6 "Better Than Surveys" Ways to Find Out What Your Customers Think

A few years ago, a trend hit—customizing your offerings to what your customers wanted. It involved surveying every part of their experience and shaping your business based on results. Customer-designed offerings kept a lot of businesses alive during COVID. The idea is a great one, give them what they want, make them feel important, and they'll return.

This premise was so widely adopted that we all became professional survey takers. Now every moment you spend with a business (online or in-person) is followed by a survey on your experience. From airlines to doctors, they're all doing it. These requests are exhausting and make people regret giving out their emails.

But it's important to ensure your business offerings are in-line with what your customers want, right? So how do you ensure this without giving them survey fatigue? Here are a few ideas that will help you get the information you need without annoying them.

Skip the Survey: Learn What Your Customers Want in More Meaningful Ways

1. **Exit Drop Box.** If you have an in-person business, at the end of the transaction give people red and green poker chips (they can be made out of cardboard) and ask them to drop the color that best fits their experience today in the box by the door. The other

one can go in the recycling box. This gives you a quick idea of whether your customer experience for a given day is as good as it should be.

2. **Website Pop-up.** At the end of an online transaction, give your customer a single question based on something you want to know. Make it a radial button answer for a quick response. Don't ask a generic question like "did you enjoy the experience?". Make it something more revealing like "did you find our website easy to navigate?". Ask different questions each week but stick with one at a time. Add a meaningful thank you message after they answer.

3. **Social Media**. Post a customer experience or product/service question to social media but invite people to answer in a fun way by using emoticons, for instance to signify their most recent experience doing business with you. Or ask them to use a gif to describe it. It's not exact science but it can be fun.

4. **Interactive menus**. Thanks to COVID, a lot of businesses like restaurants aren't using paper menus. They're using QR codes to access online menus. If you're using online menus in your business, make them interactive. Allow people to hover over and see pics of the items and add comments or use emoticons. These "comments" then serve as social proof for future customers.

5. **Text.** Remember passing notes in middle school asking someone if they liked someone else? You can do the same funny type of question using SMS. Make it creative and fun and people are likely to respond to it. You can use that same middle-school format leveraging you against your competition in an "us or them" rivalry. You may not always get the answer you want but it can be fun for you and your customers.

6. **Reviews.** Forget polls and surveys. Those things are just for your own info and other than giving you an idea to change your business for the better, they don't really do anything for you. Reviews, on the other hand, do. So, the next time you want to put a survey in front of your customers, consider asking them to review you instead.

Surveys are great tools for learning more about customer experience but these days they're too overdone. No one has time for them and they're mildly annoying when they clutter up the email inbox. That doesn't mean you should forgo asking your customers' opinions. You just need to do that in a fun, less intrusive way.

Christina R. Metcalf (formerly Green) is a marketer who enjoys using the power of story and refuses to believe meaningful copy can be written by bots. She helps chamber and small business professionals find the right words when they don't have the time or interest to do so. Christina hates exclamation points and loves road trips. Say hi on Twitter or reach out on Facebook.