

## Success in the Workplace

# Are you sure your customers are satisfied?

Business First of Louisville - by [Shawn Herbig](#)

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Many business owners believe that there are two types of customers; satisfied customers and complaining customers.

The truth is that only about 5 percent of customers will actually complain when they are dissatisfied. Furthermore, not all satisfied customers are equally satisfied.

For instance, a somewhat satisfied customer and a completely satisfied customer are both, at least, partially satisfied. But these customers clearly do not share the same level of enthusiasm. These customers will also have differing levels of loyalty and different recommendation characteristics.

To effectively use customer satisfaction information to improve the bottom line, a business owner needs to understand that there are differences among satisfaction levels and that these differences are significant.

We frequently use a 10-point scale to measure customer satisfaction — one being completely dissatisfied and 10 being completely satisfied. We might ask the question like this:

All things considered, how satisfied are you with the services received from XYZ Company?

Our research has shown that when a customer indicates a specific satisfaction score, he or she is providing valuable information that not only indicates satisfaction but also future purchase intent as well as many other characteristics.

Let's take a look at several of the satisfaction scores and their meanings.

10 — The 10 is the highest score that can be given on this scale and indicates that the customer is completely satisfied. Regardless of the amount of products purchased, these customers' buying habits tend to be extremely loyal. This customer will consistently recommend your product or service to others.

9 — The loyalty characteristics of the 9 tend to be similar to the 10, where the customer will provide a positive recommendation for your company. The 9 position is also the indication of choice for customers who believe that no product or service can ever achieve a 10.

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8 — The 8 position is the first major change in the satisfaction scale. Customers who indicate this choice are only marginally inclined to recommend your company. When they do recommend your company it will be a "lukewarm" recommendation. At this level, customer loyalty declines sharply.

The 7 through 5 positions continue the journey away from customer satisfaction. Once the 5 position is indicated, you can be assured that the customer is dissatisfied and is trying to replace your company as a vendor. Customers in this category frequently will speak negatively about your business to colleagues and associates.

The frustrating fact is that many dissatisfied customers, even customers in the 5 category, will not complain to the business that caused them dissatisfaction. This leads many business owners to believe these customers are satisfied. This is a critical mistake that leads to lost clients, lost sales and lost profits.

A couple of other interesting satisfaction points that we should mention are the bottom two satisfaction scores.

1 — Customers who indicate the 1 position are frequently described as "venting." These customers are completely dissatisfied and generally very vocal about their dissatisfaction.

These customers generally will speak disparagingly of the company and do so as often as possible. The good news about customers who indicate the 1 satisfaction score is that they can frequently be converted back to an 8 or higher if their concerns are addressed quickly and effectively.

2 — Customers who indicate the 2 position typically possess the most motivation to cause damage to a business as a result of a combination of analytical tendencies within the customer and strong dissatisfaction with the business.

It is the 2 position that is the source of many lawsuits against a company. The customer has typically complained but does not feel that the issue was addressed. A unique aspect with these customers is that in spite of their dissatisfaction, they frequently will cite positive characteristics about the company as well.

We recommend that businesses establish a "report card" where any satisfaction score lower than a 9 or 10 is considered not passing. Keeping customers satisfied to this level allows your business to reap the rewards of higher customer loyalty and greater customer referrals.

So the question becomes, do you know how satisfied your customers are? Are you sure?

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