



SMARTsm

Customer & Employee Satisfaction Research

A World of Expertise

The customer is king!

Research International's business surveys indicate that senior managers world-wide view customer service as their top priority. They recognise service levels as vital in differentiating their organisations from competitors, and in building the lasting customer relationships which translate into higher profits.

As the world's largest custom market research agency, Research International is uniquely placed to support the development and implementation of customer service strategies.

Backed by our global network of resources, our customer service specialists have successfully applied their personal expertise and our internationally proven research techniques in many different industries throughout the world.

SMARTsm, Research International's proprietary customer satisfaction programme, plays a pivotal role in much of the work which we do.

Through SMARTsm, we identify precisely which aspects of customer service are the most important, how they impact on the company's brand equity and how they can contribute to the bottom line.

We give clients specific advice on how they can improve their performance and then work with them to implement customer satisfaction programmes which bring lasting, tangible benefits.

a complex situation ...

Customer satisfaction is not only an issue for traditional service industries such as retailing and

banking. A very diverse range of organisations now appreciates the over-riding need to focus on serving "customers", whether they are consumers, trade channels, other businesses, or fellow employees. Service is often central to a company's identity, and increasingly even packaged goods brands also embrace a clear service element in their overall proposition.

Managers must address customer service proactively. They must appreciate where it fits into the overall purchase decision, what service level customers expect, and what improvements they would prioritise. They should assess their own company's performance against the competition.

They need to understand which strategies best motivate employees, or keep suppliers and trade customers happy. And, critically, they must determine how to allocate limited resources to specific service initiatives which will deliver tangible financial returns.

... a different approach

Research International works closely with clients to get to the heart of these issues. Before doing any formal research, we spend time immersing ourselves in your culture - understanding your business and your competitors, talking to employees, and often actually working alongside your staff-serving customers.

We go far beyond collecting superficial information on general service features. We help you to see inside the customer's mind, and we ensure that this understanding of exactly how customers perceive your organisation, and the kind of service they really appreciate, can be

translated into actionable prescriptions for service improvement.

The SMARTsm approach involves listening carefully to the “voice of the customer”.

Our teams have considerable experience of helping clients to manage the cultural change which is so often critical to improving customer satisfaction. We generate practical solutions which recognise the constraints employees face, and work with you to ensure that staff are motivated and empowered to follow through service initiatives.

the SMARTsm solution...

With SMARTsm, Research International brings a uniquely practical and business oriented approach to customer service issues. We provide management with a comprehensive research system. We begin by analysing the role which different aspects of service play in the business and follow right through to support the implementation and monitoring of detailed improvement plans.

- Customer service is analysed in its *true context*, alongside other issues such as brand image, price, and product quality, to create a clear understanding of what really drives the purchase decision
- Clear *service priorities* are established by :
 - measuring the relative importance of each tangible and intangible element of service,
 - placing a value on the improvement or down-grading of each service factor, and
 - simulating the impact of alternative service strategies
- The organisation's *current performance*, and that of the competition, is assessed from the customer's perspective
- Customers are segmented according to their service needs, and *targeting strategies* are developed
- Detailed *service improvement plans* are created

- Reliable, relevant *service delivery targets* are set and the organisation's performance is monitored continuously

... the voice of the customer

SMARTsm is unique in supporting strategic and tactical decision-making because it uses customers' own words rather than traditional numeric scales to convey precisely how an organisation can optimise its service.

This is particularly important in managing the softer, less tangible service values. Scoring employees at 2 out of 7 for attentiveness is less helpful than specifying that they “do not even make eye contact” when customers expect staff to “make me feel that I am the only person they care about”.

SMARTsm segments customers according to their specific needs, building a detailed picture of each group's values so that customers can be targeted according to their individual requirements.

And by modelling responses to “what if?” questions, we let the customer set the priorities for the business. This enables managers to resolve complex service dilemmas, like “what happens if I improve the cleanliness of my restaurants and staff spend more time with customers, but the queues grow as a result?”. Research International's customer satisfaction services are supported by a global network of experienced specialists, led by our World-wide Director of Customer Satisfaction Research.

Team members from around the world work together constantly, and meet regularly to share knowledge and best practice