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Introduction

To provide excellent customer experiences, companies must listen to their customers—and one of the primary means they have of doing so is through customer surveys. Such surveys, however, are of little use if their response rates are low. Defined as “the number of completed surveys divided by the number of participants invited to take the survey,” the response rate has a direct bearing on any survey’s usefulness.

This white paper outlines some best practices you can employ to help increase your organization’s survey response rates. In it you’ll find best practices for question creation, survey construction and execution, and feedback analytics. You’ll also learn about best practices for customer satisfaction and closed incident surveys and key feedback reports and see how one company is listening and taking action in response to the voice of its customers by using Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service.

Although this white paper was written with Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service in mind, these best practices are relevant regardless of your enterprise feedback tool.
Top 7 Best Practices for Question Creation

Questions constitute a key element of your feedback tool. Because words can mean different things to different people, you need to write questions that are not open to interpretation. To this end, make sure you clearly define your survey’s goals and target audience before you start writing the questions it will contain. Once you’ve done that, you can institute these seven best practices for creating questions.

1. Keep It Relevant

The first step in creating any survey is establishing what you want to learn. The goals of the survey will determine whom you survey and what you ask. If your goals are not clear, your results won’t be either. Always keep your audience in mind when writing questions, and create only questions whose answers will be relevant to that audience. The more relevant the question, the more likely the recipient will be to respond to it.

2. Make Your Questions Short and Sweet

Keep your questions short and clear. Respondents are less likely to answer if a question is too long or they do not understand how they should answer. Likewise, keep your answer choices short and concise. A good question asks for just one piece of information and doesn’t have any additional questions embedded within it. If either and or or ends up in your question, there’s a good chance your question is inconclusive. For example, if a customer service department were to ask, “Were you satisfied with your wait time and the knowledge of the agent who helped you?” a simple “No” answer could have more than one meaning—and you’ll have no way of knowing whether the respondent was unhappy with the wait time or the agent’s knowledge level.

If the list of answer categories is long and unfamiliar, respondents may have a difficult time evaluating all the responses. One way to keep questions short and sweet is to utilize a matrix-style question—grouping questions that employ the same answer choices (which can make it easier to respond), as shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. This matrix-style question is really five questions in one.](image-url)
3. Write Straightforward Questions

Although posing straightforward questions seems simple enough, surveys commonly fall short in this area. To make sure your questions are straightforward, avoid bias, leading or hypothetical questions, and difficult concepts. This means presenting your questions neutrally so that the desired answer is not implied—a feat that takes careful wording. To achieve objectivity, you need to avoid asking leading questions—typically easy to spot by their negative phrasing (“Wouldn’t you like … ?” or “Don’t you agree … ?”) Also avoid double negatives, which can cause respondents to misinterpret questions.

Start with questions that are meaningful but not threatening. For example, when conducting a survey about your company’s return policy, start by asking whether the respondent has ever returned a purchased item. This question is straightforward, and its answer options are limited to yes or no—meaning it’s easy to understand, easy to answer, and visually simple and doesn’t require a lot of work on the respondent’s part.

Also avoid asking questions to which users will have a hard time recalling the answers. For example, you’re more likely to get an accurate response to “How many times in the last month … ?” than to “How many times in the last year … ?”—simply because respondents are more likely to recall more-recent events.

4. Use Simple, Precise Language

Use simple words and specific language to create questions that yield precise answers. If your writing isn’t clear, customers’ answers are likely to be misleading. For this reason, you need to avoid jargon, company acronyms, and obscure terms. You should also avoid uncommon words and compound sentences. Abbreviations are acceptable only if you can be absolutely certain every respondent will understand them or if you spell them out when they first appear in the survey.

Confusing questions will only lead to confusion among participants—which, in turn, leads to unreliable answers and unfinished surveys. Because survey participants are likely to come from a variety of backgrounds, you need to use simple language and relax your grammatical standards slightly. For example, who may be OK to use even in instances when whom is correct. Review your questions to make certain they’re not open to misinterpretation—especially if any of your respondents are non-native speakers. Words have different meanings for different people, and concepts such as time and distance are subjective. Complex wording and sentence structure can confuse respondents, making your results less precise.

5. Take Care with Your Response Options

How many times would your answer to a survey question have been “None of the above,” “Other,” or “I don’t know” if one of these had been presented as a response option? Although you should keep the number of answer choices to a minimum, you still need to accommodate all possible answers—or else risk confusing and frustrating your respondents. For example, if a survey asks, “What brand of computer do you own?” and then presents “A. Dell” and “B. Apple” as the only answer options, several issues will arise. For starters, what if the respondent doesn’t own a computer? Or what if that person owns a different brand or possesses both a Dell and an Apple? You should also make sure
answers are mutually exclusive and that there’s no overlap among them. For example, if you ask participants to select an age range and then present “16–25,” “25–40,” “40–60,” and “60 and over” as your answer choices, how would a 25-, 40-, or 60-year-old make a selection? A better way to offer the same choice of age ranges would be as follows: “16–25,” “26–40,” “41–60,” and “over 60.”

Often users are biased toward the first answers they encounter in a survey question—choosing the first answer when another might actually be more appropriate. One way to guard against this behavior is by randomizing survey choices so that they’re presented in a different order to different participants. If a user checks Randomize Choices in Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service, the answer choices will be displayed in random order. If the checkbox is not selected, the choices will be displayed in the order in which they appear in the choice list.

![Randomize Choices](image)

Figure 2. To remove first-answer bias, you can have the order in which the response choices are presented randomized.

6. Use Clearly Defined Answer Labels

If your answer choices aren’t clearly labeled, your question will be worthless. For example, if you ask respondents to rank their level of satisfaction on a scale from 1 to 5 but fail to explain whether 1 is very satisfied or 5 is very satisfied, you’re not going to know what customers mean and their responses will be of little value. No matter what type of question you ask, make sure your answer choices are clearly worded and labeled.

Before creating your questions, decide what kind of rating labels you want to use. For “Level of satisfaction,” for example, you could use a five-point scale with responses ranging from “Very satisfied” to “Very dissatisfied.” Or for “Level of agreement,” you could use the Likert scale (the most widely used scale in survey research) to solicit responses ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.”
Often, it doesn’t matter which labels you choose as long as they’re clear to the participants and you use them consistently. Changing rating scales midsurvey can confuse respondents and produce unreliable results or decreased response rates (if respondents close the survey without finishing it due to their confusion).

There is debate within the industry about using an odd-number versus an even-number point scale, but ultimately the choice boils down to the number of selections. Although a five-point scale typically offers a neutral answer, a four-point scale typically forces the respondent to choose either positively or negatively. Because studies show that more recipients are comfortable with a neutral option than being forced to choose a positive or negative one, a five-point scale is generally better than a four-point scale. A 10-point scale, however, offers enough choices that both the #5 and #6 choices are close enough to neutral that most people will find this type of scale acceptable.

7. Use Open-Ended Questions Sparingly and Intelligently

Executives often state that the most-valuable feedback they derive from surveys comes in the free-text Comments section. Although information provided in this form can be difficult to quantify, it can also deliver deep insights into the customer experience. To elicit these insights, you will need to ask open-ended questions. Keep in mind, however, that you should use them sparingly—including no more than three to five open-ended questions in any survey (and understanding that one will be sufficient in most cases). And don’t use them unless you plan to take the time to review them. Although open-ended responses add color to your survey results and enable respondents to express their feedback in their own words, they should never be mandatory, because some users will quit the survey rather than be forced to respond.

Following are a few examples of open-ended questions:

- Do you have any additional comments about your experience?
- How could your experience be improved?
- What products or services were you looking for that you did not find on our Website?
- What did you like or dislike about your recent customer experience?
In addition, free-text customer comments can provide an effective means of gaining support internally for any initiatives you’re trying to move forward. For example, if you were trying to get resources to improve your automated phone system, you could include in internal communications and presentations compelling customer comments supporting your position.

Top 7 Best Practices for Survey Construction and Execution

Just as critical as well-written questions are well-organized and implemented ones. To get high response rates, surveys must be constructed and executed with care. By adopting these top seven best practices, you can ensure that participants will be more likely to complete your survey and provide relevant feedback.

1. Time Your Survey Smartly

Sending your survey in a timely manner adds relevance and enhances accuracy. People are most likely to remember the quality of an interaction shortly after it occurs. Thus, sending surveys within 24 hours ensures that the transactions will still be fresh in customers’ minds and increases the chance that they will respond.

Consider when people are most likely to receive and read the survey invitation and when they’re most like to have time to respond to it. It takes time to get to know your audience and understand when their downtimes and busy periods are, but by using testing and reviewing results, you may be able to spot a trend. Typically, people are getting ready for the weekend on Fridays and recovering from it on Mondays—making those not the best days for an e-mail invitation. Likewise, if you send your e-mail invitation overnight or early in the morning, you may run the risk of being lumped in with the spam generated during that period. Studies show that the best time to send e-mail invitations is midweek in the afternoon (but keep in mind that every audience is different and that it may take some testing to determine what times work best for your organization).

2. Get to the Point

Keep your surveys short, and don’t attempt to get insight into multiple topics. Studies show that if you want to prevent customers from abandoning your survey, it should consist of 3 to 12 questions. If you require more information or survey scores are low, you can send a more detailed survey as a follow-up. You should also state the number of questions and provide an estimated time for completion up front—both of which will help you increase customer response: the primary reasons for participant drop-off are excessive survey length and irrelevant questions.

In general, you should know exactly what information each question can be expected to yield. If you don’t, you should drop the question. Likewise, don’t just ask questions because you think the information they provide might come in handy one day. And if you already have certain customer data (such as name, age, or gender), don’t ask for it again. Instead, just prepopulate these form fields and let participants verify the information. With Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service, all you need to do...
is add an HTML content area utilizing form fields to verify the information, as discussed in the following section.

Also make sure to put the questions in a logical order. One question may influence how the participant judges the next one. Start the survey with questions that are likely to sound interesting and attract the respondent's attention. Save questions that might be difficult or sensitive for later. It is a good idea to ask general questions up front and more-specific ones later. For example, you should avoid asking a series of questions about a particular product without first asking whether the respondent owns the product (unless you already know this). Group similar questions, and use different pages and branching to designate survey sections.

Just as you'll want to keep your survey short, you should also keep your e-mail invitation concise and straightforward—stating the purpose of the survey, providing a reason to participate, and assuring respondents that they will remain anonymous and that the results will be kept confidential. Finally, make sure your e-mail invitation has a clear and enticing subject line.

**When to Use a Merge Field, Form Field, or Survey Question**

You can personalize the invitation message or survey by merging data from an existing database into fields such as **First Name**, **Last Name**, or **Incident #**. Form fields are used to capture or verify contact data from the contacts table. You can add merge fields and form fields to surveys within Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service by selecting **Add HTML Content**. Note that unlike form fields, survey questions are used to capture information for analysis that will be stored in the survey question tables and not directly in the contact record.

![Figure 4. Merge fields enable you to personalize your message.](image-url)
3. Keep It Personal

Your target audience will be more likely to respond if you keep the survey relevant. Personalizing surveys based on products, categories, or dispositions enhances the customer experience and increases the response rate. By using segmentation to target surveys based on demographics, you can make your surveys more meaningful and elicit more-useful customer insights.

Use branching functionality to make sure that your questions are relevant. For example, if on page 1 you ask, “What products do you use?” page 2 should display only questions relevant to those products. Another example: ask general questions about satisfaction, and if any participants say they were very dissatisfied, branch them to another page of questions to dig deeper into the issue. You can even create an incident to follow up on the issue and then direct them to a Thank You page. With Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service, you can easily leverage a single customer repository for segmentation and powerful workflow to follow up and take action.

Figure 5. A sample workflow within Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service

Also, make sure to personalize your survey invitation by using dynamic content. Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service includes three primary types of dynamic content:

- **Merge fields.** Where you merge contact fields such as name, address, and phone number with your content text

- **Merge reports.** Where you merge information from an Oracle RightNow Analytics Cloud Service report into a table, list, or single value (including even one-to-many relationships, such as recently closed incidents or products registered).

- **Conditional sections.** Are displayed only if the contact meets certain criteria such as gold or platinum member status
4. Take Action

Close the loop. Not only do the participants want to be heard but they also want to know that you’ve acted on their feedback. For this reason, it’s a good idea to feed all survey results through a process that leads to actionable results. For example, if the total survey score is less than a certain number, an incident must be created and customer follow-up must take place by phone.

According to a Gartner report, although 95 percent of companies collect feedback, only 10 percent actually deploy and use it. Even fewer (less than 5 percent) tell their customers what they have done with that feedback. Customers are much more likely to take a survey the next time you ask if they know you actually did something with the data they provided the last time around.

You can differentiate yourself from the competition by being one of the few companies that actually reports back to customers on how their feedback is being acted on. One way you can do so is by triggering an end-of-survey e-mail thanking the customer for providing feedback and describing the actions that will be taken in response. You can also redirect customers to your support site or knowledgebase to promote self-service.

Oracle RightNow CX Cloud Service enables you to automate many actions based on customer responses or profiles. By using its decisioning in advanced survey mode, you can branch your survey to take distinct actions based on the responses or characteristics of the contact taking the survey—sending notifications to managers; redirecting to the customer support site; creating an incident, opportunity, or lead; adding to a contact list; setting a field on the contact record; sending a follow-up e-mail or survey; or even executing an external event for a custom action.

Figure 6. Oracle RightNow CX Cloud Service enables you to branch your survey to take actions based on your contact’s characteristics or responses.
5. Motivate Customers to Respond

In the movie *Office Space*, a character says, “It’s not that I’m lazy; it’s that I just don’t care.” Don’t let the same hold true for your customers—give them a reason to provide feedback. If they’re taking the time to provide feedback, they’ll want to know what they’ll get in return.

Research shows that offers of free low-value merchandise, coupons, or even cash incentives don’t go as far in increasing response rates or building long-term relationships as simply communicating to customers the actions that have resulted from their feedback. Customers want to know that someone is listening and that their next experience could therefore be improved (especially if they weren’t satisfied with the previous experience).

Requesting participation in a subsequent survey in advance, during personal contact with the customer, is also recommended. By mentioning an upcoming survey, agents give participants a heads-up that an invitation is forthcoming, thus increasing the likelihood that they’ll watch for and respond to it.

6. Limit Survey Frequency

Oversurveying reduces response rates and decreases customers’ willingness to participate in future surveys. Ideally, you should survey your customers just often enough to get the information you need but not so often as to annoy them. The frequency of customer satisfaction surveys will depend on the frequency of your organization’s interactions with customers. With Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service, you can use the “Limit frequency of communication” and “Limit recency of communication” settings to help ensure that you are not overcommunicating.

![Figure 7. Limit the frequency of your survey mailings to preserve customer goodwill.](image)

7. Optimize and Test

Proofing the survey is extremely important. Send a proof of the survey to a small group of people. After they complete the survey, brainstorm with them to see if they encountered any issues. Make sure that your test group evaluates the quality of the questions, how long it took to complete the survey, and the flow of the survey and the invitation message.
Learn from past results. If a survey question provided no valuable insight, don’t ask that question again. If you discover that you get better response rates by sending out your surveys on Tuesdays than on Fridays, stop sending them on Fridays. Make sure to take advantage of analytics so that you can learn from past results.

### Additional Best Practices for Customer Satisfaction and Closed Incident Surveys

Customer satisfaction surveys can help you determine how satisfied your customers are with your company, product, or service or with the assistance they’ve received on recent support issues (with closed incident surveys often used to ascertain customer satisfaction for support issues). The same basic principles apply to both kinds of surveys (especially those pertaining to timing, relevance, personalization, and length). Here are a few additional suggestions:

- **Do not** ask about topics other than the issue submitted.
- Send the survey within 8 to 24 hours of closing the incident. Let enough time elapse to ensure that the incident has been resolved, but send your survey soon enough that respondents are likely to remember the quality of their interactions (this will increase the chances that they’ll respond).
- Reference the issue in question in the invitation message, and include the reference number and subject of the issue.
- Be sure that your service and marketing teams are on the same page and that all understand how the rules will trigger surveys.
- Train your agents to review previous survey information before dealing with a new incident.
- Consider designing agent workspaces to accept phone surveys by proxy. Capturing information in the moment can provide excellent results (although depending on the question, participants might be more honest when responding through the Web instead of directly to an agent).
- Incorporate survey results in the agent desktop so agents can understand their own performance.

See the appendix for a sample customer satisfaction survey template.
Top 7 Best Practices for Feedback Analytics

Understanding the information you want to gather from your surveys is critical to designing them correctly. Establishing your measurements for success and for follow-up actions will enable you to efficiently report on those successes. The following best practices are more specific to Oracle RightNow CX Cloud Service than the previously covered best practices, but they’re useful to consider no matter what tool you’re using.

1. Score Your Responses

A great way to quickly evaluate survey results is to add score values to responses. These values are used to assign a relative weight to each choice, facilitating easy calculations that can be used to trigger rules or actions based on the contact’s answers. With Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service, scoring is built in—which means that you can put in a score when setting up question types rather than performing manual calculations after the fact.

![Survey Question](image)

Figure 8. Designating score values for customer feedback helps in response evaluation.

2. Chart Your Results

One of the easiest ways to view survey results is on a chart or graph. A line graph, for example, is great for showing trends or specific data values, whereas a pie graph is best for seeing how something is divided among groups and a bar graph makes for easy comparisons. With Oracle RightNow CX Cloud Services’ easy-to-use chart wizard, you can use many of the out-of-the-box reports that display results in a chart, or you can create custom reports with charts.
3. Tell a Story

Ensure that your results tell a story. Ask yourself the following questions before sharing your results in a formal report: What is the key learning objective? What insight are we seeking? What will we recommend? How do we tell the story? When requesting management approval to take action, present data that makes your point—highlighting key points, outlining action steps, and describing the expected results.

One way to make sure your story is correct is by verifying that none of the responses skew your data. Thus, duplicates, answers that indicate that the respondent misunderstood the question, and outliers are often best omitted from results. This is easy to achieve by taking advantage of the Survey Response Exclusion feature in Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service, which enables you to capture all results but report only on those that are of value.
4. Organize and Archive

Think about report filters when setting up your folder hierarchies for questions and surveys—doing so will help make searching and filtering more intuitive when you’re running reports. Before creating reports, you should also understand the level of data being used. In other words, is it being analyzed at an individual customer level, or is it being used at an aggregate level (such as by account, call center, or region)? Survey scores can be viewed by contact, demographic (age, location, and so on), or agent. When you set up folders properly, it’s easier to find questions and survey names in the Search pop-up menu when you’re running reports.

Creating folders for archived questions and surveys is also a key part of the survey process—because deleting them results in the loss of valuable historical data. To preserve your collected data, it’s best to move unused questions and surveys to an archive folder. Also, keep in mind that if you significantly change a survey or a question, the responses to previously submitted surveys may become skewed.
5. Analyze Free-Text Responses

Free-text answers can provide valuable insight into customer satisfaction and key areas of concern, but they can also be more difficult to analyze than answers to multiple-choice questions (the answers can be quantified and included in graphs). Thus, you should not ask free-text questions if you’re not prepared to review the responses. You can make this task easier by using a tool that lets you spot trends in text responses and use keywords to rate responses as positive or negative.

The SmartSense feature in Oracle RightNow CX Cloud Service provides such a tool. Incorporated within Oracle RightNow CX Cloud Service’s topic management tool, the SmartSense feature makes it easy to analyze unstructured text responses. Text responses are automatically grouped by similar content and analyzed for themes. Topic monitoring enables you to view the distribution of responses across themes and drill down into themes and subthemes as well as read individual responses. Themes are accessed via the Survey Results tab and the topic monitoring report in analytics. The topic monitoring wizard is best suited for when you have a lot of data to decipher, because it becomes better at identifying themes and keywords as the amount of free-text responses increases. The SmartSense feature uses words and phrases to ascertain whether the theme is positive or negative, enabling reviewers to easily sort and prioritize the responses.
6. Identify Trends

If you can detect trends in your survey responses, they can be helpful in your business planning. With most surveys—but especially those related to customer satisfaction—it’s helpful to see how ratings change over time (day to day, week to week, month to month, quarter to quarter, and even year to year). To track trends effectively, you need to ensure that questions and rating scales remain consistent over time. Within Oracle RightNow Analytics Cloud Service, you can use reports such as Question Response Trend to identify improvement or decline trends in areas of interest such as customer satisfaction.
Figure 13. You can use the Question Response Trend report in Oracle RightNow Analytics Cloud Service to detect trends in survey responses that develop over time.

7. Automate Report Production and Distribution

Remove manual processes from report running by scheduling reports to be sent to management automatically on a weekly or monthly basis. You can also facilitate quick escalation when satisfaction levels dip below acceptable levels, by setting up a report to be triggered when an exception has been met. Oracle RightNow Analytics Cloud Service makes it easy to schedule automatic report runs and distributions—freeing you from spending time in the system, running reports.

Figure 14. With Oracle RightNow Analytics Cloud Service, it’s easy to schedule regular report runs and see that they’re distributed to the right people.
### TABLE 1. KEY ORACLE RIGHTNOW FEEDBACK CLOUD SERVICE REPORTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORACLE RIGHTNOW FEEDBACK CLOUD SERVICE ANALYTIC REPORT</th>
<th>KEY METRIC</th>
<th>SECONDARY METRIC</th>
<th>WHY USEFUL?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Survey Summary Dashboard (3 reports in 1 dashboard: Broadcast Survey Summary, Transactional Survey Summary, and Website Link Survey Summary) | • Broadcast: sent vs. opened vs. completed  
• Transactional: sent vs. opened vs. started vs. completed  
• Website link: started vs. completed | N/A | Pinpoints your most and least effective surveys |
| Invitation Message Delivery Analysis | Number sent and delivered | Bounces of various types | If invitation mailings are not reaching their audience, will help you identify the problem |
| Invitation Message Response Analysis | Total opened | Total clicks | Helps you see how much interest is being generated by your invitation mailings |
| Survey Score Trend | Total responses for a survey over time | Average score for a survey over time | Shows whether number of responses and scores for a survey are changing over time |
| Question Response Trend | Total responses for a survey question over time | Average score for a survey question over time | Shows whether number of responses and scores for a survey question are changing over time |
| Topic Monitoring | Common words used in text responses | Details of each response | Enables you to quickly gather information about text responses without needing to read each response |
| Survey Page Drop-Off Rate | Number of times a survey page was submitted | Percentage of survey takers who abandoned the survey on each page | For multipage surveys, identifies which pages may cause a survey taker to abandon the survey |
How One Customer Used Oracle RightNow CX Cloud Service to Close the Loop with All of Its Customers

Established in 1979, J&P Cycles is the largest provider of motorcycle aftermarket parts and accessories in the world. A multichannel marketer that uses catalog, retail, Web, and event channels to reach its customers, J&P Cycles offers the best service in its industry, with free lifetime technical support, around-the-clock customer service, and a liberal returns policy. It’s no wonder, then, that 98 percent of the company’s customers report that they would recommend J&P Cycles to friends and family.

J&P Cycles uses Oracle RightNow Customer Portal Cloud Service for e-mail support, support videos, feedback, and live chat, and it uses Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service to process 100 percent of its customer surveys. (These include Web surveys, online general surveys, manual survey cards, and chat surveys.) Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service adds value for every department, by providing automated survey reporting, participation trending, question trending, question and comment distribution, high-level overviews, and departmental granular reports.

![Figure 15. A sample J&P Cycles report confirming on-time arrival of orders](image)

Closing the loop on every survey response is critical to J&P’s business. Indirect customer follow-up involves all the following departments: e-commerce (usability, functionality), purchasing/merchandising (quality, availability), DC (shipping, packaging), marketing (feedback, catalog fulfillment), showroom (appearance, service, selection), call center (service, tech support), and sales (research, parts availability, selection).

Direct customer follow-up is mandatory, because 100 percent of the surveys become incidents and thus must be reviewed. All surveys receive a response through a canned or custom e-mail or even a personal phone call.
Figure 16. J&P Cycles uses exceptions to highlight survey responses that are poor (red) or average (yellow), so problem areas are easy to spot.

By adopting Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service and the survey best practices outlined in this paper, J&P Cycles has reaped numerous strategic benefits. These include process improvements in all departments and an increased customer win-back rate (as a result of quickly closing the loop with customers, which has resulted in the retention of an estimated 5 to 10 customers per month). Management estimates that the company has saved $50,000 in annual labor costs by having a system in place to handle all feedback. Best of all, by listening to its customers, J&P has been able to increase its sales by an estimated $100,000 within just one year of implementing Oracle RightNow Feedback Cloud Service.

Conclusion

If it wasn’t clear before, it should be now: by taking care in how you write your questions, construct and execute your surveys, and design the metrics that will enable you to quantify your results, you increase your chances of high response rates and useful results. By instituting the survey best practices outlined in this paper, you can go a long way toward guaranteeing survey success.
Appendix: Sample Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are two different things. Customer satisfaction denotes whether expectations are being exceeded, met, or not met. Customer satisfaction surveys typically contain questions such as “How satisfied are you with …?” Unfortunately, customer satisfaction typically has little to do with customer loyalty. Satisfied customers will stay with you until they find a better alternative, whereas loyal customers will stay with you through thick and thin. Customer loyalty surveys ask questions such as “How likely are you to recommend …?” or “How likely are you to use or buy …?” Both types of surveys provide valuable information.

The following sample surveys focus on customer satisfaction, providing sample questions as guidance only. The more specific and focused the questions, the greater the chance that the questionnaire will result in complete, honest answers and actionable data. Therefore, you should personalize the questions you ask, to meet your organization’s needs.
Welcome Sue Beyer! Please take the time to answer a few quick questions about your experience with Customer Support. This survey should take about one minute of your time and will help us to make your next experience with us even better.

How would you rate our service?

- [ ] 5 - Outstanding
- [ ] 4 - Excellent
- [ ] 3 - Good
- [ ] 2 - Fair
- [ ] 1 - Poor

What factors led you to your rating of our service?

- [ ] Speed of Service
- [ ] Responsiveness of Agents
- [ ] Availability of Information
- [ ] Satisfactory Resolution
- [ ] Other

How would you rate your experience with the Customer Service Rep who assisted you?

- [ ] 10 - Always
- [ ] 9 - Very Likely
- [ ] 8 - Likely
- [ ] 7 - Somewhat Likely

How likely are you to refer us to a friend, relative or colleague?

- [ ] 10 - Always
- [ ] 9 - Very Likely
- [ ] 8 - Likely
- [ ] 7 - Somewhat Likely

Please tell us how we can improve your experience in the space provided:

[Text Box]

Submit
Best Practices for Improving Survey Participation

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