Voice of customer

Description

The Voice of Customer is a broad term used to describe the process of capturing the customer’s requirement of your service in terms of fulfilling their needs and meeting their expectations.

It is often the critical first step in any improvement project and helps to ensure that customer issues are identified and that solutions are prioritised to address the needs of the customer.

There is no one single Voice of Customer. There may be more than one customer group for any given process. Customers may be internal or external and their needs are often diverse. Even across similar customer groups, there may be multiple voices with different needs.

Voice of Customer involves identifying the individual customers or customer groups, implementing a data collection plan using both proactive and reactive sources and capturing information that may be qualitative or quantitative in nature. The objective is to gather relevant and meaning intelligence to better enable services to adapt to consistently deliver what is required.

Where to use

- To listen to what is important to the customer and what their expectations are
- To ascertain the perception of your customers and the satisfaction from your service
- Use Voice of the Customer where there is little or no existing market intelligence, perhaps due to
  - the market being introduced to a new product or service
  - Where existing customer information is considered obsolete or irrelevant
  - Where customer demands are unknown or change quickly over time
  - To challenge or reaffirm existing perceptions of the market

How to use

1. Define the individuals or groups of customers, defined as those who receive an output from the process being investigated.
2. Identify the relevant sources of Voice of customer and implement a data collection plan for their capture, combining both:

Reactive sources such as:
- Customer correspondence (emails, phone calls, letters)
- Internal reports and management information
- Complaint logs
- Call logs
- Industry reports
and proactive sources such as
• Questionnaires, surveys and interviews
• Benchmarking
• Customer meetings
• Competitor intelligence
• Focus groups
• Customer forms

3. Construct a data collection template including the wording of appropriate questions to be asked
4. Implement the data collection plan with the aim to extract a statement of need from every source
5. Use the CTS tree to break down each statement of need into measurable components
6. Use the data to set specifications for the process to be improved

Handy tips

Use a mix of both reactive and proactive sources to uncover the real perception from your customers

Reactive sources tend to give information on things that have happened in the past. Proactive sources give an insight into what the customer expects in the future

Customers often express their needs in terms of ‘how’ their need can be satisfied rather than ‘what’ the need is. Combine with the Critical To Success tree to identify the specific attributes and expectations that are required by the customer

Use an appropriate sampling strategy to ensure information is relevant and unbiased. Do not dismiss subjective data as it may provide insight to the ‘feeling’ of the customer that quantitative data may struggle to uncover

Word questions carefully as people often give the answer that they believe the interviewer wants to hear, rather than their actual opinion. The more focussed the question, the more focussed the response

Do not make judgements purely on customer complaints as this may not reflect the opinions of the general population. These should be judged together.

Example application

In embarking on an Improvement Project with a call centre for an international financial services provider, reactive data sources including a review of customers call logs revealed that the key driver was resolution time to customers’ queries.
The improvement team set up a data collection plan to assess the needs of the customer, using both reactive and proactive sources. To minimise disruption of the core process, that of resolving issues, data was collected by each operator immediately after the point of resolution by asking “how could we have improved the service for you?”

The results were startling. The data revealed that although both waiting time and resolution were drivers, the critical driver was in fact the number of operators the customer had to speak to before their issue was resolved. The higher the number, the more dissatisfied customers were with the service.

Ideally, customers required their issue to be resolved by just one operator. Customers understood that in order to receive a quality resolution, this would take time, yet as long as their case was conducted by the same operator, who owned it from start to finish, the customer was happy.

Consider using with

- Customer perception
- Critical to success tree
- Kano model
- SIPOC
- Value stream map

Facilitation time

75 mins
Assess Needs

Reactive

Proactive