Reengineering a Customer Satisfaction Survey Questionnaire Yields Improved Customer Feedback *

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Consider how you reacted when asked to complete a recent survey questionnaire.

- Did you think that the survey was beneficial?
- Did you think that your feedback would generate improvements?
- Did you think there were too many questions?
- Did you complete the survey form?

When reviewing survey feedback do you ask any of the following questions?

- Are these response levels okay?
- Are there any improvement trends?
- What should be done differently to improve faster?
- Might the results be different if the survey were taken a month later (e.g., a gloomy time of year might yield a less favorable response than a bright time of year.)

With traditional surveys it is difficult to answer these questions. Why?

- The time between surveys is too long.
- There is an upper response limit (e.g., 5 is assigned "Excellent").
- There is no formal communication channel that collects and prioritizes Improvement opportunities. Often only average responses are considered.
- Typically the comment section contains the most beneficial information. However, it is often difficult to quantify and react to these issues.
- People do not see the benefits of surveys.

In addition, many internal opinion surveys are in contradiction to Edwards Deming's management principles. Opinion surveys are sometimes used to reprimand individuals for not performing satisfactory. Surveys do not often give meaningful insight to what should be done different to improve the processes. Customer feedback is important; however, there has to be a better way to get it!

A Statistical Process Control (SPC) based survey using the tools Six Sigma can

- Give better information that is timelier.
- Give direction on what should be done different to improve processes.
- Use less questions and get a higher return rate.
- Get more information with less work.
- We helped one company institute an internal opinion survey based upon SPC techniques so that it addressed all the above issues. A few of the differences from this survey are listed below.
- The survey consisted of only three questions.
- One out of every 12 of the total population is surveyed monthly.
  Results are analyzed monthly for special and common cause variation using control charts.
- Normal probability plotting techniques graphically illustrated the variability of question responses when common cause variability existed.
- A Pareto chart of votes from "improvement suggestions" led to a more efficient and effective approach to obtaining direction when desiring constructive change that would eventually yield better survey responses.

Customer feedback is important; however, often much money is spent on surveys with minimal gains. Wisely applied SPC techniques can lead to surveys that give more information with less work.

Additional information about this application example and a roadmap for integrating measurements with process improvement activities can be found within *Implementing Six Sigma: Smarter Solutions using Statistical Methods*, Forrest W. Breyfogle III, John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY, 1999. The wise integration of Six Sigma tools is described within our training. Focus during the training is given to building effective implementation procedures that have bottom line results for the application situations described by attendees.