

# MOBILITY™

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## Boldly Embracing Change

### WORK AUTHORIZATION

MAKING IT WORK FOR FREELANCERS

### ARE YOU 'EXTREMELY SATISFIED'

OR JUST 'OK'?

3 STEPS TO A

### MORE EFFICIENT WORKPLACE

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# IS 'EXTREMELY SATISFIED' REALLY 'OK'?

To enhance your employee experience, try asking the right questions at the right time

BY CHAD STERLING, CRP, GMS

"We always did feel the same. We just saw it from a different point of view."

— Bob Dylan

People love to share their feedback, so much so that it is rare these days not to be presented with some way of expressing your satisfaction with a product, service, or experience. As consumers, we are accustomed to being asked for our feedback in a variety of ways. We have all received the extensive questionnaire after a stay at a hotel or resort. We have also been urged to complete, or even coaxed into completing, a feedback survey that seemingly goes on forever. Sometimes, we are pinged with a short five-star pulse survey after dining at a restaurant, and we are almost always prompted to evaluate our driver the second we step out of our favorite ride-share service. Even lower-tech approaches, such as entering a code from a receipt to access a questionnaire—and maybe winning that elusive \$500 gift card—are popular. Regardless of the technology, method of delivery, or length, these surveys are designed to help gain insight on a customer's experience with a brand, product, service, or relationship.

In 1995, Amazon began allowing customers to voluntarily provide feedback via a five-star scale and comment tool. Other businesses and industries—including mobility—quickly followed, shifting power from corporations and the C-suite directly into the hands of consumers. Entire industries—think hospitality—can no longer compete on service and amenities. They must compete on what consumers are saying about their experience with the brand, product, or service. From a marketing standpoint, the old notion of price, product, and placement is becoming secondary, and consumer feedback is a major factor in a decision to purchase, with a Podium survey indicating that 93% of consumers say online reviews now affect their purchase decisions. Furthermore, the widespread adoption of the voluntary five-star rating allows consumers a platform to rationalize experiences across industries. Suddenly, I have a basis on which to evaluate and compare my interaction with a utility company representative, a greeting from the front desk agent at a hotel, and the performance of my workout instructor. I may pay very different prices, and these may be very different businesses, but my platform of evaluation, and to a large degree my expectations, are the same.

### WHICH WAY IS THE WIND REALLY BLOWING?

Measuring consumer satisfaction dates back to the 1950s, and abundant research exists on how, when, and why to collect customer sentiments. In the past, specialized market research firms used techniques such as face-to-face interviews, phone interviews, or even mail-in responses to gather feedback, and consumers often were compensated for sharing their opinions. Today, nearly 70 years later, virtually all customers expect to have a medium through which to provide real-time voluntary feedback. Leading aggregator sites such as Google, TripAdvisor, and Yelp amass millions of reviews without compensating customers; as a matter of fact, many aggregators go to great lengths to remove feedback that may have been tied to financial compensation.

One of the tried-and-true methods of receiving feedback in the mobility services industry has always been a post-service survey or even an interim-service survey. When I joined my current organization, I was thrilled to learn we had consistently received post and interim feedback that averaged a 4.7 out of 5—year-in,

year-out. With response rates typically exceeding 50% to 60%, I was pleased that a majority of customers were responding. Yet, to my amazement, anytime I would ask people about relocating—sometimes with our organization, sometimes not—the response I often received was, “It was OK.” Sure, there were some delighted and elated customers, as well as some who expressed negative sentiment, but for the most part people were just “OK” with a mobility experience. That led me to the mobility experience paradox: *If the end-user customers are feeling just “OK,” how are the feedback scores averaging 4.7 out of 5?*

### FALSE POSITIVES

All surveys have one thing in common: The responses are valuable data and easily transferable onto a numeric scale. Survey results and statistics influence everything from investment decisions to performance evaluations. However, there can also be serious danger lurking behind the numbers—danger that leads to false conclusions. For those who rely solely on these false conclusions, the results can lead to misdirected resources, misapplied funds, or even more devastating outcomes. The danger I am referring to is *response bias*.

Exhaustive academic and consumer research identifies and defines the many forms of response bias. However, the basic description is that there are many cognitive predispositions influencing the accuracy of participant responses. While often not intentional, the way in which questions are asked, the timing, the order, the language, the context—all can lead to biased responses, and biased responses are bad information. Three biases, in particular, can be present in a mobility context: confirmation bias, fading affect bias, and serial position bias.

- **Confirmation bias** is the tendency to answer in such a way as to confirm our prior decisions. Take as an example an assignee who enrolled children in a stellar new international school. If the process of identifying, selecting, interviewing, and enrolling the children was less than optimal, but the children are adjusting quickly and performing well in school, the assignee may be more likely to ignore or discount their negative experience in favor of their prior opinion.
- **Fading affect bias** is a psychological occurrence whereby memories associated with negative events are forgotten more quickly than memories

associated with positive events. Asking a question at the end of the assignment or prolonged one-way relocation may yield a response that, more often than not, skews positive, since negative memories are muted or faded.

- **Serial position bias** is the phenomenon whereby in a series of events, the first and last memories are more heavily weighted when giving feedback. At the beginning of a new assignment or relocation, excitement levels are high, as customers begin making decisions to affect their next chapter. At the end, everyone is eager to move on to his or her “new normal.” As is often the case, the middle is where the true measure of the experience is misunderstood.

Another form of misleading results stems from collecting a biased set of survey responses. As humans, we are driven by intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. One common reward for service employees in the mobility industry is variable compensation tied to positive customer feedback scores, i.e., bonuses based on returned surveys.

These reward structures have existed for many years, and valid arguments can be made for both the positives and negatives of compensating for positive customer feedback. On one hand, tying compensation to service results motivates service employees to stay on top of their game and treat every customer as their only customer. On the flipside, especially in this industry, which has a relatively long service-delivery cycle, agent-counselors coordinate many things outside of their control; therefore, they can be penalized for something that is ultimately not their fault. In addition, over time, service personnel may become fixated on items that move the needle to get a positive response but become less focused on an area that may be of critical importance to a unique customer’s overall experience. Lastly and most importantly, in the new experience-based economy, asking a customer for a positive response masks your results and leads to false conclusions. Leaders should take time to educate service personnel on the purpose, value, and necessity of honest, unbiased feedback.

### GOOD OR BAD?

The realization that mobility customers are on a journey, in which a series of moments are strung together to create an overall experience, is a primary facet of customer experience. Evaluating these moments, in real time, allows the customer



“May you always  
know the truth  
And see the lights  
surrounding you.”

— BOB DYLAN

to express an unbiased response capturing both the emotion and the experience with the particular facet of mobility. How many times have we said mobility is one of the most emotional and stress-laden events in someone’s career? Then why do we continue to measure experiences when the emotion and stress have been diffused?

To illustrate, using the example of a hotel stay, in the top chart on page 42 are three questions, sent two days after checkout. If, for this same chain of events, we could see these items as interconnected moments of an entire journey, in real time where one moment influences another, the responses would yield a far different result (bottom chart, page 42).

In this scenario, upon check-in, the wait was long and the front desk representative was slightly rude, so when receiving a quick one-question survey, the customer had an 80% level of satisfaction. However, the room was perfect, and one hour into the experience, both moments when considered together equate to an 80% level of satisfaction. Unfortunately, the restaurant was overcrowded, the food was cold, and the service was poor. Upon receiving a survey one hour after payment, the customer evaluated the restaurant a 3 out of 5. The resulting levels of satisfaction (80%, 100%, and 60%), when multiplied across the journey, yield an overall experience at a 48% level of satisfaction.

This is far different from the 80% level of average satisfaction arrived at using a traditional post-service survey. As you can see, *the key tenet to evaluating moments in an interconnected journey is*



### TYPICAL GUEST SURVEY - SENT/RECEIVED TWO DAYS AFTER CHECKOUT

QUESTION	TOPIC	CUSTOMER'S RESPONSE (5-POINT SCALE)	SATISFACTION
1	Check-In/Front Desk	4	80% (4 of 5)
2	Room Cleanliness	5	100% (5 of 5)
3	Restaurant	3	60% (3 of 5)
Overall		4	80% (4 of 5)

### TYPICAL GUEST SURVEY - SENT/RECEIVED DURING EXPERIENCE

QUESTION	TOPIC	TIMING OF QUESTION	CUSTOMER'S RESPONSE (5-POINT SCALE)	SATISFACTION	CUMULATIVE EXPERIENCE
1	Check-In/Front Desk	15 min. after check-in	4	80% (4 of 5)	80%
2	Room Cleanliness	1 hour after check-in	5	100% (5 of 5)	80% x 100% = 80%
3	Restaurant	1 hour after payment	3	60% (3 of 5)	80% x 100% x 60% = 48%
Overall					48%

that a moment, once complete, cannot be reworked. As has been said many times, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Of course, the most important facet of evaluating experience and minimizing bias is asking for feedback in the moment. Asking the customer in real time eliminates or at least minimizes confirmation bias, fading effect bias, and serial position bias. It also captures emotion, delight, or disappointment. The resulting measure is a much more accurate representation of the overall experience.

#### A LITTLE MORE CLARITY

As an industry, we are in a unique position. The chain of events in a mobility assignment all influence an employee's perception of a successful move, but historically, service has tended to be boiled down to one number.

The next time you're at a restaurant or hotel, evaluate the different moments of your experience. My bet is that when things go awry, there is little hope of recovering that lost moment in the journey.

While there is no magic formula to minimize all bias, it is important to realize your numbers can be deceiving. Asking the right questions, at the right times, in a customer-preferred medium without influencing the results, are the fundamental components to understanding your customers' true view of the mobility experience. While we may have to say goodbye to the days of our "overall 4.7," a deeper understanding of the moments that matter will allow all of us in this industry to move beyond "OK" and begin to deliver truly exceptional experiences. *M*

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