

Does Voice of the Customer Drive Your Service Decisions?

Questions to Help You Improve Service by Capturing—and Sharing—Your Customers’ Compliments, Suggestions, and Complaints

If your doors are open, you are serving your customers. But how well are you serving them? Is their service experience average and expected? Or does it surprise and delight them?

At many companies, the customer’s service experience takes a back seat to tasks and problems that seem more pressing. Months and even years go by with no changes made to the protocols, processes, and procedures that impact the customer experience. An “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it” attitude develops.

Yet times change and so do customer expectations. And in our increasingly competitive global market, average isn’t good enough. If you don’t offer your customers an outstanding service experience (supported by an uplifting service culture), then one of your competitors will.

One powerful and immediate way to improve your service is to get ideas and advice straight to the source by capturing “Voice of the Customer” (VOC) feedback. Make it clear to your customers that their complaints, compliments, and comments will be carefully studied, appreciated, and valued. Capture as much VOC feedback as you can and make sure it is shared with the service providers and decision makers throughout your organization.

Consider these examples of companies that successfully seek out and apply what customers have to say:

- At Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, customer comments are proactively gathered each day and then shared with team members in briefings at the beginning of each shift. This gives both frontline and support employees the insights they need to provide better service and to more effectively respond to suggestions and problems.
- At Microsoft, the words and phrases people type into free-form comment fields is carefully studied every day. Their objective in listening to this verbatim text is to discover new drivers of customer satisfaction and shape the service Microsoft provides.
- At San Diego International Airport, a large sign and a stack of attractive forms awaits travelers at baggage claim. The sign simply asks, “How are we doing?” and the forms ask a single question: “What can we do to make your next visit more enjoyable?”
- At Singapore’s Changi Airport, each washroom has a touch-screen feedback system that asks each traveler to “Please rate our toilet.” Travelers choose from five faces ranging from a toothy grin for “Excellent” to a disappointed frown for “Very Poor.” Whenever a rating of “Poor” or “Very Poor” is given, washroom attendants immediately appear to correct the problem.



Here are some questions to spark your thinking and help you harness the power of your “Voice of the Customer.” Discuss these with your leaders and team members at all levels and, if you wish, with the team at Uplifting Service.

Seek Qualitative Insights, Not Just Quantitative Data

Chances are your company already employs standard surveys based on quantitative data that yield rankings, ratings, and statistics. While this type of data is very useful, it's also important to collect subjective, qualitative, and emotional data in the form of opinions, observations, and suggestions.

Free-form commentary from your customers provides you with the emotional and expressive inputs to help lift your service to the next level.

You can capture ideas, insights, and impressions by asking your customers questions like these. Note that some of these questions sound quite similar—and they are. And while you do not need to ask them all, asking the same question a slightly different way will often bring you more answers, more insights, and more of your customers' creative ideas:

1. What did you like about our service?
2. What did you not like about our service?
3. What would you like us to do that we are not yet doing?
4. What would you like us to change?
5. What did you appreciate the most?
6. What did you appreciate the least?
7. What should we start doing, or stop doing?
8. What should we do more of, or less of?
9. What could we provide that was missing?
10. Did anyone or anything let you down?
11. What could we do to win more of your business?
12. What are our competitors doing that you think we should do, too?

13. What could we do differently that would make it better for you the next time?
14. What could we do to win or deserve more of your business?
15. What could we do for you that would be worth raising our prices by 10 percent?

Make Sure Your Employees Seek Out—and Listen to— the Voice of the Customer

Don't limit your customer feedback gathering to only “passive” formats like online surveys and printed feedback forms. Every customer-facing employee can also be active in soliciting your VOC. Employees can be especially powerful in capturing comments, compliments, and complaints when your customers' impressions and experiences are fresh.

Discuss these questions with your team:

1. Are your employees curious to know what customers have to say about their service?
2. Do your employees proactively ask customers what your company does well and what it might do better?
3. Are your employees empowered to respond to customer comments with action, or the promise of action?
4. Do your employees assure customers with a promise that their comments will be reviewed and acted upon? Is that promise being kept by your organization?
5. Do your employees gather customers' contact information to enable timely follow-up?
6. Do you share current VOC input with all employees? Is this done in a creative and compelling manner?

Know How to Leverage Customer Complaints

Customer complaints may not be fun to hear or read, but they can be very valuable for your organization because they provide the opportunity to make constructive changes and win back customer loyalty. When your company receives customer complaints, do you examine them for opportunities to:

1. Identify areas where your systems require improvement?
2. Identify where your procedures need to be improved, updated, or revised?
3. Discover information your customers receive that is insufficient, erroneous, or out of date?
4. Identify team members who need more training or closer supervision?
5. Highlight inconsistencies among shifts, departments, or locations?
6. Refocus your attention, priorities, and budget toward service?
7. Identify emerging trends and changing customer expectations?
8. Identify customers to invite into pilot runs, focus groups, and beta tests?
9. Gather content and current case studies for your service education programs?
10. Share important news and information with everyone in your company and educate them about what your customers experience and expect? (Sharing customer complaints, along with your replies and action steps, is a powerful method to engage employees and avoid complacency.)

Spread Your Voice of the Customer Feedback Throughout Your Organization

To harness the value of your VOC, share it frequently and widely throughout your organization. Ask yourself:



1. What procedures are in place to ensure VOC is shared in all departments and at all levels?
2. Do your leaders continuously bring the VOC feedback to their teams?
3. Do your leaders encourage employees to think about and discuss specific VOC comments and ideas?
4. Do your leaders explain to internal employees how their actions are connected to both positive and negative customer feedback?
5. Is VOC feedback part of your new employee orientation and continuing education for all employees?
6. Do your employees know which changes, investments, and improvements are a result of customers' compliments, complaints, and suggestions?
7. Does your company benchmark its VOC processes with those of other organizations?

Want to See the Bigger Picture? Uplifting Service Can Help You Assess and Improve Your Service Culture.

“Voice of the Customer” comprises only one building block of a proven architecture that you can use to create an uplifting service culture. Contact UP for a more in-depth cultural assessment, to compare relevant case studies, and to learn more about the proven path to building a sustainable cultural advantage.



Uplifting Service is a global consulting and education firm based in Singapore, serving multi-national clients worldwide. We help clients develop a culture of service excellence, aligning the entire organization to win the hearts and minds of customers. We work with leaders who seek to harness the power of service excellence and seek the impact of a strong and sustainable service culture.

UP's proven proprietary methodology aligns, integrates, and accelerates organizations in three essential areas: Service Leadership, Continuous Service Improvement, and The 12 Building Blocks of Service Culture. This proven approach leads to an action-oriented culture, empowering everyone to delight customers and colleagues with consistently uplifting service.

Client Results

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"We use the proven Uplifting Service tools and methodology to design our global customer centricity program. UP has an unrivalled approach, enabling companies build a strong and sustainable culture of service excellence."



"Uplifting Service addressed the problem we were trying to solve – getting over 10,000 employees to all move in the same direction. UP is really good at understanding our challenges and helping us address these by leveraging a highly effective methodology."



"I appreciate the change. I can see and feel a shift in the way Crown approaches our team, in the way they speak and the way they ask. They focus on what we are working on to achieve as a business and how we can become better partners to move our agenda forward."



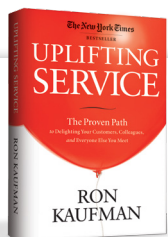
"UP gives insights to change mindset. Now we focus on end to end thinking. I can put myself in someone else's shoes and evaluate what is important."



"Uplifting Service helps us create a culture of obsession for the customer for the entire organization, inspiring everyone to work as one to take the next step up."



"Uplifting Service is the cornerstone that helped STERIS revitalize focus on our Customer, helping us differentiate our offers in a price-sensitive marketplace and drive customer loyalty."



The New York Times
BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Ron Kaufman founded Uplifting Service in 2003. He is one of the world's most sought-after educators, consultants, thought leaders on the topic of service excellence and customer experience. He is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller, *Uplifting Service*.

