

What's your most important customer service standard?

Survey participants speak out on what service metrics they have found to be most important to their organizations.

We received a number of mixed and divergent results recently when we asked participants in our *2010 Standards and Benchmarking Survey*, "What is the most important or unique customer service standard your organization has established?" Some companies responded with traditional numbers-oriented results like speed of answer and calls handled, while others considered more overall satisfaction ratings to be most important.

In fact, while our overall survey results showed "number of calls handled" to be the number one customer service metric tracked by companies participating in our survey, and "average handle time" to be the top metric, the companies responding to this question had more to say about "customer satisfaction" and "customer experience" than about numeric performance metrics.

Customer sat stands out

Here are some of the comments from survey participants about tracking customer satisfaction:

- "We have maintained a 92 percent customer satisfaction rate, and we have this as a performance standard for all reps."

- "We have a targeted post-call customer satisfaction survey for calls into the call center to track our service quality."

- "We reward our CSRs based on their customer satisfaction survey scores and verbatims generated. CSRs are rewarded when they get a 'Perfect 10' score from a customer."

- "We obtain feedback after each customer request is completed to ensure that the customer is satisfied with the work that was done."

- "Our company does a post-call email survey to follow up on all quality-related complaints."

- "We do a monthly review of all of our reps' ticket satisfaction ratings."

Call quality and call resolution

Call quality and first call resolution are also important metrics for many companies — as well as being related metrics for some companies. For example:

- "We do call-quality monitoring. It's crucial that our reps build relationships with our customers, and this allows us to make sure that their soft skills are where they need to be."

- "We have a Beyond the Call standard, which means the rep is to

show empowerment and desire to go the extra mile to assist a customer."

- "Our company does call quality monitoring along with tracking first call resolution rates."

- "Resolution time is a key metric for us. Some 95 percent of all enquiries can be handled over the phone, and this is key because our clients live mostly in remote areas that make a follow-up contact difficult."

- "Providing an answer to the inquiry or help in finding an answer are important — with the offer of 'Please call us if the information or the person we have referred you to does not help.'"

- "We try very hard not to pass people off into the ether."

A mix of metrics

In other cases, companies take a more traditional performance approach, or use a mix of performance metrics. For example:

- "Our company monitors mostly speed to answer, and the percentage of calls answered in a target of 90 seconds and 120 seconds or more. We also have an event-driven survey at the end of calls."

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- “All issues reported must be resolved or referred within 48 hours.”

- “My company uses nothing other than standard metrics of total calls, average talk time, call monitoring results, and customer questionnaire results.”

- “We combined attendance, calls per hour, and quality monitoring scores to create one scorecard. We also follow up on all closed tickets to ensure that the customer is satisfied.”

- “When a customer places an urgent ticket on the web, we have five minutes to respond to that customer.”

- “Escalated queries must be resolved within 24-48 hours.”

Some are still working things out

There are other companies that are still working out their performance standards, or who have more general (even vague) customer service goals rather than formal metrics. For example:

- “We promote our local organization, as we are local in the community. Our tagline represents us well: ‘We’re the local dog. We’d better be good.’”

- “We strive to stay competitive in our market.”

- “Our company has an ESOP — an employee stock ownership

plan — and offers employee stock options as well as quarterly incentive payouts based on organizational performance in certain categories. This seems to work out great for all involved.”

- “There is no standardized performance measure in our organization. We do have an annual performance review at which all areas of performance are evaluated.”

- “We don’t have an automated system. All calls are answered by a live person. For any customers that do not want to wait for an agent, they have an option to leave a voicemail. All voicemails are returned the same day.”