

Insight – More To It Than Research

What's the point in spending large amounts of your budget on research if it doesn't actually get used? Sadly, much research conducted ends in a reports whose findings are never really put to use. Apart from the waste, what about the poor respondents who never see any difference as a result of the time they put in? Repeated involvement really depletes the goodwill factor especially when they never actually witness any change as a result. Consequently, it gets harder to recruit the right people to help.

Where does it go wrong?

Often the research is of more interest and relevance to the business than the respondents for one thing. What's in it for customers?

Some "exploratory" research is necessary but, unless what is being asked is aligned to what business users of the research are trying to achieve, it won't help them to take key decisions or change the right things.

Thirdly, much of the research done is concentrated on getting a widespread or horizontal view – safety in numbers from a few questions asked in omnibus surveys.

The benefits of digging deeper...

Increasingly, if you want real insight, there is more to gain from getting greater depth, testing the results of analysis on the customer data you hold, and seeing whether the feedback supports your intuition regarding what the data is telling you. This is especially the case where customer relationships or the customer experience is concerned. This may mean more from fewer respondents or even eventually less surveys, but is that a problem? Not if you can achieve some real nuggets from the work that you do and it translates into meaningful tasks within effective workplans.

Continuous improvement...

The beauty of this type of research is that, if you get the framework right, it can be repeated to measure the impact of change or "continuous improvement" over time. Once you can measure change in this way, the research becomes an important feedback mechanism for managers and the findings a useful (even vital) tool to help them manage. Add to that a mechanism for comparing current performance against expectations

and/or competitors and you really are beginning to stretch the value from your research budget.

Creating a culture of goodwill

Finally, how do we maintain the goodwill of customers? Often the only effort made to make research a positive experience is to use incentives. Billed and used in the right way, research can be a means of engaging in a very positive dialogue with customers and developing relationships with them. Customers can see how the results are being used, recognise that you value their input and, if you update them on progress, that is often all they are looking for.

So, for senior managers to really acknowledge the power of customer feedback, the research programme needs to be structured in such a way as to provide some oomph behind their efforts to develop the business – real and valuable insight, not only from analysing all the information you have, but supplemented by additional structured customer feedback.

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