

Adaptations to Increase Participation in Customer Satisfaction Measurement

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Introduction

Customer satisfaction is an important component of Texas Cooperative Extension's (TCE) accountability efforts. In 2003, the state of Texas decreed customer satisfaction to be a performance measure and funding criterion for TCE. Indeed, elevation of customer satisfaction to augment traditional measures of agency performance, such as cost efficiency and outcomes, follows a well established trend that has been seen and documented in other states (Rennekamp, Warner, Nall, Jacobs, and Mauer, 2001).

Although the benefits of an ongoing customer satisfaction measurement program are well known (Jones and Sasser, 1995; Cummings and Ladewig, 1998), organizations may be financially, logistically, or otherwise challenged to fully adopt and integrate customer satisfaction measurement into day-to-day operations. Such was the case with TCE which conducts educational programs in all 254 counties of Texas. Participation in customer satisfaction measurement by county faculty was minimal and mostly involuntary – as little or no individual benefit resulted from participation. Counties were required to manually input their own customer satisfaction data via a web application but did not receive a summary of results.

In 2005, to increase participation and fully realize the benefits of ongoing measurement, TCE developed a strategic vision for customer satisfaction to be more than “required data” reported to the state. Elements of program improvement, customer service, form ownership, and technology were added to existing measurement efforts to create a “return on investment” and thus encourage greater participation by county faculty. The changes included:

- Modification of content on standard customer satisfaction survey form. New questions were added to capture different dimensions of satisfaction. Many questions were shortened or reworded for greater clarity. Scales were changed and made consistent. Follow-up questions were added to provide insight on previous questions.
- Implementation of scanning technology (Teleform) for quick and accurate processing of large volumes of customer satisfaction forms.
- Forms were made available over the web. Scan forms could be downloaded, printed, and copied as desired for use with program participants.
- Different versions of the customer satisfaction form were developed. Spanish language and youth versions of the form made it possible to measure customer satisfaction with these audiences. Additional versions were developed with an outcome section – which allowed faculty to create a customized form with program-specific client change questions – with the form retaining its scan capability.
- Detailed results were returned to faculty in a timely manner. Using Teleform and SPSS scripting, detailed customer satisfaction results for 600+ educational events have been

provided to county faculty since 2005. Results include frequency tables, descriptive statistics, correlations, analysis of pre-post change, and listing of comments.

- Interpretation aids were provided. Interpretation guides and Word templates were provided to help faculty extract relevant information and effectively report results.
- Management tracking tools were developed. Web-based charts and logs were created to help leadership track and manage progress in measuring customer satisfaction.
- A template and instructions for producing quadrant charts were provided as tools for program improvement and teaching effectiveness.

Results

The changes implemented in 2005 led to dramatic increases in all forms of participation (Table 1). Mean values for the state-reported index (a combination of survey items) and overall satisfaction have increased as well. This is even more impressive given that the high point on the satisfaction scale was changed from “very satisfied” to “completely satisfied” – arguably a higher and more appropriate standard (Jones and Sasser, 1995). Barely halfway through FY07, participation has already surpassed FY06 on some measures.

Table 1
Customer Satisfaction Participation, FY04 – FY06

Measure	FY04	FY05	FY06
Number of non-required counties	0	2	37
Total number of counties / units	33	53	86
Number forms processed	2,531	4,222	9,513
Number of events processed	114	187	300
Number of faculty served	78	103	148
Index measure (reported to Legislative Budget Board)	4.42	4.53	4.57
Overall satisfaction (out of 5.0 max)	4.55	4.54	4.57

Future Plans

Entrepreneur Tom Leonard once said, “It costs five times as much money to get a new customer into a store than it does to keep an old one happy (Warnock, 1992).” As such, ongoing monitoring of customer satisfaction is vital to organizational effectiveness and survival. TCE will continue to make logistical, technological and customer service enhancements in its customer satisfaction measurement efforts to encourage even greater participation by faculty. As a result, the state will have an even more accurate and vivid picture of satisfaction among TCE clientele.

Costs

Implementation of scan forms technology involves an upfront investment in computer hardware, software, personnel, and training. A minimal configuration consists of a high-end standalone PC, duplex scanner with an automatic document feeder, SCSI board, Cardiff Teleform document capture software, and Adobe Acrobat Professional software. There is also an annual maintenance fee with Teleform software.

References

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