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Customer Satisfaction Cliffhangers: Closing the Loop

by Lynn Hunsaker

Customers are typically motivated to give companies feedback by hopes that their opinions will be valued, make a difference in their near-future experiences, or spare others any grief they've endured. Anytime customers share feedback — whether solicited via survey or unsolicited via complaint or casual comments to front-line employees — it's important to acknowledge the customers' view and thank them, with assurance you're working on solutions. Don't let them feel like they're hanging on a cliff waiting for advice they offered to make a difference!

Validate Root Causes

Make it easy for front-line employees to pass along feedback to management decision-makers. If practical, act on each customer's feedback. Otherwise, collect feedback broadly for a representative picture of the customers' perspective. Identify key themes and root causes. Then validate your thinking with customers as you establish priority action areas. The validation process is an important step to eliminating customer satisfaction cliffhangers.



Close the Loop

Once you know the real root causes, create and manage an action plan. Bolster the action plan internally with visibility, stakeholder buy-in, and team motivation and accountability. Close the loop with customers who've given you feedback by sharing your action plan progress with them. By making your internal metrics visible to customers, you're helping them re-set their perceptions for fresh experiences and fresh feedback in the near future. Sharing your progress is the number one way to prevent customers from feeling that they're hanging from a cliff after communicating with you.

Eliminate Cliffhangers

Proactive communication with customers after they've given you feedback ignites their enthusiasm to continue helping you see their perspective. It improves future survey response rates and positive word-of-mouth. It's an excellent way to transition defectors or ambivalent customers to promoters of your brand. Acting on customer feedback and closing the loop with them is the most sustainable way to reduce customer churn, improve customer experience, and increase customer lifetime value.

Find out how to customize these tips to your situation; contact the author lynn.hunsaker@clearaction.biz.