



## 5 Essential Customer Satisfaction Survey Questions

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Measuring customer satisfaction is incredibly important because satisfaction is a strong predictor of future behavior (e.g. the probability of buying again and/or the probability of your customers referring others). If you are running a survey to gather customer feedback, it's important to ask the right questions. Here are five **customer satisfaction survey questions** that are widely used in the world of satisfaction research.

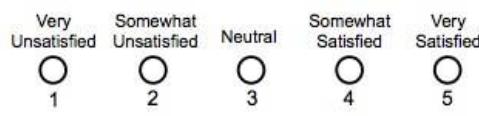
### 1. Overall Satisfaction Question

It is a good idea to include a general satisfaction question, which will serve as an overall measure of how well your company is pleasing customers across all aspects of the business (product, brand, service, communication, etc.).

#### Example

Q: What is your overall satisfaction with (insert company name)?

(use the five point rating scale shown below)



5 Point Rating Scale

The results of this question will provide a useful baseline to use in measuring your company's

progress over time. Since this is a very common question asked by many companies, there are various industry benchmarks to also measure yourself against.

The most common way to analyze responses to this question is to look at the percentage of respondents who are either somewhat or very satisfied. Most companies will find that this number usually lies somewhere in the 75%-85% range, although it will vary by product type and industry.

One downside to this question, however, is that it is not very actionable. It might tell you that customers are relatively happy or unhappy overall, but it doesn't tell you why they feel the way they do. Knowing that 75% of your customers are satisfied isn't very useful on its own, but I do think it is helpful to understand if that percentage is rising or falling from quarter-to-quarter or year-to-year.

### 2. Attribute Questions

The general question shown above is a nice measure of overall satisfaction to track over time, but you will also want to measure specific aspects of satisfaction in order to obtain more actionable data. If you operate a restaurant, for example, you might want to ask your patrons about their experience with service, cleanliness, food quality, etc. These attribute questions are useful in pinpointing specific areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Again, the information gleaned from these questions is *actionable*. For example, if you, as the restaurant owner find that satisfaction scores for cleanliness are low, you can address the issue with the cleaning staff and implement new practices. You could even incentive the staff with bonuses and prizes that are tied to the cleanliness satisfaction score.

#### Example

Q: What is your satisfaction with our cleanliness?

Q: What is your satisfaction with the taste of our food?

Q: What is your satisfaction with the cleanliness of our restaurant?

### 3. Behavioral Questions

There are two commonly asked behavioral questions used in customer satisfaction research surveys:

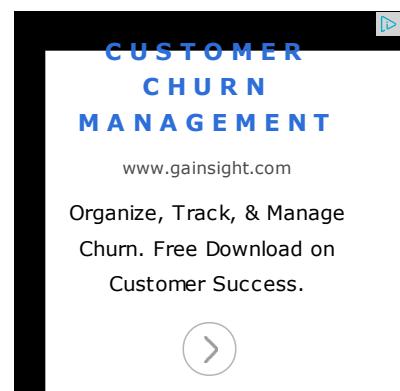
A) How likely are you to recommend (company/product/service) to a friend?

B) How likely are you to buy from (company) again?

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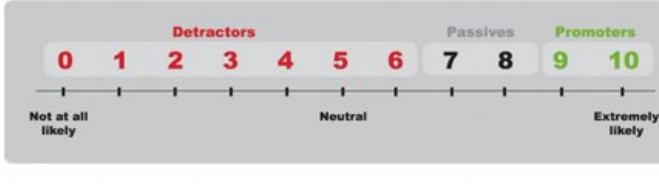
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Both of these questions are typically measured on a 10-point scale, as shown below. These questions are widely used because they offer insights on *intended behavior*, and that's the whole point, right? After all, we measure satisfaction and try to improve upon it because satisfaction is an important predictor of behavior. These questions get right to the business problem at hand—how to increase sales through customer loyalty.

### How likely are you to recommend to a colleague or friend?



$$\text{NPS} = \text{\% of PROMOTERS (9s and 10s)} - \text{\% of DETRACTORS (0 through 6)}$$

Net Promotor Score - 10 Point Rating Scale

#### Net Promotor Score

Those who respond with a 9 or a 10 to the question above are considered “promoters.” Those who respond with a 7 or an 8 are passively happy customers, and those who answer with a 6 or below can be considered “detractors.” To calculate the Net Promoter score, simply subtract the percent of detractors from the percent of promoters. This metric—the Net Promoter Score—is an excellent satisfaction metric to track over time, as it correlates with customer actions, and ultimately revenue growth.

In addition to providing an aggregate satisfaction measure, this question is useful in identifying your most loyal individual customers. You can then follow up with them to make sure you maintain those key relationships.

#### What is Net Promoter Anyway?

The question “how likely are you to recommend...?” is quite famous in customer satisfaction research. In a nutshell, a company called Satmetrix and a guy named Frederick Reichheld did some research in 2003 to determine the customer satisfaction question(s) that best predict positive future behavior—namely, repeat purchases and customer referrals. Long story short, they determined that the question “How likely are you to recommend X to a friend or colleague?” had the highest positive correlation with future customer behavior. In fact, Reichheld ended up publishing a book titled “The Ultimate Question,” based on this research (there is now an [updated version](#) of the book as well).

#### Optional Steps

The behavioral questions shown above provide your customers’ *self-reported* actions. Even better would be *actual* behavior from your customers. If you have set up your accounting and customer relationship management (CRM) systems with the ability to track unique customer actions, you should be able to actually measure the number of customers who are repeat buyers, so you won’t even need to ask them. To measure recommendations, you might track positive and/or negative mentions of your brand on social media platforms.

#### 4. Demographic Questions

It is usually useful to slice and dice your data by customer type. Customer type could be males vs. females, young vs. old, new customers vs. long-time customers, heavy users vs. occasional users, etc. These demographic questions will be specific to your company and industry, but it can be very useful to segment satisfaction scores in order to see if there are any notable differences in the data. For example, you might find that customers who purchased your product via the Web are far less satisfied than those who purchased the product in person. Simply segmenting your survey results in this way can provide actionable insights to improve satisfaction.

#### Examples of common demographic questions include:

- Age
- Gender
- Income
- Geography
- Familiarity with product
- Familiarity with industry
- Duration of customer relationship
- Sales channel

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I'm curious if people with tattoos are more likely to have stickers/decals on their car.

So, which one are you?

- NO tattoos, NO stickers on my car
- NO tattoos, YES sticker(s) on my car
- YES tattoos, NO sticker(s) on my car
- YES tattoos, YES sticker(s) on my car
- I don't have a car. Count me out of this poll.

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### 5. Open-Ended Question

Finally, don't forget to include an open-ended question in your customer satisfaction questionnaire. This is an opportunity for customers to explain *why* they gave the ratings they've given. You also want to provide customers with an opportunity to tell you whatever is on their mind, especially if it is not covered by the other questions you've asked. Without an open-ended question, you might leave respondents frustrated, as they have no way to tell you those burning thoughts in their minds.

If you have a lot of respondents, these open-ended responses will not be easy to summarize or report, but do take the time to read through each one. In many cases, the most insightful data will come from these free-form comments.

#### Example

If you would like to provide additional feedback, please use the space below:

Don't Forget to Include an Open-Ended Question

There you have it—five essential customer satisfaction questions to use in your next survey. Remember to keep your survey short and sweet (one page is best) and don't over-survey your customers (no more than once a year), or survey fatigue will become a source of dissatisfaction in itself.

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jared

September 23, 2013 at 9:15 am

quite insightful. thanks

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