

Customer experience: what’s your first impression?

We’ve all heard it: first impressions count. But what does it mean for your business? What do new customers notice about your business that will persuade them to return? And tell their friends?

First impressions are powerful. They can lead to strong relationships with customers who keep coming back. They position people to think your business is great and make them want to be proved right. It’s not easy to overcome a bad first impression; it can be done but your business has to work twice as hard. Analyse customer experience with your team and brainstorm how to make it even better. Build on the list below to analyse all your first points of contact with customers.

Every touch point is important - it might only be something small today but it could be big tomorrow. If a first time contact has an OK experience, that’s good, but an AMAZING experience will prompt them to come back and to tell their friends. Sure, you have to deliver on quality and service, but a great first impression makes it so much more likely that you’ll be asked to.

What is customer experience from the first...

call?	view online?	visit to your office?	time in the showroom?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> answered quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> value proposition easy to understand, typo-free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> greeted straightaway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> looks good, feels better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> friendly and eager to help, (smile when you pick up the phone, it really works) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> easy to navigate and to order your products or services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> friendly, welcoming, professional, attractive premises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> team presence is just right (not all over the visitor or ignoring them)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quickly through to the right person, or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> easy to contact you with queries or feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the team is amazing, keen to work with the customer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff know the product, but listen to what the customer needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accurate message taken, ‘no problem’ attitude, speedy callback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not too many clicks or too much scrolling required. No annoying pop-ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if asked to wait, they are made comfortable, offered refreshment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shop floor is well organised, good signage, good-looking displays

The importance of client feedback

Keeping your customers satisfied should be top priority. So how do you measure their satisfaction? The key is communication; ask the questions. One of the most cost effective ways to do this is with a client survey.

A survey can establish how your customers perceive your company, gauge interest in products, get feedback on services and pinpoint areas of concern. Involving customers in a survey will help make them feel valued and important to your business.

Establish a plan and a list of important questions you want answered. Is it a one-off survey, or something you will send out regularly? How will you deliver your survey? If you're not sure where to start, there are a number of free or cost-effective websites allowing you to capture important client information via online survey software. Research which survey company best fits your business and intentions.

The most important element to any client survey is action. Be sure to take on board all feedback received and put it to good use. Address any client frustrations promptly.

Creating an online customer survey

Online survey tools allow you to easily design and conduct your own surveys, providing a cost effective alternative to printing and posting client feedback forms.

Before you start:

- § Register an account with your chosen survey website. This should be as easy as choosing a user name and password. No money should change hands
- § Follow the help guidelines and familiarise yourself with the process from start to finish
- § Review the pricing options - a free version may suit you. If not, decide on a starting payment plan depending on your level of use - it's likely you can upgrade at any time

Now you're ready to create...

1. **Define your objectives:** What will be the focus of your survey.
2. **Work backwards:** Once you've established your objectives, determine the information you wish to gather.
3. **Check for bias:** Make sure you're not asking leading questions or offering biased multi-choice answers. This will only lead to inaccurate feedback or annoy your customers.
4. **Test-drive your survey:** Engage an independent party to test it - they'll let you know if your questions and response options are understandable and logical.
5. **Collect your results and analyse the data:** As data rolls in from your survey you should gain an accurate client insight and important future direction for your business.

If you feel you're not savvy enough to design your own survey, your chosen survey website can probably develop your questions and design your survey for a minimal fee. It should be as simple as supplying them with your logo etc.

Introducing Survey Monkey

Survey Monkey is a popular online survey web tool. It's free at the basic user end as well as incredibly intuitive to use.

Survey Monkey provides:

- § Step by step, easy to follow guidelines for putting your survey together

- § Questions that have been designed to give you an accurate and precise answer with minimal bias
- § A variety of survey options, formats and designs
- § Multiple options to collect responses including email, your website or social network site
- § Access to specific target markets or wider demographics
- § Four different pricing plans from Basic through to Premium
- § Concise results displayed in graphs
- § Tips, tricks and ongoing support

Survey Monkey a great starting point if you want to learn more about what drives your customers. Creating an online client survey can help you research different demographics and/or focus on a new target market. Most importantly you'll find out if your current client base is happy with your products and services, or if they enjoyed the latest event you hosted.

If you're yet to open the doors of your business, you can conduct a survey for target research purposes and 'buy' the responses of many different target markets. Survey Monkey has millions of survey respondents ready to provide answers to your questions.