

Companies that sell technology-based solutions, whether offering a service or product, fully appreciate the importance of customer satisfaction. While most companies have some sort of program for monitoring customer satisfaction, the vast majority of these customer satisfaction initiatives focus only on customer-facing functions such as sales, customer service and field support. Moreover, the majority of customer satisfaction studies capture customer opinions from a couple of representatives within a couple different departments. Finally, the metrics applied to assess customer satisfaction are often deemed significant to the seller, but are of little importance to the buyer – the customer.\*



Indeed, customer satisfaction relies on the performance of multiple departments across the entire organization. Companies must comprehensively identify the customer “touch-points” (i.e., points at which employees, products or services have direct interaction with the customer) to establish metrics and benchmarks that completely assess business and workforce performance in the context of the customer.

Gantry Group’s *Creating Customer-Centric Company™* (C<sup>4</sup>) program ensures your company will objectively assess customer satisfaction throughout your offering’s entire lifecycle to generate performance metrics that can be directly tied to the specific groups that influence them. Eradicating the perception that customer satisfaction programs are expensive to implement and tricky to execute, Gantry Group’s proven, outsourced program is affordable and quick to deploy.

## Defining Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a key business performance indicator. When customers purchase your offering, they also make an implicit decision to interact with your technology, developers, support personnel, account managers, training and documentation staff, accounts receivable staff, and many more. The measurement of customer satisfaction is therefore an aggregate of how multiple groups within each customer company customer think you have performed at the *touch-points that are* relevant to each of them. Every business must objectively judge how well it is meeting customers’ expectations during every interaction with the customer. While a customer may be viewed as a single entity by your finance department, a customer is in reality a team of designated individuals, each of which has different types of interactions with different individuals within your company. The complete set of customer touch-points must be optimized for the customer to conclude that it is having a positive experience with your company. Whether your company offers a technology solution or a service that depends upon a technology infrastructure, many of the following customer touch-points will prove to be relevant.

**Direct Sales/Account Management** – New sale/ renewal is presented and sold to customer.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Customer has difficulty extracting necessary information to make a decision
- Sales staff is not responsive to customer’s requests during sales process
- Sales staff incorrectly sets expectations about offering’s capabilities, performance and/or business impact

**Marketing & Strategy** – Marketing communicates the offering’s current & future capabilities to facilitate customer’s decision-support process.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Marketing materials don’t clearly present the facts to support an investment decision
- Marketing materials inaccurately present the capabilities of the offering
- Strategic plan incorrectly set expectations about future offering capabilities

**Contract Management** – Solution use and payment terms are negotiated with customer.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Customer feels contract process is arduous and complex
- Customer feels company is inflexible and difficult to do business with

**Configuration / Implementation / Customization / Installation** – Solution/service must be confirmed and/or customized according to customer's exact specifications.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Missed solution/service deployment schedule dates
- Poor communications with customer throughout deployment period
- Budget overruns in projected implementation costs
- Customer has difficulty getting customer's organization to adopt solution/service

**Accounting/Billing** – Ongoing execution of agreed financial terms with customer.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Misunderstanding of business/financial terms
- Frequent billing errors
- Unresponsive A/R

**Education / Training** – Customer's designated workforce must become familiar and facile with the solution/service in order to actively and successfully use it.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Customer is not informed of documentation/training options available
- Documentation and/or training materials are incomplete or poorly done
- Training is not available at necessary frequency/geographies

**Solution** – Solution technology infrastructure implements a specification that is communicated to the customer, including features/capabilities, performance, and its ability to integrate with other solutions at the customer's site.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Solution is difficult to learn or use
- Solution doesn't perform as expected within customer's infrastructure/data streams
- Solution is compromised by poor quality that is not remedied in a timely fashion

**Outsourced Service Delivery** – Service replaces customer's internal business process, implemented as a mix of personnel, processes and/or technology infrastructure.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Service performs inefficiently, inconsistently and/or unreliably
- Service doesn't perform seamlessly with other customer business processes/systems
- Service personnel are insufficiently knowledgeable about the customer's business needs & the service that it delivers

**Customer Service** – Customer requires assistance to expedite and resolve issues related to solution order problems, payment, refunds/returns, component replacement, and delivery status.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Poor responsiveness (no call back, long hold times, too many call transfers)
- Lacks appropriate knowledge & listening skills to understand issues and resolve them
- Fails to set clear problem resolution expectations and resolution follow-up

**Technical Support** – Customer requires competent, prompt response to in-use and technical questions, as well as accurate updates on problem fix requests and upgrades.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Poor responsiveness (no call back, long hold times, too many call transfers)
- Staff is insufficiently familiar with solution to answer customer's questions
- Staff is inadequately briefed on development plans and schedule
- Lack of continuity between multiple related support calls

**Field Service** – Provides services to maintain and repair equipment at the customer's location.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Not responsive to fulfilling service requests according to the customer's urgency of need
- Field technicians fail to show up for scheduled service calls on time
- Field technicians lack knowledge and tools to expeditiously fulfill service need

**Professional Services / Consulting** – Offers customer solution development, technical consulting and business advisory services.

*Typical Customer Challenges:*

- Lacks proven, robust project methodology, fully informed by industry best practices
- Project deliverables too often miss project objectives, schedule and budget
- Poor customer communications regarding project progress, issues/resolutions, project dependencies and changes

## Measuring Customer Satisfaction

The key to meaningful customer satisfaction studies that yield real diagnostic value is to identify the critical metrics for each customer touch-point. Having a single customer satisfaction score with no insight into individual metric performance impairs a company's ability to pinpoint problems. Approaching customer satisfaction as a composite whole may be a high level indicator of customer satisfaction overall, but it is the granularity of the underlying metrics that reveals "why" and specifically "where" your organization may need to improve. Your customers are the best source to isolate which customer satisfaction metrics are most applicable to your company.

## Achieving Employee Buy-in

To effectively transform your organization into one that is truly customer-centric your employees must believe that the customer survey and the measured metrics are realistic and credible. Your employees must believe that they can be successful in affecting change on the metrics within their particular sphere of operational and organizational control. This is best achieved when each organizational group's performance links only to those customer touch-points and metrics that it realistically can impact. By soliciting feedback from each customer stakeholder involved at each customer touch-point, defined performance metrics that govern customer satisfaction at each touch-point can be quantified. This technique creates a meaningful closed-loop feedback system between each group within your company and the customer groups with which they interact.

## Aligning Customer Satisfaction to Your Organization

Gantry Group can develop a tailored C<sup>4</sup> program that quantifies and trends customer satisfaction metrics for each touch-point at your desired testing frequency. Applying our comprehensive suite of customizable customer touch-point components and online survey services, Gantry Group can provide customer satisfaction scorecards that you can link to organizational performance. Using the first study as an organizational baseline for customer satisfaction, subsequent study metric data will be progressively accumulated, compared and trended against this baseline. The following 6 step process assures comprehensive, accurate customer satisfaction metric data to your company's strategic planning and performance assessment activities.

1. Gantry Group facilitates discovery sessions that detail your organizational structure, enterprise-wide customer touch-points, the groups within your organization involved at each touch-point, and the metric set that comprise your standardized customer satisfaction scorecard. Appropriate customer performance metrics are aligned to measure the performance of each group within your organization
2. Customizing our customer touch-point survey component suite, Gantry Group creates a standardized, online customer satisfaction survey designed to comprehensively test all your customer touch-points with all your customers' stakeholders.
3. Working with your staff, Gantry Group creates a secure, confidential database of your customers with names, titles and email addresses. This database is routinely managed and updated by Gantry Group. This database drives the email campaigns that invite your customers to participate in the customer satisfaction study. The email invitation includes a direct link to the online customer satisfaction survey. As an alternative, Gantry Group can provide the study invitation for your staff to administer these email campaigns to avoid releasing your customer list outside of your premise.
4. Gantry Group manages the online study to achieve a statistically valid sample from your customer base for each defined customer touch-point.
5. Study data is analyzed and graphically presented in a report, along with a completed customer satisfaction scorecard. The first study establishes your baseline customer satisfaction metrics. Subsequent studies are trended against this baseline to measure the impact of organizational performance changes since the C<sup>4</sup> program was initiated.
6. The calculated change in assigned customer satisfaction metrics over the measured period directs employee rewards based on their performance. Using a consistent study instrument and data collection approach, this process may be cost-effectively repeated quarterly, semiannually or annually.

## The C<sup>4</sup> Program Benefit

Deploying Gantry Group's program ensures:

- All customer touch-points relevant to your company are included in the customer benchmark.
- All relevant customer functional groups that interact with your company are surveyed.
- The customer satisfaction metrics are meaningful to your customers, justified by rigorous research.
- Your organization can apply highly granular customer satisfaction analytics to take business action.

***To learn more about Gantry Group's Creating Customer-Centric Companies program or to schedule a demonstration of a sample customer satisfaction study, please call 978-371-5557.***

*\* Based on Gantry Group market research, 2007*