



For more information about Azar & Associates, go to www.azarandassociates.com

17 Tips on How to Effectively Solicit and Gather Customers Quotes

When was the last time you talked with the people who buy your products and service's, and pay your salary? I mean a face-to-face or voice-to-voice conversation with those good people that keeps you in business.

Customers are your expert witnesses-people who can provide you with marketing intelligence that result in marketing breakthroughs.

In my opinion, nothing replaces the credibility and natural cadence of a customer quote. And for those of you with a tight marketing budget, customer interviews are virtually free. There's no huge research budget required.

Whether you are a sales manager, marketing vice president, product development, or a consultant, like I am, your customers are a solid source of eye-opening anecdotal insights. They have no hidden agendas, no corporate turf to protect. They simply want the best-they-can-get-that-does-the-job-at-the-right-price.

So, if it's been few months since you've had a conversation with a customer, it's time to pick up the phone and call. Here are 17 tips for how to effectively gather these comments so you make the most of your time.

1. Focus groups and surveys have their place, but they don't replace the one-to-one customer conversations. Phone interviews with select customers are extremely valuable.
2. Who should you interview? Ask your sales people, office staff, receptionist for candidates to call.
3. Before you call, gather background information about the individual you're calling, such as name, length of time as a customer, product / service bought, and reason they are on your call list.
4. Talk to new customers who have recently made the buying decision, as well as established customers who stuck with you through thick and thin. Both have valuable insight that can help you connect with your prospects
5. Prepare a list of questions-some specific, others open ended. Run those questions by your client for input and approval.
6. During your interviews, listen between the lines for additional questions to ask
7. Include the date and time you talk with each person as part of your written report. You never know when and how this will come in handy.



8. When you first call to set an interview time, introduce yourself and give a brief reason for the interview, i.e. "I've been working on new advertising materials for my ABC Company and I would like to talk to customers like you to help me understand how people make their buying decisions." This makes your intentions for the interview clear from the very beginning.
9. Let your interviewee know you are interested in hearing about both positives and negatives. This is a unique opportunity to uncover information that can help improve product, service's, future marketing plans and customer service.
10. Briefly explain how the comments shared by the interviewee may be used, "Brochure, website, copy, etc." This provides the background for why you're asking the questions and reinforces the value of the customers opinions and experiences.
11. Reassure interviewees that, before anything they say will be used in print or online, they will have the opportunity to approve it.
12. Mention upfront how long the interview will take. Try to keep calls to 15-20 minutes. You can use the 15-minute time limit as a reason to end or keep the call on track.
13. Thank the person for his or her time and ideas at the beginning and at the end of the call.
14. Go through your notes immediately after the call and highlight the most valuable comments while the individual interview is top of mind.
15. If you are doing interviews for advertising purposes, you may want to include a photo of the person with his or her comments. It adds credibility.
16. Write up each customers' comments for their approval as soon as possible after the interview. If you wait, the comments will lose some of their unique personality.
17. Always follow up with a thank you note. Again, this reinforces the value of the comments shared.

Call us today at (661) 810-2446 or visit us on-line at www.azarandassociates.com