



Case in Brief:

Quality Customer Feedback Begets Quality Customer Experiences

FlightSafety increased its focus on gathering more actionable information, which led to hundreds of customer-requested improvements.

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FlightSafety wanted to collect more actionable feedback from students who attended courses at its 40 learning centers. Although the international aviation training company had been collecting comments through a one-page paper survey for many years, the quality of feedback was not up to the standards that the company was looking for. Rick Bedard, FlightSafety's director of training operations, says that even though surveys about the organization's maintenance courses had a 100 percent response rate, often the information was sparse and not actionable.

Cognizant that getting the right feedback would help it make modifications that positively impact the customer experience, FlightSafety changed its data collection system and saw a vast improvement in actionable data.

Situation

FlightSafety wanted to get more information from the 75,000 individuals who attend its courses around the world every year. Only between 10 and 12 percent of students who attended its pilot courses were filling the one-page survey at the end of their training experience. And while the company was seeing a 100 percent response rate for its maintenance courses, where providing feedback was mandatory, the information didn't offer much value. "The surveys were not specific enough to get actionable feedback," Bedard says.

This meant that the organization was left mostly in the dark about what its students thought of their experience, and how FlightSafety could improve that experience. Moreover, paper surveys could easily be misplaced, leading to potentially valuable data being lost.

Strategy

FlightSafety partnered with Confirmit in November 2008 to upgrade and standardize the flight training company's feedback program. FlightSafety rolled out the new program across its 40 centers the following June. The company designed new surveys tailored to each learning experience, asking specific questions about elements of each course. For example, if a student received training from three instructors, the survey would list them by name and ask feedback about each of them.

Bedard says that within days after each training program, customers receive an email asking them to provide feedback about their experience while it's still fresh in their memory. This approach provides valuable information the company can use to make improvements in its courses and in its customer experience.

Results

Since FlightSafety started using automate surveys it has seen a threefold spike in responses from its pilot training programs. Response rates are now hovering between 35 and 40 percent. Providing feedback on the maintenance programs is no longer compulsory, so response rates to those surveys are now also between 35 and 40 percent. Although the maintenance programs saw a decline in response rates, Bedard says the information gathered is much more actionable. "Although it's hard to quantify, the quality of feedback is between three and four times better than before and more usable," he says.

While the vast majority of information is positive, FlightSafety has also received feedback that required it to take action to improve the learning experience for its customers. For example, if students say that a particular instructor lacked knowledge about a particular aircraft, the company provides additional training for that instructor. Jonathan Garner, a business analyst with FlightSafety, says 9 percent of surveys call for some change, and about 3,600 improvements have been made on the basis of this feedback. These changes are providing an overall experience that the organization's customers are requesting.

FlightSafety is also making sure its clients know their feedback is valued. In fact, part of the welcome presentation that students receive outlines some of the changes the company has made based on comments from other customers. Additionally, students who respond to the survey are sent a thank-you email and are informed if action was taken based on their feedback.

Lessons learned

Focus on quality rather than quantity: While a high response rate is good, it is better to have fewer responses that provide actionable data.

Take action on customer feedback: It is not enough to collect information from customers. When they indicate that something is not working or could be better, companies should make changes.

Tell customers what actions were taken: Customers appreciate being kept in the loop on what action their feedback led to.