

# Using customer feedback as a growth strategy

Whether positive or negative, customer feedback remains an invaluable tool for enterprises wanting to better themselves and in a digital age, it is easier to access to what consumers think of a business' products and services.

"No matter what product you're selling, it remains vital to know what people think. In today's world, it's easier than ever to get access to these opinions. Thanks to the anonymity of the internet, customers feel empowered to speak openly. Businesses should not see this as a threat, but rather a powerful tool that they can use to their advantage," says Robert Viljoen, director of VavaVox.

"Your business will have a weakness, whether you like it or not. The good news is that customer feedback gives you the chance to address these issues quickly. Speed is essential in the new digital economy. Wasting time papering over the cracks will likely cause for you to fall behind."



Image via Fotolia

The flip side of the coin also rings true as customers will point out what businesses are good at as well. "People are generous too and if they feel you're deserving of praise, they'll let you know. Knowing what people appreciate about your service is as vital as knowing what people don't. Play to your strengths and use these to sell yourself accordingly as a marketing tool," he says.

So should you respond to both negative and positive feedback as a business? "Absolutely yes!" says Viljoen. "Getting in touch with your customers is crucial. Never forget that these are real people with real views that they're expressing. Whether they're happy or dissatisfied, get in touch, thank them for their input and endeavor to keep client satisfaction a top priority. Acknowledging a customer and their viewpoint is half the battle won already."

Furthermore, many companies neglect to "close the feedback loop", a term coined by Inc.com. "Closing the feedback loop

means getting in touch, making contact and building relationships with people. It's critical, and if you do it well, you immediately stand out from the competition," he says.

In conclusion, Viljoen says that whether businesses are getting praise or harsh criticism, it is a way to start spotting trends; similarities in what customers are saying. "If the same negative reviews are coming in, waste no time in addressing the issue, then responding to the client one-on-one. Don't let negativity fester - act decisively.

"If people are overwhelmingly happy and heaping you with unanimous praise, you know you're on the right track. Thank them for their input and give yourself a pat on the back. After all, a satisfied customer is the best business strategy of all."

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