



Survey Channel Slamming: Common Sense in Surveying isn't so Common

By Dr. Jodie Monger – President, Customer Relationship Metrics

When trying to provide the best service to your customers, it is not a good idea to create a disservice by forcing all customers through one communication channel. That is why contact centers provide multiple points of access to improve the success of the interaction. Multi-channel integration is something that almost all contact centers must now deal with. By providing several channel options for the customers, it reflects that we are in tune with their desire for high-, medium- and low-touch customer service interfaces.

We certainly can, and often try to, encourage customers to serve themselves on low touch issues and if done correctly it will not jeopardize customer loyalty. With all of our efforts to reduce cost via high tech/low touch service channels, it is tempting to force electronic surveys on your customers to lower the cost of measuring the Voice of the Customer, no matter how the customer contacted you. And with a multitude of new companies offering electronic survey solutions, the common sense approaches to the science of surveying is being lost in the hype. Beware and be aware that cheap can be very expensive and an 'easy' fix may not provide you with any actionable data. Customer feedback that is gathered by a flawed measurement strategy can easily mislead and ultimately misdirect your service strategy. One of the largest, and most easily avoided, flaws we observe today is Survey Channel Slamming.

In the effort to quantify customer satisfaction, you must not create dissatisfaction by forcing your customers through a different contact channel to measure service. Your measurement strategy must reflect your mission to be customer-focused and to be easy to do business with and that means congruence with the customer-selected channel of communication. If the customer sends us an email, sending a US Mail survey to gather an evaluation of the interaction is Survey Channel Slamming. If the customer called us for service and we send an email survey, this is Survey Channel Slamming. This flaw in measurement must be avoided.

Survey Methods by Contact Channel	
Contact Type	Correct Measurement Method
Telephone	Telephone (Automated or Live)
Web/Email	Email
Chat	Email
Mail	Mail

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Survey Channel Slamming is dangerous to your measurement program. Ignoring customer preferences can generate a service weakness and may create a source of dissatisfaction; this undermines the validity of the Voice of the Customer measurement program.

Unless you are a company that conducts a significant amount of customer interface electronically, you do not have a comprehensive and high quality list of customer email addresses. Except in the case that you are an online-only company, you cannot assume that all your customers have the ability to contact you electronically. And if this is not the case, you will be missing a large percentage of your customer base if you rely solely on an electronic method for a survey. Customers who call you may not have an email address or do not update their records which generally deters the desire to Survey Channel Slam an email to them to evaluate the service delivered on the telephone call. We cannot manage to feedback collected electronically because the sample is inherently biased. Customers also have privacy concerns about how information will be used, especially email addresses, which may further alienate them or create dissatisfaction with the process and further weaken the measurement program.

The inability to randomly sample from your customer population due to channel selection prevents your results from being generalized from the sample to the entire customer population. If you can't randomly sample from each channel, then don't measure at all. Invest your research budget into a program that yields results that are worthy of your management team's attention, one that is statistically viable. Your Return on Investment (ROI) will be significantly higher even though the initial investment may be slightly more.

To best measure the effectiveness of service delivery, an immediate evaluation is needed via your customers' preferred channel. If the customer calls you, conduct an immediate post-call survey. If the customer Emails you, respond with a web-based survey opportunity. To measure the effectiveness of fulfillment issues (or back office work), a follow up, delayed survey is appropriate and, here, the use of a complementary survey methodology would not be considered Survey Channel Slamming. Don't listen to the hype or feel the pressure to utilize an ineffective research program. Determining the method of measurement for each channel should follow the rules of common sense and therefore use multi-channel methodologies.

Dr. Jodie Monger, PhD is the President of Customer Relationship Metrics, L.C., (www.Metrics.net). Prior to joining Metrics, she was the founding Associate Director of Purdue University's Center for Customer-Driven Quality. Her expertise is working with Fortune 1000 companies to help them create post-interaction survey programs using automated survey solutions.

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