Gathering the voice of the customer (VOC)

Results WA Continuous Improvement COP

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Who is the "customer"?

Customer: The downstream recipient of a process output

Example:

- Shannon works in a call center – when taking calls from the public, those members of the public are her customer.
- After every call Shannon takes, she must fill out paperwork that goes to her manager. Her manager is the customer of that work.

We can have multiple customers across our work

How do we define value?

- Value is what the customer expects to achieve from our service or product
- Value is always defined by the customer
- Value is what customers say it is, not what WE believe it to be

Know your customer!

Three fundamental questions in process improvement and innovation:

- *Who is the customer?*
- *How does the customer define success?*
- *How well are we meeting the customer's expectations?*

Voice of the Customer (VOC)

The term Voice of the Customer (VOC) is used to describe customers’ needs and their perceptions of an organization's product or service.

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How do we gather the VOC?

Active VOC collection can include:

- **Focus groups**
- Surveys
- **Interviews with customers (and sometimes analysts)**
- Secret shoppers
- Customer testing

Passive VOC collection can include:

- Blogs
- Tweets
- Observation
- Review of complaints
- Reading (non-commissioned) press

VOC: Types of data you can collect

Qualitative

- Easier to develop
- Can provide detailed data
- Can be challenging to analyze
- Can be labor-intensive to collect

Quantitative

- Provides precise measures
- Reliable
- Harder to develop
- Easier to analyze

Semi-structured

- Not sure what to measure
- If there's no need to qualify the data
- If you are doing exploratory work
- If there's no set process in place

Structured

- You have a large sample or population
- Numerical results
- Need to make comparisons
- Need to be precise

Listen to your customer!

What Marketing suggested

What Management approved

What Engineering designed

What was manufactured

What was installed

What the Customer wanted

Source: http://www.businessballs.com/treeswing.htm

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Interviews

Interviews

- Purpose: to learn about a specific customer's point of view on service issues, product/service attributes, and performance indicators/measures
- Using interviews establishes communication with individual customers (vs. a group of customers)
- It allows for flexibility and probing of customer needs
- Customers feel "listened to"

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When to use interviews?

Beginning of Project

to learn what is important to customers (which supports the development of hypotheses about customer expectations)

Middle of Project

to clarify points or to better understand why a particular issue is important to customers, to get ideas and suggestions, or to test ideas with customers

End of Project

to clarify findings, to validate improvement

How to do customer interviews

1. Be clear about the purpose. What role will the interviews play in the project? How will you use the information afterwards?
2. Prepare a list of questions.
3. Decide on interview method (face-to-face, phone).
4. Decide how many interviewers and interviewees will be present.
5. Do practice interviews internally to refine the script, questions and interview process
6. Contact customers and arrange interviews. Conduct interviews.
7. Transcribe notes and continue with data analysis.

Focus Groups

Focus Groups

- Purpose: To get feedback on existing products or services or on a proposed ideas from the point of view of a group of customers
- Why would we use focus groups?
  - Allows for more creativity and open-ended answers but isn't as time consuming as individual interviews
  - Allows participants to play off each other's ideas
  - Lets you observe people interacting with physical items (products, prototypes, marketing materials, etc.) which you can't get from surveys

When to use Focus Groups?

As prework for a survey or interviews to ID topics of critical customer interest

To test concepts and get feedback

As follow-up to customer interviews as a way to verify lessons or information learned

How to conduct a focus group

1. Identify the number and target size of focus group (~7-13 participants per group)
2. Identify participants (mix representatives of different customer segments, or focus on a specific segment or on people known to have an interest in the topic)
3. Develop questions (do a pilot to test the ease of gathering and analyzing data)
4. Conduct the focus groups (hire outside help if needed)
5. Transcribe customer comments after the focus group
6. Select appropriate follow-up action (create an affinity diagram to find themes; use customer statements to develop product/service requirement statements)

Story Time – Focus Groups

Focus Groups Conducted

- In 2018 I was working on getting my Black Belt through the University of Washington Tacoma's Professional Development Center

- My project was all about expanding Continuous Improvement culture throughout the Health Care Authority

- Before moving forward with my project, I wanted to know:
  - How folks at the agency viewed continuous improvement,
  - If and how they were currently using continuous improvement and
  - What kinds of training/communications they would like about continuous improvement

Next Steps – Part One

- I worked with my project team to identify staff within HCA that had attended some of our Lean Six Sigma trainings or that came to our Monthly Lean Meetings.

- We also made sure we had each division within HCA represented

- All told, we selected 15 staff members to take part

Next Steps – Part Two

- After selecting our participants, we worked to group them into one group of seven and one group of eight

- We then scheduled one hour with each focus group

- We also assigned roles – one of us would lead and two others would take notes

Next Steps – Part Three

- We kicked off each session by doing introductions and ground rules
- We then did a quick introduction to the project and the questions we would be asking
- We then asked each question and allowed the group time and space to answer
- As the facilitator – my role wasn’t to fill the silence but to gently encourage participation

Next Steps – Part Four

- The groups answered all four questions while we took notes
- We then wrapped up the groups and thanked everyone for their time
- From there we took the raw data (our notes) and themed them
- The themes that emerged also gave us our customer requirements

Outcomes

Themes from Focus Groups

- Lack of communication and awareness around Lean
- Lack of plain talk around Lean work/Lean is not accessible to all
- Current culture doesn't support Lean

Customer Requirements

- Plain talk – lose the Lean jargon
- Supervisor's/managers need to see the value so it will trickle down to employees – work seen as a benefit and not in addition to daily work
- Heightened communication around Lean projects within HCA and opportunities for training

Thank you!

- Questions?
- Feel free to reach out: megan.oczkewicz@hca.wa.gov