

How To Ensure Customers and Employees Recognize Your Organization's Value

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Organizations cannot optimize their business results unless their customers **and** their employees clearly recognize the significant value they provide. How can you discover whether these two important groups really see this value? *Ask them.*

To discover whether your customers perceive the value your organization provides, have a third party call them and ask a few open-ended questions. For example (assuming your organization is called OUR Company):

1. **What impact did OUR Company's products/ services have on your organization? Consider both tangible and intangible changes.**
2. **What results did you experience personally as a result of using OUR Company's products/services?**
3. **Sum up the value that OUR Company offers its customers.**

Let your customers know in advance that a third party will be calling on your behalf to ask for this information. Another way to increase the response rate is to let your customers know how long the interview will take. Keep the interviews short (i.e., 15 minutes maximum) by asking only a few questions. I recommend including a "catch-all" final question such as, "What else would you like to tell me about your experience with OUR Company?"

The survey results are likely to be instructive and insightful. If customers cite products or services but no value, your organization is not realizing its potential. If customers identify specific value, keep up the good work! You may even discover a potential side benefit of conducting the survey: learning that your customers experience value that even you have overlooked.

My favorite question to determine whether *employees* recognize the value their organization provides (the "big picture") **and** the contribution they make is, "What is your job?" Employees who respond by citing the value their organization provides (e.g., peace of mind, the experience of a lifetime, an effortless journey) understand that value, as well as how they personally support its delivery to customers. Those whose answers include their job titles and/or a list of the tasks for which they are responsible neither see the value nor appreciate their contribution to the organization's success.

It is critical to assess employees' perspectives because their views influence their workplace behaviors. To illustrate, I like to tell my favorite "big picture" story, which is about a custodian at NASA in the late 1960s. When asked by a visitor what his job was, he responded, "My job is to help put a man on the moon." Imagine the difference in motivation between someone who goes to work every day knowing that he is helping put a man on the moon, and someone who goes to work contemplating how many bathrooms there are to clean, trash cans to empty, and floors to sweep.

When the ability to achieve optimal business results is at stake, can you afford to guess whether your customers and employees recognize your organization's value? ➔

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