foundational. Then, can the employee **demonstrate** how to use that knowledge or perform the procedure when working with a customer? Their skill is key. For example, I might be able to explain how to make a good steak

(knowledge) but doing it doesn't come easily (skill)!

- The second bucket is people skills. How do your employees make customers **feel** during their interactions? Do your employees use the appropriate words, voice tone and body language to communicate caring, excitement, concern or whatever the appropriate emotions are to help customers be receptive to the message?

As you develop your enterprise feedback management process and look for both positive and negative feedback to share, be sure to include both the technical and people skills aspects of their customer interactions.

**Which of these communication and training activities exist in your organization?**

**Ideas to include customer feedback management**

**Classroom or eLearning training**

Share customer feedback relating to the training topic. Reinforce how this employee training boosts their abilities to provide what customers want.

**Example 1:** If training is on a procedure or problem resolution technique, provide trends in customer feedback that speak to the value that customers place on the competence, knowledge, and confidence of employees.

**Example 2:** In a training class that focuses on employees entering accurate and complete customer notes in the system, determine what customer comments are available that relate to that topic. Do customers mention their displeasure at having to explain their issue over and over again? Do customers express concern that it takes multiple contacts to get resolution? Tie in the influence that accurate and complete system notes are to reducing these customer concerns.

**Example 3:** Create discussion questions for participants to ponder that relate to customer feedback on the training topic. Provide scenarios based on customer feedback. Ask training participants to role play how to address the customer questions or respond in a way that shows caring and accurate information.

**Self-study activities**

Give employees a brief assignment to build in accountability to provide customers with the experience they want.

**Example 1:** Focus on one current customer feedback trend. For example, “representatives are courteous” or “representatives are rude.” Have employees take two to three minutes at the end of their day to journal about two customer experiences they had that day and what they did and said to show they were courteous.

**Example 2:** Ask employees to view customer survey scores and customers’ written comments that relate directly to interactions of that individual employee. Ask the employees to be prepared to discuss during a one-on-one meeting where they feel they do well and where they can improve, based on customer feedback. Management of this data is crucial in the success of your program.

**Planned one-on-one meetings between employee and leader**

Motivate employees to be eager to hear customer feedback by providing both positive and negative responses. Put them at ease before you begin the session by using the Learning Readiness Tips below.

**Example 1:** Ask each employee to describe what he/she says and does that contributes to the positive feedback and the negative feedback. Be sure the employee is talking about behaviors and not generalities. For example, if there is a trend in customer feedback that the employee takes too long to find the answer, address that with the employee. Encourage each employee to be specific. If the employee says he/she isn’t comfortable with using the knowledge base system, that is too general. Good customer feedback management includes asking the employee questions to drill down to how and when he/she accesses information. Ask them to describe how they would find a certain piece of information. Have them show you. Now you are getting at the behaviors that can be addressed.

**Example 2:** Point out where the employee is excelling at providing great customer experiences based on trends in customer feedback. Giving positive feedback boosts employee motivation and confidence and shows each employee you value him/her. As Positive Psychologist Shawn Achor says, “Happiness proceeds success, not the other way around.” Your meaningful praise creates that happiness. Try giving the praise without any “but” comments afterward. For example, “We continually see in customer feedback that you are courteous and caring. But we need to work on...” Cut the “but” part of that statement and eagerly share good information without any bad.

**Spur-of-the moment conversations and emails**

**Example 1:** You ask an employee for help with a customer situation. As you explain the situation, remind the employee of the customer survey question or questions that are at stake for this customer’s experience. This helps to turn the employee’s “radar on” as to how he/she can make a difference.

**Which of these communication and training activities exist in your organization?**

**Ideas to include customer feedback management**

**Corporate Communication announcements or Executive Town Hall meetings**

These are influential platforms to show support from all levels of the organization for the customer experience.

1. Provide context as to how the topics relate to the organization being able to provide your customers' desired experiences.
2. Share the latest customer survey scores and sample customers' written comments that indicate trends.

**Mentoring**

Peer influence by a colleague has been cited as a positive motivator. According to research reported on Justworks: "Mentorship programs can also boost productivity within your company. According to a study by Millennium Group International, 95% of mentees reported that participating in a mentoring program motivated them to perform at an even higher rate."

1. Encourage mentors to further your organization's ability to be effective at customer feedback management. Ask mentors to become familiar with recent customer feedback and periodically relate topics to conversations with mentees to the feedback.

**Cross-departmental meetings**

Invite other departments to team meetings to discuss how the two departments work together to fulfill the customer journey.

1. Provide customer feedback by discussing each department's role in the resulting feedback, whether positive or negative. Discussing this helps employees realize their impact. Be sure to identify behaviors that are working between the two departments and where improvements can be made.

Be curious about how prominently customer survey feedback is showcased, mentioned, or reinforced during these different forms of training. Every employee development activity has an opportunity to tie back to discovering how the organization is enriching the lives of customers. Repetition indicates what is important.

Helping others to be ready to listen to and absorb the customer feedback is essential to the feedback being taken seriously. This is an important aspect of training using customer feedback. Customer

feedback is heavily influenced by the communication skills of the employees. Extraordinary communication skills are an indispensable Key Performance Indicator (KPI), especially for customer-facing employees. Judith Glaser of Conversational Intelligence shared, "To get to the next level of greatness depends on the quality of the culture, which depends on the quality of the relationships, which depends on the quality of the conversations. Everything happens through conversations!"

# Learning Readiness Tips for Training based on Customer Feedback

Create learning readiness by using these tips to help others be receptive to the feedback and willing to act



## Set the stage.

Explain the importance of customer feedback. Ask questions that help the employee or team think about the vital role of customer feedback in their jobs. Sample questions are: How might customer feedback help you be successful? What customer feedback have you heard before?



## Reduce defensiveness.

Share that there are good trends in the feedback and areas for both of you to be curious about and examine. Express faith in your employees and the valuable work they do throughout your conversations or team meetings.



## Coach them to have an outward mindset.

The Arbinger Institute defines the outward mindset as seeing beyond ourselves. Their research provides examples of how organizations have been transformed with an outward mindset. Share that you will look at several perspectives that feed into the situation that resulted in the customer feedback. These perspectives include the customer's, the employee's and the organization's. You'll discuss the emotions and what each perspective has at stake in the situation. This helps the employee listen with an empathetic ear. This also can reduce defensiveness by providing objectivity.



## Close with action.

Ask the employee to share what he/she did well, based on the feedback, and what they'd like to focus on to improve. It significantly increases the employee's buy-in when this comes from the individual employee. Help them identify behaviors and avoid being too general. For example:

Comments too general to be actionable	Comments that are behavior based and actionable
"I'll improve my voice tone."	<i>"I'll pay more attention to the customer's rate of speech and make sure my pace compliments their pace."</i>
"I'll work on my knowledge of that process."	<i>"I'll set up time with Joe since he is an expert with that process. I'll ask him to mentor me."</i>
"I'll remember to close all my customer conversations in a nice way."	<i>"I'll post a note on my computer to remind me to close every customer conversation expressing gratitude for their business."</i>

Positive customer feedback is always welcome. Be sure negative feedback is also welcome by putting your employees at ease during the process, using the tips to created readiness to hear the feedback and be willing to take action. Be prepared to share the good, the bad and the ugly in your customer feedback management process in order to be focused on the right behaviors.



## Evaluating your Training Program

Your first step is to discover the answers to the following questions to determine if your company can prove your business IS enriching the lives of your customers

- Is customer feedback information regularly disseminated throughout the organization?
- Is customer feedback information discussed and/or reinforced during any of the forms of communication and training listed? Are you illustrating the importance of the training or communication to the customer experience?
- Can each employee explain how his/her role ties to serving the organization's customers?

Keep in mind that even small steps forward are progress. Your customer feedback management is a critical element in your ongoing efforts to enhance employee development and increase customer satisfaction and loyalty.



## About the Author



**Lisa Rike, CPBA**

With over 30 years' experience, Lisa Rike continues to immerse herself in transforming leading edge theory and practices into relevant and interactive learning experiences for employees at every level. Her various certifications include behavioral analysis, team development, coaching conversations and instructional design. She has worked with hundreds of organizations in the United States, Canada and Europe. Lisa has a passion for continuous learning and is an avid researcher in the Learning & Development field. Her greatest joys are her two adult children and thinks it is a hoot when they quote her back to her!

**She is:**

- Certified in human behavioral analysis that creates productive and energizing working relationships.
- Awarded the Master's Designation in Instructional Design by the premier industry organization Association for Talent Development.
- Certified in the analysis of people talents aligned with task execution to create high-performing teams.
- Certified in a coaching approach to develop C-suite and employees at all levels.
- Experienced in creating productive team performance through foundational assessment and facilitated growth.
- Sought after to consult on call center quality programs and employee development at every level.
- Competent in needs analysis and designing/facilitating learning using customer feedback, employee discovery and feedback, and aligning to business objectives.
- Experienced working with Fortune 500 companies to boutique firms and smaller in industries including pharmaceutical, utilities, insurance, retail, agriculture, government, resort vacations, manufacturing, and medical.

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