

## Patients Don't Sue Doctors They Like

September 2011 newsletter

Customer satisfaction has become an integral part of the tool set for diagnosing consumer pain points and fixing any problems that arise. However, many customer satisfaction efforts have become so routine that this critical function no longer captures the full attention of management, even as it continues to get adequately funded.

This lack of engagement might be caused by the hypnotic effect of seeing reams of data that never appear to change or by the boring data-centric (and non-visual) reporting systems. While there are clearly fixes for these ailments, the most important task is to re-enforce the importance of measuring customer satisfaction.

Look at it this way: **Patients are less likely to sue a doctor they like.**

Malcolm Gladwell (in *Blink*) popularized a 2002 study by psychologist Nalini Ambady (and others) that showed that the tone of a surgeon's voice was more predictive of patient satisfaction (i.e. they did not sue) than the content of their conversations, regardless of the actual outcome of the procedure.

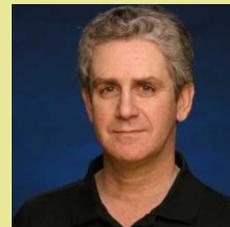
This conclusion is intuitive enough so that most people can apply it to their own company: even if the outcome is mostly terrible (but not fatal), a customer will not be upset enough to change brands or companies if the customer truly likes the company.

It is pretty easy for a patient to identify a physician who cares from one who is a little distracted. Although some physicians may only appear to care –

**This is a monthly newsletter from Prell Organization.**

**Prell Organization** is a marketing research firm that uses qualitative and quantitative methods to help our clients and their agencies see their brands more clearly.

**Brand Clarity** is a process by which consumers reveal the essence of a brand to make sure that the products and services being offered are closely aligned to their needs.



and others may be burdened by a personality deficit (but who are otherwise very competent) – it does not matter. It only matters what the patient/customer perceives.

In the same way it doesn't matter how good your product is, or how dedicated your employees are, or how noble your mission is – if your customers are not receiving this message. And because your customers are hearing mostly your tone, and not your content, it is particularly difficult to develop a consistent voice throughout your organization.

That is why you must constantly monitor your customer's satisfaction. It doesn't matter whether you report the 'top-two box' or the net promoter score or "likability," or whatever metric is in fashion at the moment.

It is just important that you conduct customer satisfaction research regularly (so you can monitor any changes) and use a large enough sample size to be able to determine if any of these changes (or differences between segments) did not happen because of chance.

Only then you can diagnose what ails your company and prescribe the appropriate medicine to cure it, so that your customers will remain loyal to your brand.

Rick Weitzer  
Principal

636-728-1557  
rweitzer@prellorg.com  
www.prellorg.com