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## Closing the Customer Perception Gap

Ever wonder what your customers *really* think about you? Instead of guessing, it's a good idea to ask. Customer surveys sent by direct mail, email, and online can give insights that make the difference between steering the company in the right direction and missing the boat.

Research shows that there is a huge perception gap between how companies think they are performing with customers and how they actually are. According to Bain & Company, 80% of companies think they give superior customer service, but only 8% of their customers thought they received it.

There is a reason "Undercover Boss" is such a hit. It's great fun to watch the CEO try to work a forklift or fail miserably at making a pizza in under four minutes. But from a corporate perspective, real issues get uncovered and critical oversights get fixed, too. You can do the same thing with your customers—without the wig and set of fake teeth.

Let's look at five strategies for getting inside your customers' heads:

- 1. Mail a survey.** Want to know what your customers think? Mail a survey with specific questions you want the answers to. Leave room for write-in responses to reveal issues you might not have thought of. You can allow customers to remain anonymous or give their names if they'd like you to respond to a specific concern.
- 2. Email a survey.** Emailing a survey is a great way to get quick responses to specific questions. Email surveys don't carry the same weight as a well-crafted print piece, so consider them for "quick hit" feedback on timely items. Use printed surveys for more in-depth reveals.
- 3. Personalized URL survey.** Personalized URLs are a great way to get feedback while giving yourself the option to automatically append data back into your marketing database.
- 4. Pop-up box on your website.** Pop-up forms are great for getting answers to quick questions from visitors to your website. Is the site easy to navigate? Can they find the things they need? Are there other products they wish you offered?
- 5. Keep tabs on social media.** Assign someone inside your company to monitor your Facebook page or do regular Twitter searches to see what people are saying about you on social media. You might be surprised what gaps in your service you can find.

When it comes to what your customers think, closing the gap between perception and reality doesn't have to be difficult. Sometimes all you have to do is ask. Want to craft a customer feedback campaign? Let us help.

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