# 7 ways you can get more value from your precious customer insight

How often have you seen expensive research gathering dust; wasted and ignored? Findings (perhaps important truths) fading from corporate memory, squeezed out by today's urgent demands?

It's true that sometimes interesting but valueless questions are posed, and that too often research fails to tie insights to actions. However having been involved in hundreds of research projects I find the vast majority contain powerful customer insights that can help a company become fitter, more popular and richer.

In this multi-channel, fast moving and competitive world understanding your customers better has never been more important.

Here are seven things we have found help companies fully exploit the value locked in this rich resource. Some are simple, others require effort; all make a valuable contribution.

1. Raise the bar
2. Regularly review the body of past research
3. Think cross functionally
4. Ask four 'so what' questions throughout every research project
5. Distil your findings, ideally to a single page
6. Think 'customer driven transformation' not 'research'
7. Ensure you have a cross-functional team with the skills and authority to act on research findings

## 1. Raise the bar

Too often metrics, like Customer Satisfaction (CSAT), are used to justify inaction rather than to inform change.

It is amazing how a small shift in perspective can create massive shifts in behaviour. CSAT scores are no exception. We regularly see reports where 92% or 97% of customers are said to be satisfied. 'Satisfied customers' being those who mark extremely, very and somewhat satisfied in a survey.

Faced with an overwhelmingly positive experience any change initiative can seem pointless, churlish even. It encourages inaction and complacency; after all ***'we're doing really well'***.

However it is easy to raise the bar and come to a very different conclusion. In these days of growing intolerance to slow or inefficient service and increasing customer choice 'somewhat satisfied' really doesn't make the grade. Seen another way it could be interpreted as a 'bit satisfied', or 'underwhelmed'.

We recommend companies measure satisfaction only by those who are extremely or very satisfied. This typically reduces a score in the mid 90's down to the mid 70's. Suddenly a

The Customer Journey Consultancy Ltd. The Innovation Centre, Broad Quay, Bath BA1 1UD.
t | (0845) 83 82 159 m | (07860) 633235 w | www.customerjourney.uk.com

VAT Registration Number: 131 3970 32. Registration Number 7990892 England. Registered Office, Innovation Centre, Broad Quay, Bath BA1 1UD

quarter of all customers are actively dissatisfied or unimpressed and you have a huge challenge and a huge opportunity on your hands.

2. **Regularly review the body of past research**

   Staff and suppliers move on taking their knowledge with them. New challenges come to the fore. New insights are generated which may challenge or compliment earlier findings.

   For these reasons and more it's worth returning to your body of research at regular intervals. At Customer Journey Consultancy we try to begin every new Client engagement with a review of existing research. We find that very often lessons have been forgotten, teams learn from work that was commission by others and it avoids the expense of reinventing the wheel.

   But more than that; given a new challenge a fresh pair of eyes looking across the findings of multiple research and management reports can identify important new conclusions and help build a shared understanding of an issue or opportunity. A small investment can create significant new value from discarded information that may have cost huge amounts of time and money in the first instance to generate.

3. **Think cross functionally**

   Too often customer research is commissioned by marketing for marketing. The modern marketing department however needs to think about more than just communications, they need to be customer champions.

   Their job, increasingly, is to help every function understand prospects' and customers' end-to-end experiences and to ensure change initiatives are aligned and balance customer needs and business needs. Customers, after all, are the only group to experience all touch-points and the output of the entire organisation.

   Customer research needs to be framed with this in mind. Research shouldn't only concern itself with the things controlled by marketing. If the findings are likely to have implications for other functions they need to be involved early so their questions and insights can be incorporated into the study and their concerns addressed.

   As multi-channel customer journey experts a huge amount of what we do is to help break down functional silos and to build alignment. We help ensure customers' needs and concerns can be addressed; irrespective of which parts of the organisation they impact.

4. **Ask four 'so what' questions throughout every research project**

   I'm sure you can think of more but we find asking these four questions throughout a research project help make sure it is focused, relevant and delivers insight you can act on. And make sure you remind your team or Agency of these four questions before they sit down to analyse their findings

   a. what does (or will) it tell us
   b. how does that relate to the big picture
   c. what is the opportunity
   d. what needs to happen next

5. **Distil your findings, ideally to a single page**

   Frankly presenting 135 pages to a wider audience is both disrespectful and an opportunity wasted.

   Certainly some people need this level of detail and it must be there for everyone to call upon. The fully story can be used to ensure your conclusions are reliable and to allow different questions to be asked of the same data at another time.

   However the size of this task shouldn't be underestimated. It's hard to sift the gold from 135 pages and put it into one, and it can't be delegated to a junior team member. It can be done by external consultants or in-house but, either way, they need to be bright and experienced people who understand customer experience and get the big picture.

   You do this hard work so that your wider audience doesn't have to and so you can spend the time discussing how to respond to the insight rather than trying to understand what it means.

6. **Think 'customer driven transformation' not 'research'**

   Research is something that a small team in the corner of the marketing or customer experience department does; customer driven transformation on the other hand is something that an ambitious CEO might aspire to.

   Suddenly the customer insight produced by that 'little team in the corner' matters; it's the stuff that informs customer driven transformation.

   Of course not every business wants transformation, some are cash cows and others, perhaps protected by high barriers to entry, are happy being no worse than their competitors. So highfalutin language may not always be appropriate, however in our experience reminding people of the potential power of the insight they are dealing in does no harm. It can even encourage people to extract the greatest value they can from this vital resource.

7. **Ensure you have a cross-functional team with the skills and authority to act on research findings**

   In our experience one of the most common reasons valuable insights aren't implemented is where they require the alignment of multiple functions. This is far more difficult than managing something that exists within your own boarders.

   As we have already said this requires a cross-functional team; a single department rarely succeeds in doing change *to* others, *'not invented here'* is as powerful as it ever was. But even cross functional teams need a span of authority appropriate to the opportunity. Confirming at the outset who the senior sponsor is, what resources you have at your disposal and if you can get more if necessary will help shape the scope of the research and its conclusions.

   Resources, particularly IT, are scarce in every organisation; however this doesn't mean you can't do anything. Clearly where important new findings emerge they need to be flagged up the organisation and actions agreed. Where major development isn't possible *'yet'* it is always worth considering what can be done today, within existing resources, for example a pilot to act as proof of concept or to help inform a wider business case.