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**Consumer insights: what they are and how to use them**

**A consumer insight refers to information about a specific group of buyers and what they want. Learn how to get and use customer insights.**

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Operating as a business without consumer insights is like working in a library without knowing how to read. Just because you come across a lot of information doesn’t mean you necessarily understand it or know how to use it effectively.

While any company can uncover customer insights, not every business is taking the opportunity to do so—potentially stifling their growth and their revenue in the long run. Learn how to collect, analyze, and apply high-quality customer data so you can make intelligent business decisions, build meaningful relationships with your buyers, and improve your bottom line.

**What are consumer insights?**

A consumer insight (or customer insight) is the information about a specific group of buyers and what they want. This data provides an in-depth look at how the consumers interact with your marketing content, sales team, support representatives, and product. With this critical knowledge, companies have a strong foundation for deciding what to pursue as an organization.

**Why are consumer insights important?**

The last thing you want is for your company to guess what customers want and be left shooting in the dark. Consumer insights allow you to understand what customers need from your company—and why—and to make informed decisions on how to better serve them.

“Consumer insights are a critical building block that businesses can use to make everything better,” says Andrew Forbes, director of product marketing at Zendesk. “They help you understand your customers—what they want from your business, how they use your product and service—and can be used to uncover areas to drive improvement across the business.”

The data is invaluable because it’s easy for businesses to only rely on intuition when it comes to customers. While gut feelings shouldn’t be ignored, you also want evidence that the initiatives you’re pursuing are (or aren’t) working before you make your next move. Consumer insights empower you to verify your decisions with data.

“Having rigor around putting customer insights to use eliminates the guessing and helps businesses make more data-driven decisions,” explains Forbes. “It'll help businesses move away from acting on anecdotes and towards a place where they optimize their business based on customer needs and insights.”

**What's the difference between consumer insights and market research?**

Market research refers to the broader process of collecting information about your business's target audience, customer, buyer, and wider market to learn how your product or service resonates among these groups of people. It reveals information about market needs, market sizes, competition, and customers. Market research tends to be quantitative. You can think of it as the "what" behind customers and market groups.

Consumer insights are one type of market research. You can think of it as the "why." It provides data that helps you learn why your customers behave how they do specifically with your business. Consumer insights are actionable.

**Types of consumer insights**

Consumer insights come in various forms. Learning about the different types of customer data will help you know what to look for when it comes time to collect and analyze insights.

1. **Firmographic data**

For B2B companies, this information describes the attributes of the businesses that are using your product or service. Firmographic data typically includes details like the size, location, and industry of the company.

1. **Usage information**

Usage data indicates consumer behavior, such as how people use your product or service and exactly what that looks like. These insights might show whether your customers use your product weekly or whether they use it several times a day, for example.

1. **Customer loyalty information**

This data reveals how happy people are with your business. Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a common way to measure customer loyalty; it entails sending customers a one-question survey and asking how likely they are to recommend your product or service to other people.

1. **Customer service data**

As you might have inferred, this data divulges the quality and the context of customer interactions with your support team. What are customers saying to your representatives, and what do they want to know? Is there anything they’re upset by or don’t understand?

1. **Competitor data**

This information indicates how competitors are running their companies and how you can position yourself to stand out. You’ll likely need to conduct market research or consumer research to collect competitor data.



**The power of consumer expectations**

**How do you get consumer insights?**

There are several ways to gather customer insights for your company, but it’s best to start by having conversations with your buyers across multiple mediums. You can also collect customer interaction data from other touchpoints. From there, use technology to organize and interpret the datasets.

* Have conversations with your customers
* Use technology to aggregate and analyze data

**Generate insights by having conversations with your customers**

Whether they take place over a messaging app, on the phone, or in person, customer conversations are essential to understanding who your buyers are and what they want. Use these interactions to ask customers how they use your product or service and what they think about it.

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Another option is to organize focus groups around a specific topic. It doesn’t matter if you’re talking to an online consumer in real-time or having a face-to-face conversation—the idea is that you keep the conversation flowing to generate the insights you’re looking to collect and make actionable.

Forbes points out that you don’t need to speak with a large number of customers to pull meaningful insights: “It could be 10 people, but you’re going to start to see some trends,” he says.

While two-way conversations are ideal, you could also send surveys to your customers to [collect feedback](https://www.zendesk.com/blog/customer-feedback-hear-voice-customer/). Just like you would during a conversation, ask survey recipients about their experience with your product or service and what improvements they’d like to see.

The more conversations you have across touchpoints—whether from your product, support, or sales teams—the more insights you’ll generate. But it’s equally important to centralize this conversational data and share it across your company so teams can stay in sync.

**Use technology to aggregate and analyze data**

Once you start gathering insights, you’ll need technology to aggregate interaction data from various locations and to make sense of that information. From there, you can begin leveraging consumer insights to meet your business goals.

Businesses should look for tools that make it easy for their business to get started immediately.

“I think it just comes down to having tools that a business can use to dig deep into all of their data,” Forbes says. “And when it comes to [Zendesk] software, we put a lot of effort into making it really easy for businesses to measure and analyze every aspect of their customer data.”

Many of the tools that exist for data collection and analysis don’t require advanced technological skills, so anyone can learn how to use them.

“Businesses should look for tools that make it easy for their business to get started immediately, without a team of data analysts required,” Forbes adds. “Many solutions do just that—they come with best practices built in, allow users to analyze data without any advanced coding, and make it really easy to share insights across the business.”

There are numerous data aggregation and analytics tools available, including [Zendesk](https://support.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360022178674-Getting-started-with-Zendesk-Explore-for-reporting-and-analytics). Our software provides powerful, built-in reports that help teams view and analyze key information about their customers. (You can create your own custom reports, too.) Once reports are ready, they can be shared with other teammates on a one-time or recurring basis.

Regardless of the tools you use, it’s important to house this information in a single place and to share it with employees across the business. That way, you can [break down data silos](https://www.zendesk.com/blog/ways-data-silos-impact-business-knock/) and ensure everyone is working better together.

**How to use consumer insights**

Consumer insights should help you understand customer needs so you’re able to improve your product offerings and service. The data can also help you spot trends and determine how to give your buyers what they want based on where they are in their [customer journey](https://www.zendesk.com/blog/fantastic-voyage-customer-journey-mapping-well-worth-effort/).

“Consumer insights are a critical building block that businesses can use to make everything better.”  
Andrew Forbes, director of product marketing at Zendesk

From a support perspective, you might use consumer insights to identify common customer questions and which team members are best equipped to handle them. Many of the companies that use [Zendesk](https://www.zendesk.com/), for example, leverage customer insights to route questions to the right service representative.

You may also use consumer insights to develop content that’ll help customers independently answer their own questions. This [customer self-service option](https://www.zendesk.com/blog/customer-self-service-guide-helping-customers-help/) streamlines the support process by giving agents more time to handle complex, high-level inquiries.

Most importantly, companies should use consumer insights to enhance their product or service. Many support teams will relay customer questions to product and engineering teams so they can make adjustments based on the feedback.

“[At Zendesk], customer insights fuel so much of what we do,” says Forbes. “We are constantly combing through our data to understand where there are opportunities to optimize everything we do—from product, to sales, to marketing.”

**Getting started with consumer insights**

Once you’ve figured out how to collect and analyze consumer insights, you’ll have the building blocks you need to keep customers happy. This data will help you create a strategic, data-based plan for how to grow your company in the future and keep your business in sync.

Gain a clear picture of what is and isn’t working for consumers so you know where to make improvements. Repeat this process consistently, and you’ll be well on your way to building brand loyalty and keeping customers around for the long haul.