

## THE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESEARCH PROCESS

By

**Harold U. Nwosu**

*Mechanical Engineering Department  
University of Port Harcourt  
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.*

### ABSTRACT

*The objective of customer satisfaction surveys is not just to get and stay connected to customers. The data collected is to be converted into meaningful information and can initiate product enhancement as well as process improvement. This paper presents the process of customer satisfaction survey research beginning with the idea of a study area and carrying through the steps of refinement, hypothesis, formulation, operational definitions of variables, measurement, statistic selection, and conclusions. The survey research process is central to several critical areas of business: productivity, customer satisfaction, attitude and morale surveys, project analysis, and numerous other categories. The basic message is that understanding the research process in its broadest context is important to total quality management regardless of discipline.*

### INTRODUCTION

Survey research is a process which enables analysis of critical issues affecting productivity and quality by providing a way to analyze many of the human factors. The use of this process,

however, requires special skills and knowledge. It is a rigorous discipline in its own right, and deserves attention for application in some areas such as customer satisfaction. Weinberg discussed numerous social science issues including ego, social structure, and behaviour affectation. We can all agree that listening to the customer is vital to business success. This has been driven home, by many, for some time. A company willing to listen to customers and use their input, often realizes a long term benefit. If customers are not satisfied, they eventually will look elsewhere (Weinberg, 1971).

Fortunately, many business today have implemented appropriate process to measure customer satisfaction and survey their needs. These process are essential to earning customer satisfaction. To beat the competition, one needs more than satisfaction. One needs customer loyalty. Effective customer communication can go a long way toward achieving that loyalty and gaining competitive advantage. Toward these goals, our communication processes have been executed on two fronts: Conducting customers

satisfaction researches, and implementing customer linkage processes.

Customer satisfaction research is a powerful tool to gather customer feedback, and it is the base upon which to initiate product and service improvements. The purpose of the customer satisfaction survey is to measure customer satisfaction levels and importance factors. It measures satisfaction with product features, production and service processes, as well as customer perceptions of the company. Ownership of the survey results is assigned to the appropriate management and teams who apply pareto analysis, developments, and presentation to executives.

It also indicates customer perception of the value of our products or services, their impact on profitability and market share. It is therefore imperative that firms become more customer focused; to help them do so, they need continuously to solicit customers' feedback. Being customer focused does not mean giving customers everything they want, or having friendly service people or adding head count and driving up the cost of doing business. It is basically making a strategic choice to enhance the value of customer relationships. It also means building a competitive advantage through customers' perceptions of the total value they receive from your firm versus your competitors. Marketing can be simply defined as meeting the needs of the customers. As with any business,

satisfied customers will provide opportunities for repeat business and create loyal customers. The degree of satisfaction varies among the customers. Some dissatisfied customers may continue to purchase your product because you are the only source. It is essential that we monitor the pulse of the customers on a regular basis. The customer satisfaction survey is one of the most effective and proven tools for collecting information. The objective of customer satisfaction surveys is not only to get and stay connected to customers but to meet their requirements always. The data collected can be converted into meaningful information and thereby initiate product enhancement as well as process improvement.

Even if your customers appear to be satisfied with your products and services, you may not be meeting their expectations or you may not be meeting other similar product needs. Therefore, we need to monitor the customer's level of satisfaction as well as their expectations and other needs. Generally, you are not the only supplier trying to satisfy the needs of the customers. Some customers prefer to have more than one supplier. How do you compare with the competition in the eyes of the customers? Customer satisfaction surveys can also help answer this question.

If we are satisfying the needs and expectations of the customers with our products and services relative to the competition, then we have a viable business. Our cost structure and pricing will



determine our profitability, only if we are satisfying the customers. Therefore, it is the customer that ultimately determines our success. The customer drives the marketing function and the marketing function drives the business. From a planning perspective, all levels of planning is driven by the desire to satisfy the needs of the customers as shown in Fig. 1.

Given the importance of customer satisfaction, we cannot afford to view it as an activity that is conducted when we have the time. It should not be relegated to a low priority under any circumstances, because it is the heart of the business. If the heart is not properly nourished, the business suffers. If we spend a lot of time putting out fires, it means that the customers are experiencing some levels of dissatisfaction. Conversely, a dissatisfied customer is generally a manifestation of internal quality problems and inadequate processes. So, it is the customer that determines the quality of our products and services as well as our internal functions. There is a tendency to view the customer as external to the company but we know that the **TQMP** concept encompasses both internal and external customers. This guideline is oriented towards the external customers, but it can be applied to internal and external customers.

Any process that consists of three stages should be defined, namely: Preparation, Coordination, and presentation. Based on past experiences,

emphasis should be placed on getting upper management involvement and commitment in the preparatory stage. This involvement should keep management abreast of the process at all three stages. Emphasis should also be placed on the presentation so that there is a clear plan of action that addresses any customer's perceived problems and anticipated marketing decisions with regard to product, price, sales, promotion, and support. In compliance with upper management's guidelines, the main objective of customer satisfaction surveys should be to determine the level of satisfaction of products, services, sales activity, and support relative to previous performance and the competition. Sub-objectives may include:

1. Identify customers better (segmentation).
2. Determine how well products and services meet the needs and/or expectations of the customers.
3. Help determine advertising/promotion strategy.
4. Discover trends in the market.

## METHODOLOGY

### 1. TACTICS AND PREPARATION

Depending on your resources and expertise, the actual survey can be conducted internally, or you can employ/ engage a market research company. In any case, it is essential that you initially go through a preparatory stage that clearly defines what you are trying to accomplish. The process is shown as Fig. 2. It is essential that executives buy

into the process. Marketing and sales management must have ownership of the assessment. They should know up front that the assessment will impact the bottom line in terms of:

- Product development decisions.
- Sales strategies decisions.
- Advertising/ Promotion decisions.
- Pricing decisions.

The objectives and decisions should be determined by those in marketing, Sales, and other departments that will derive some benefit from the survey. This should be a team effort. The objectives and decisions to be made will help to generate a list of topics and questions to ask the customers. The questions should test the following areas:

- Expectations of customers (Are you meeting it?).
- Perception of customers (Are you satisfying their needs?).
- Importance (Priority).
- Demographic data (Segmentation).
- Comparisons (Competitors, past performance).

In most cases the survey will be quantitative, meaning that you will be able to statistically quantify the results. The target audience should be clearly identified in terms of the type of customer, industry, and geographical location. The type and depth of analysis partly determine the size of the sample of the target audience, and the sample size

helps to determine the amount of money allocated to the survey. Customer satisfaction is the key to business success: Satisfied customers are repeat customers. Customers are satisfied to the extent that their expectations and needs are met.

These expectations are based on what they have been told, and the experience they have had with one organization's products and those of its competitors. Customers care about the product attribute set-function, usability, performance, reliability, and support. Customers also care about getting the best price. To be successful, a business must have the right product, right price, and right availability. An organization's effectiveness is measured by its ability to satisfy customer needs. Therefore, an organization's effectiveness is based on following:

- Providing their right product in a rapidly changing environment: A function of planning.
- Providing a product at the right price: A function of productivity.
- Providing the needed product at the right time in the changing environment: A function of adaptability.

These attributes: planning, productivity, and adaptability are the primary elements of competitive fitness, and the most important elements of organizational effectiveness.



## 2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RESEARCHER

The values of the customer satisfaction survey process are often perceived differently by staff, management, and executives from various departments or divisions. It is the responsibility of the researcher to communicate these values to all levels in the organization and seek their support. The main responsibilities of the researcher are to:

1. Consult at length with management who request the satisfaction survey to help them understand its challenges and the objectives.
2. Provide results of previously conducted survey.
3. Become familiar with the objectives before conducting the survey.
4. Question the soundness of the objectives.
5. Determine the survey methodology.
6. Determine the sample size.
7. Design the questionnaire.
8. Administer the survey.
9. Be creative as well as objective in analyzing the results.
10. Make recommendations for action, based on own judgment as well as the findings.
11. Assist results users to formulate strategies.

The survey process should be considered to be owned jointly by the researcher and the users of the survey results. A team approach to survey ownership has proven to be effective and has gained support from the research community.

After the survey is completed and the results are analyzed, executives are to be encouraged to participate in results presentation as well as the formulation of strategies for change.

## 3. PLANNING FOR ACTION-ORIENTED DECISIONS

When planning a survey, the key is to determine how the results will be implemented. A good design can provide effective action plans, establish priority of issues, determine budget requirements, and anticipate contingencies. When planning the survey, use following steps as guideline:

- Identify key questions to be asked.
- Set a plan as to how the data is to be analyzed.
- Determine how to use the information gathered.
- Commit resources to the action plans.
- Do not include questions in the survey which have no implication for action.

Whether you decide to conduct your customer satisfaction survey in-house or purchase the services from an external supplier, budgetary issues may arise. Some effective areas to emphasize when communicating these issues to management are: cost, saving, return on investment (**ROI**), and cost-benefit analysis. If operating under a tight budget, there are ways to reduce the cost without jeopardizing the quality of

the results. For example, using a flexible rather than rigid timetable if possible, using statistically efficient sampling procedures (sequential sampling, stratified sampling), collecting only essential data, skipping information that is “nice to have” but does not contribute to the decision making, controlling open-ended questions, and tabulating and analyzing only the information that is needed.

#### 4. SUPPLIER SELECTION

When it has been determined to use an outside vendor to conduct the survey, get research firm involved early in the survey process. As the first step, talk to people who have worked with the research firm and ask for their experiences. A good research firm is also willing to supply a list of their references. Some general considerations when selecting a vendor are: experience in surveying your business type, reputation of the research firm, range of talent and the availability of specialized consultants within the firm, attitude of their staff, and having a problem-solving approach to conducting surveys. Visiting the consulting firm is recommended. Watch for their security procedures to see that access to office is controlled, and reports or documents are not left unguarded. If it is a telephone survey, tour their telephone center. Inquire about the interviewers' training program, procedures used to supervise, average number of interviews per day, quality control, and the turnover rate of their interviewers.

When discussing the survey design and questionnaire, construction, challenge the researcher with questions and also watch for their ability to recognize problems. It is wise to find a research firm that has the skills of a number of varied research methodologies. This will assure a problem-oriented rather than a technique-oriented approach. When reviewing the survey proposal from the supplier, ensure that the scope and the survey objectives are well defined. The survey methodology includes the survey design, sampling procedure, questionnaire plan, data collection procedure, data processing, and the analysis procedure. The requirements for written reports and/or oral presentation need to be specified in the proposal. Time schedules in **PERT/GANTT** charts, cost breakdown, and the payment schedule should be included in a proposal. It is also important to obtain prior agreement with the research firm on any liabilities resulting from the study and the rights of ownership, storage and disposal of documents, data and results. Once a research firm is chosen, request an analytical plan and make clear that the results/recommendations are to be used for decision making so that they can plan their recommendations accordingly.

#### 5. CONDUCTING THE SURVEY

Surveys are generally conducted in three ways: in-person interviews, telephone interviews, and mailed questionnaires. The first two methods are preferable in terms of obtaining a high response rate and valid data from respondents, since the



intimacy of personal contact enhances the likelihood that respondents will be more committed to the request for their opinion, they also provide the opportunity for the interviewer to follow-up the respondents' answers in a customized fashion. However, interview methods have two major disadvantages: they are expensive to conduct, and they are not anonymous. Anonymity is a must since people are generally reluctant to provide negative feedback when they are personally identified.

Therefore, mailed questionnaires are very commonly administered to obtain honest customer feedback in a cost-effective way. To overcome the problem of lowered response rates using mailed surveys, several strategies are used: enclosing gifts or cash respondents with a summary of the survey's results are two commonly used incentive strategies. A simple and very effective method for increasing response rate is to contact candidates on the telephone before the survey is mailed to inform them that it is coming, and calling again after the mailing, reminding them to return it. This strategy commonly produces response rates of over 80 percent.

## 6. SAMPLE SELECTION

From the conceptualization, it is clear what kind of data needs to be collected. For example, a hypothesis stating a difference between software engineers and hardware engineers indicates two distinct populations. The issues of where to

obtain the samples and which individuals within those populations need to be resolved. In an industrial environment, randomness may not be as important or achievable as in sampling the general population. Access to the entire industry is not likely so the sample pools are smaller. The way the data is recorded most facilitate easy entry to a data base for computer processing. While the package itself should not be the driving factor, it creates extra work if the data has to be reformatted in order to accommodate peculiarities of the analysis package. Therefore, be sure that the data collected conforms to the analysis tools you intend to use. There are several issues to manage during data collection. It is important that the way the data is collected is standardized. Inconsistencies will create anomalies in the responses.

Other factors affect the responses, not the least of which is time. The longer the elapsed time in collecting data, the chances are greater that the results will be biased by external events, subject maturation, and other factors. Unless the researcher is studying the specific aspects of time, it is better to get in, get the data, and get out quickly. Interviewing is a good technique for ensuring that questionnaires are completed with consistency and in good faith. If the method of data collection involves interviewing, the interviewer should be familiar with the lexicon of the subject being interviewed. This is particularly true when dealing with professionals. A sample is a subset of the population of interest from which

data will be collected. This data will then be used to draw conclusions about the entire population. By sampling only a portion of the population, time and money are saved in conducting the survey. Sampling a population appropriately can be a very efficient method for drawing conclusions about the customer population. Done incorrectly, invalid conclusions can be drawn from the sample and applied to the entire population.

The major consideration in selecting a sample is that the data obtained from it be **REPRESENTATIVE** of the population sampled. The method used to assure representativeness is **RANDOM SAMPLING**, wherein every member of the population of interest has an **EQUAL** chance of being included in the sample. Any selection criteria which involve human judgment for being included in the sample can introduce bias to the sample, in which case the data would not necessarily be generalizable to the entire population. In order to correctly obtain a random sample, a random number table should be used to dictate which population members are to be sampled. To determine the **SAMPLE SIZE**, the number of population members to be sampled, three elements must be determined in advance:

1. Population Size: What is the size of the population of interest?
2. Precision Level: How close will the sample data be to the actual population values... within 1 percent, or 5 percent, or 10 percent?

3. Reliability: What percent of random samples would yield sample data within the stated precision level bandwidth... 80 percent, or 90 percent, or 95 percent, or 99 percent?

These decisions will affect the utility of the data obtained in the survey. In determining sample size using these considerations, it is clear that certain trade-offs must be made. There may be heavy sampling costs in requiring very unreliable results may invalidate their utility. The population of interest may have to be scaled down to permit more economical sampling. The following illustrative table shows how many members must be sampled from a population of 3,000 to obtain the indicated precision and reliability levels:

| Precision<br>Level | Reliability |       |       |       |
|--------------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|
|                    | 80%         | 90%   | 95%   | 99%   |
| ±10%               | 41          | 67    | 94    | 158   |
| ±5%                | 156         | 249   | 341   | 544   |
| ±1%                | 1,734       | 2,079 | 2,286 | 2,541 |

In summary, selecting a sample size involves crucial advance decisions which will determine the scope and applicability of the final survey results.

## 7. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The background section of a questionnaire is extremely important. In it, the respondent provides a personal profile indicating a number of factors such as education level, age, industrial



experience, and so forth. This background data is often the source of independent variables. Again, the sub-hypotheses will set the requirements for the required data. Regardless of who design the survey instrument, the major areas of concern when writing the questions are:

- Know the objectives (one or two major objectives).
- Know your audience.
- Type of analysis help determines type of questions.
- Avoid multiple issues questions.

#### 7-1 QUESTION WORDING:

- a. Only include items for which responses have action implications.
- b. Keep questions as concise as possible.
- c. Avoid jargon and acronyms to maintain clarity.
- d. Avoid ambiguous terms (e.g., “adequate”).
- e. Avoid double-barreled questions e.g. was the staff courteous and competent?

#### 7-2 SEQUENCING:

- a. Organize items into logically meaningful sections (e.g., Service Hours, Staff, Hardware, Software).
- b. End sections with global ratings for the section.
- c. Start with simpler topic areas to draw respondents into the survey.
- d. Measure meaningful respondent characteristics (demographics).

#### 7-3 LENGTH:

- a. Longer surveys will reduce response rate.
- b. Try to limit survey length to four pages or less, if possible.

#### 7-4 IMPORTANCE/ SATISFACTION:

- a. Each item should be rated on level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction.
- b. Each item should be rated on level of importance/unimportance.
- c. This technique provides a method of prioritizing the actions to be taken once the results are analyzed.
- d. Importance ratings are meaningful independent of satisfaction ratings in determining customer requirements.

#### 7-5 SCALE SELECTION:

- a. Determine granularity of customer perceptions to decide on number of scale points... 4-point scale or 100-point scale?
- b. Determine need for scale-point labels; usually helpful as anchors (e.g., Very Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Satisfied, Very Satisfied).
- c. Odd number of scale points permits fence sitting.
- d. Try to include a “Don’t Know” or “Not Applicable” category.

### 7-6 CLOSED-VERSUS OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:

- Closed-ended questions are more easily quantifiable.
- Try to include open-ended questions, since areas of customer concern may not have been included among closed-ended questions.
- Open-ended questions be quantified using content analysis.

### 7-7 COMPETITOR COMPARISONS:

- Try to make comparisons explicit by naming competition.
- Use survey content sections to compare competition (e.g., service hours, staff, hardware, software).
- Make explicit who is being compared to whom.

### 7-8 PRETESTING QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN:

- Select a sub sample of about 10-25 people to uncover problems with questionnaire design.
- Sample from the same population to be used for actual survey.
- Open-ended interview with pretest participants is desirable to ascertain their specific reactions to question wording and content.

### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS

During the conceptualization phase, the basic research area is sorted out and hypotheses are

formulated. At the beginning of a project, ideas are not yet well thought out. In fact, the actual research area may be jumbled or too broad and consequently requires refinement. In this phase, the researcher, in essence, documents the requirements of the research. The researcher must clearly isolate the research problem. The basic hypothesis can border on a simple observation or assumption. It must be refutable. It sets the tone and direction of the research efforts. The basic hypothesis is narrow enough to crystallize the research area, and broad enough to necessitate further refinement. The refinement occurs when the sub-hypotheses are stated. The sub-hypotheses are a body of testable relationships, which, when taken together, tend to support or refute the basic hypothesis. Sub-hypotheses state relationships between independent and dependent variables that are measurable and disprovable.

The whole issue of quantifying the variables and selecting appropriate statistics drives the researcher to specify acceptance criteria for the sub-hypotheses. From a process standpoint, the researcher may, as in the case of non-parametric data, be forced to first specify a null hypothesis, then choose a statistic like Chi square and finally, specify the acceptance or significance level. It is important to realize that the selection of statistic and the selection of acceptance criteria are done in advance of collecting any data. From the outset, the researcher and the research team know very clearly what mathematical issues will drive the



conclusions. In support of this, the researcher should specify what each of the ideal or predicted outcomes would be. This includes tables, minimum sample size requirements, statistical methods, and clearly stated significance levels. These tables and presentation techniques are the same table and presentation techniques that will be used in the final report. The difference, obviously, is the real data used in the final report. This specification is called the hypothetical findings, and when combined with all the other documentation of this phase, constitutes a survey research requirements document (Siegel, 1956):

### 1. BASIC STATISTICS

After the survey data is collected, each item has a **DISTRIBUTION** of responses underlying it: 30 percent Very Satisfied, 40 percent Satisfied, etc. To get the best picture of a survey's results, the frequency distribution for each item should be displayed, showing how many respondents (or what percentage) selected each scale point for that item. However, to assimilate, so some basic descriptive statistics should be provided to summarize the data. The most common descriptive statistics is the **MEAN**, or average, response. For instance, if an item on a 5-point scale had 30 responses of 2 and 30 responses of 4, the mean would be 3.00. However, 60 responses of 3 would yield the same mean, as would 30 responses of 1 and 30 responses of 5. In this example, very different data patterns yielded the same mean. The mean can thus mask frequency

distribution patterns that are crucial to understanding the data. Does this imply that the mean is worthless in interpreting survey results?

There is another statistic, the standard deviation, which is designed to convey the nature of the data distribution underlying the mean. Just as the mean is the **AVERAGE** of the **VALUES** in a distribution, the standard deviation is the **AVERAGE** of the **DISTANCES** from the mean for each value in the distribution (squared). Using the standard deviation, then, we can ascertain how widely dispersed the values are around the mean. The larger the standard deviation, the more widely dispersed the distribution. Any mean used to describe a set of data should include with it the standard deviation for that distribution, to give a clearer picture of the distribution of values behind that mean. In the above example, the three distributions all having a mean of 5 would have very different standard deviations. In a normal distribution, 68.3 percent of the values are within 1 standard deviation of the mean, 95.5 percent of the values are within 2 standard deviations, and 99.7 percent are within 3 standard deviations.

Once the data is collected, entered into the system, and scored, the charts and tables from the hypothetical findings activities are filled with real data. Actual significance levels, correlations, and measures of central tendency are available for analysis. During the analysis, the results of the statistical tabulations are studied. Common sense

is applied to statistical representations of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Deviations from normal distribution are identified and discussed. The skills needed are those of mathematical interpretation and subject matter expertise in the disciplines around which the hypothesis and sub-hypotheses are focused. The goal of the analysis is to reach some conclusions. The raw statistical results themselves are not conclusive. Conclusions are judgments made by the qualified subject matter experts of the research team. Acceptance of the basic hypothesis depends on whether, when taken as a whole, the sub-hypotheses tend to support it. In all probability, not all of the sub-hypotheses will be supported. Therefore, the element of judgment is critical (Kazmier and Pohl, 1984).

## 2. DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWNS

Any distribution of values obtained for an entire sample may also have underlying it a set of subdistributions which systematically differ based on the characteristics of the respondents. Old customers may view things differently from new customers, those in different geographies may have differing views, those with different sales reps etc. It is usually helpful to divide the sample into the various demographic categories, to discover any differences in response patterns among them. When doing so, however, it is important to recognize that the sample size among the subcategories of respondents may be

so small as to render the interpretation of the data meaningless. One rule of thumb is that any demographic subcategory should contain between 20 and 30 respondents to be interpretable.

## 3. PRESENTATION AND CONTROL

It is commonly accepted that the presentation largely determines if the information will be used. All the attributes of a good presentation such as knowing your audience knowing issues as perceived by your “buyers” apply to the presentation of the survey results, conclusions, recommendation and plan of action. We have to go beyond where the supplier left off. We must identify and “prioritize” problems and derive a plan to correct the problems or processes. This may entail some training. The plan of action is a follow -up on your tentative plan in the preparatory stage, but it is now concrete in that it reflects the actual results of the survey. The gap to be closed can be the difference between the customer’s expectations and your performance and/or the difference between satisfactory performance. Your efforts to resolve the problems should involve **TQMP** and it should be closely monitored. If we have done an adequate job in the preparatory stage, management is not likely to show resistance to change or resistance to provide appropriate resources (see Fig.3). Customer satisfaction assessment is an ongoing process and must be monitored periodically. The designated person within the division should insure that there is a benchmark which will be used for future



comparisons and as a gauge of progress in meeting the needs of the customers. Management must be informed about the progress.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

One common problem in applying the results of a survey is having too much data and not enough information. Sometimes the data is presented too descriptively and not interpreted. A good conclusion consists of key statements that are accurate and well supported by the data obtained in the survey. To organize a formal report, the following items should be included:

1. Cover Letter
2. Title Page
3. Table of Contents
4. Executive Summary
  - a. Background
  - b. Results
  - c. Conclusions
  - d. Recommendations
5. The Text
  - a. Introduction
  - b. Background
  - c. Objectives
6. Body
  - a. Survey methodology
  - b. Results
7. Conclusions
  - a. Findings
  - b. Recommendations

A research project should end with one or more recommendations. The research was undertaken for some reason, therefore the analysis and conclusions should form a framework for recommending action. If the results, for example, indicate worker productivity would be significantly affected by changes in leadership styles, then, there should be a set of recommended actions to introduce them to the management structure. It is also the responsibility of the researcher to motivate the concerned parties to work with the findings and assist them understanding the data collected. Total Quality Management Process (TQMP) tools are very useful in identifying the problems uncovered in the survey and analyzing the results. Pareto charts can rank problems and portray a concise picture of the most pressing problems needing attention. The fish bone diagram is a disciplined approach to cause-and-effect analysis to identify the most likely causes of problems identified in the survey (Mizuno, 1988).

#### 6. ON-GOING COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS SURVEY RESULTS

As a measurement tool, it is not unusual to conduct customer satisfaction surveys on a regular basis. However, there are a couple of areas that need to be highlighted:

1. Key indicators should be included in each wave of the survey, which should be reflected in identically-worded questions administered in every survey.

2. The scale should be also consistent for comparison purpose.

## 7. PUTTING SURVEY RESULTS IN PERSPECTIVE

The primary function of the researcher is to summarize the survey's data and produce information for the decision-making executives. It is necessary to understand the executives' perspective and expectations. The following table displays some disparities in the viewpoints of the survey's users:

| Researcher                          | Executives                            |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| The last step in the survey process | Part of decision process              |
| The end of a project                | The beginning of a project            |
| The answer                          | A piece of the puzzle                 |
| A summary of what was done          | Recommendation on what be done should |
| An exploratory document             | A confirmatory document               |

As indicated earlier in this paper, the responsibility of the researcher is to provide technical expertise in the survey process. However, it is critical that the ownership of the survey findings belongs to the users of this information (Kohnut, 1999).

## 8. ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethics, apart from any moral dimension also impact on the quality of the survey. Some ethical concerns are:

1. Unrealized promise of anonymity.
2. Falsified identification.
3. Misrepresentation about the survey procedure.
  - a. Purpose of the survey.
  - b. Length of the questionnaire or interview.
  - c. Follow-up contact.
  - d. Use of the survey results.

The researcher must accept the ethical obligations of conducting human research. Use the code of ethics from American Sociological Association or Marketing Research Association as guidelines.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

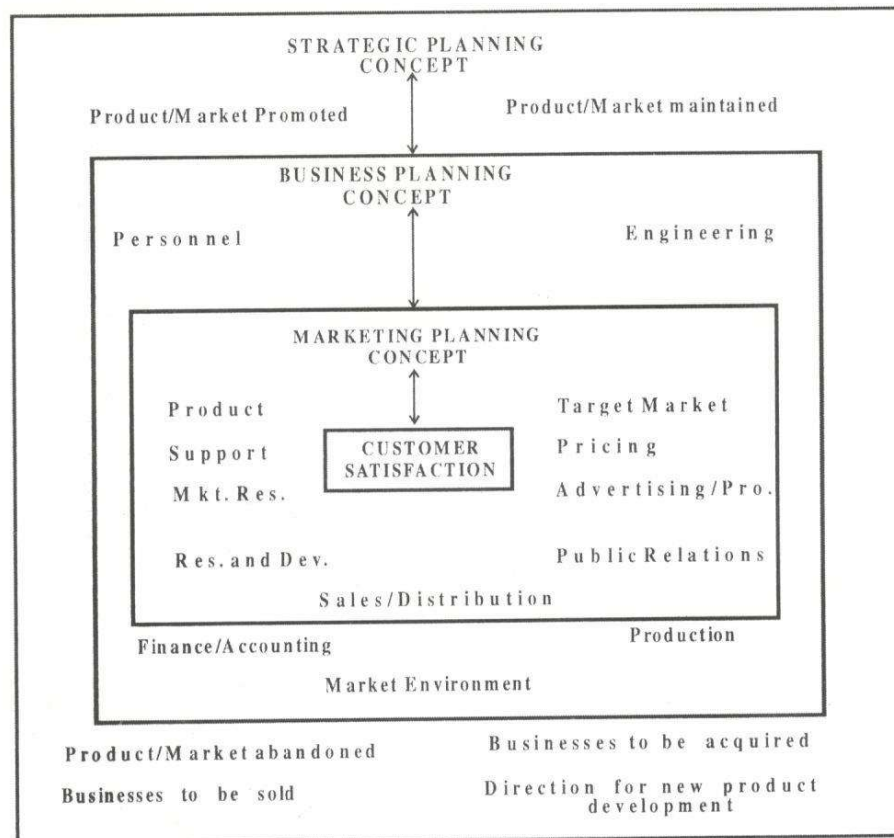
The objective of customer satisfaction surveys is not just to get and stay connected to customers. The data collected is to be converted into meaningful information and can initiate product enhancement as well as process improvement. The survey research process is central to several critical areas of business: productivity, customer satisfaction, attitude and morale surveys, project analysis, and numerous other categories. The basic message is that understanding the research process in its broadest context is important to total quality management regardless of discipline. A company willing to listen to customers and use their input, often realizes a long term benefit. If customers are not satisfied, they eventually will look elsewhere. One of the largest obstacles to overcome is the changing attitudes toward listening to the customer when they express dissatisfaction. To become effective in a



customer-oriented manner means going beyond the statement, and using customer input to bring about positive results. This strategy becomes even more effective, when it is apparent to the customer that change has resulted from their input.

## REFERENCES

1. Borman, E. G.; and Borman, N. C. (1998). Burgess Publishing Company, Fourth Edition, New York.
2. Eagle, A. R. (1954). A Method for Handling Errors in Testing and Measuring, Industrial Quality Control, pp. 10-14.
3. Helmstadter, G. C. (1980). Research Concepts In Human Behavior, Prentice Hall, NJ.
4. Kazmier, L. J.; and Pohl, N. F. (1984). Basic Statistics for Business and Economics, McGraw-Hill Inc., New York.
5. Kohut, A.; and Destefano, L. (1999). Workers Today Want More From their Jobs. The Gallup Organisation, STAR IBUNE, New York.
6. Mizuno, S. (1988). Management For Quality Improvement, Productivity Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
7. Phillips, B. S. (1971). Social Research Macmillan Publishing Company; New York.
8. Shneiderman, B. (1980). Software Psychology. Winthrop Publishers, Inc., Cambridge, Mass.
9. Siegel, S. (1956). Non-Parametric Statistics, McGraw Hill, New York.
10. Weinberg, G. M. (1971). The Psychology of Computer Programming, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York.

**Figure 1: Integration planning processes.**



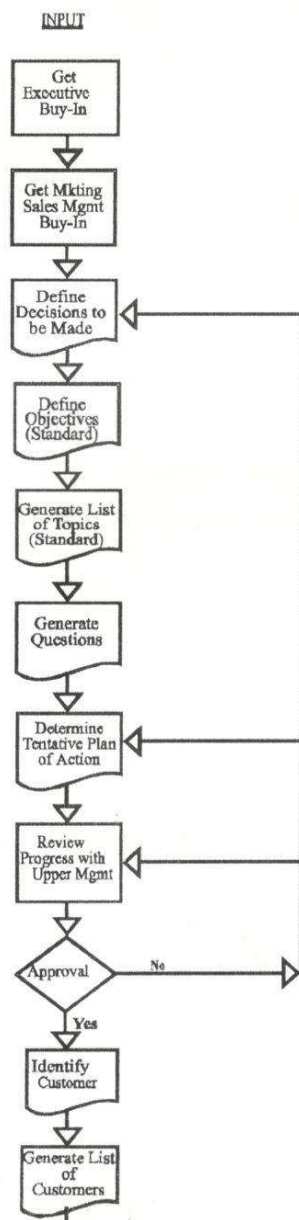


Figure 2: Input (Preparation).

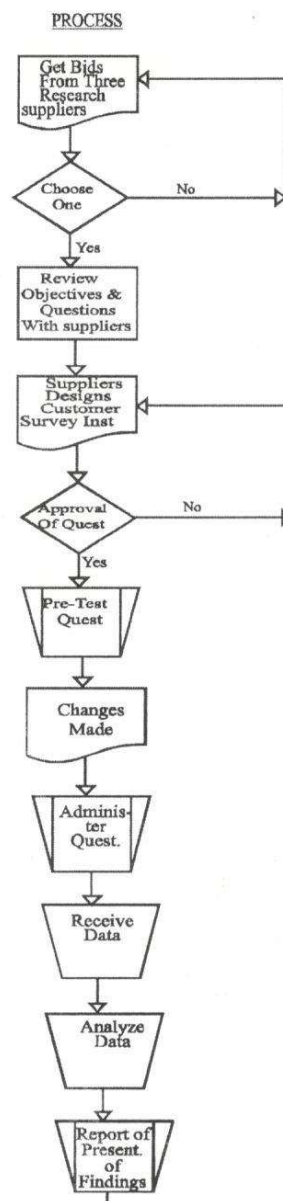


Figure 3: Process (Coordination).