

THE BEST PRACTICES SERIES

How to Collect Customer Feedback Using Surveys

PG 2. Collecting Customer Feedback Using Surveys

PG 3. The Facts **PG 4.** Pros and Cons **PG 5.** Using Surveys Throughout the Product Development Lifecycle **PG 6.** Best Practices and Pro-tips

PG 9. To Sum It All Up

Collecting Customer Feedback Using Surveys

Surveys allow you to poll a chosen audience in order to create, validate, or disprove a product hypothesis, and to gain a deeper, quantifiable understanding of users' tastes and opinions. At relatively low cost, you can sample a large amount of people and get actionable responses, making surveys one of the most scalable ways to gather structured customer feedback.

Use customer surveys to sample a broad audience at a low cost and get actionable feedback.



TWEET THIS

The use of surveys to collect customer feedback has exploded in the past few years. With tools like SurveyMonkey and Qualtrics and embedded survey capabilities within Facebook and Twitter, it has never been easier to poll your customers. But while sending a survey has become no-brainer easy, too many surveys are sent with too little thought put into them.

How can you create a survey which users will respond to and from which you can gather useful customer feedback? When in the product development lifecycle are surveys most effective?

The Facts



Collecting the Feedback

Moderate difficulty. It takes some time to create an effective survey and think about how the data will be used, yet once in place, it can be easily reused.



Analyzing the Feedback

Moderate difficulty. The analysis depends on the complexity of the survey and how much thought was put into what data to collect.



Reach

Broad and Deep. Surveys can be used across a broad spectrum of a population with remarkably consistent results.



Scalability

Highly scalable. Once created, a survey can be distributed across a large population, or reused as often as needed.



Cost

Inexpensive. Surveys are one of the least expensive methods of collecting substantive feedback.

Pros and Cons

PROS

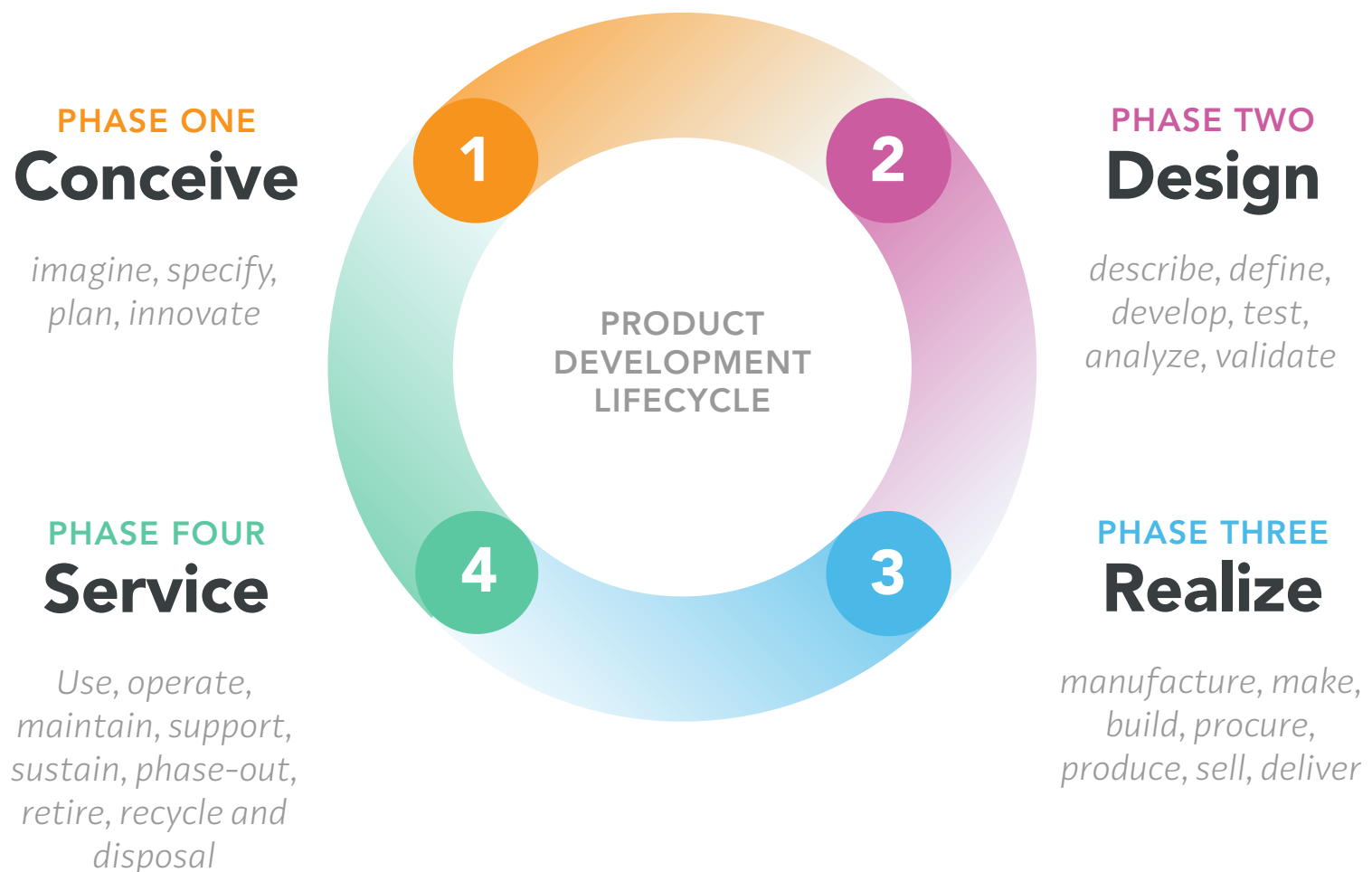
- ✓ **Cost & Scalability.** Surveys are generally inexpensive. Once you have created a survey, it can be reused across a large population and the results aggregated at a relatively low cost.
- ✓ **Broad reach.** Surveys are useful methods of determining behavioral trends of a large population.
- ✓ **Flexible.** There are a lot of ways to distribute a survey (online, email, social media, mobile, face-to-face), so you have the opportunity to craft a survey that meets your target audience's needs.
- ✓ **Dependable.** The anonymity of most surveys means people are likely to provide more unbiased, honest answers than they might give via other feedback methods.
- ✓ **You can learn something unexpected.** Providing customers with the opportunity to give responses to open-ended questions gives you the opportunity to glean unexpected insights.
- ✓ **More Marketing.** Surveys can educate users about under-used features: "Do you ever turn the function up to 11?" is a subtle way to point out that your product goes to 11.

CONS

- ✗ **Survey overload.** Surveys are technically easy to create and easy to send; unless you are vigilant, you can fall into the trap of surveying everything you can and overloading people who then refuse to respond.
- ✗ **Effective surveys = time and effort.** Surveys may technically be easy to create, but good surveys that result in well-structured, actionable feedback take time and effort to craft and analyze.
- ✗ **Undercoverage and nonresponse.** In the case of online surveys, samples may be subject to bias since you are only able to reach and survey people who have internet access.
- ✗ **Don't provide feedback on a continuous basis.** Surveys are samples of how people use and/or feel about your product at one particular time; unless given regularly, they are "events" rather than a continuous source of customer feedback.

Using Surveys Throughout the Product Development Lifecycle

At what point(s) in the PDLC will this type of feedback be most useful?



Feedback from surveys can be helpful throughout the Product Development Lifecycle.



PHASE 1 AND 2 As early as possible, use surveys to understand your target audience and their pain points. Surveys can be used to uncover latent needs and more importantly to validate your hypothesis more broadly. Use surveys to turn anecdotes into facts.



PHASE 3 AND 4 When your product has been released, use surveys to continually bring the voice of the customer (VOC) back into the conversation about what and how to improve the service. Surveys are also a fantastic tool to gauge ongoing customer sentiment about your product, allowing you to probe into why a user "likes" or "doesn't like" it.

Best Practices and Pro-tips

FIND THE RIGHT AUDIENCE ...AT THE RIGHT TIME

Be discerning about who gets your survey, and at what stage of the relationship with you and your organization they should receive it. If you're B2B: You get bonus points if you have developed a direct relationship with the point-person at a customer's company who is distributing your survey.

QUESTION WITH PURPOSE

Every question in a survey should be there for a reason and have a distinct purpose. Surveys should not be extended fishing expeditions — know why you are writing it and what questions you are hoping to get clarity on. If you have this in mind before creating the survey, you're more likely to get actionable, valid results after the survey is completed.

USE A VARIETY OF CLOSED-ENDED AND OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Surveys should range from structured questions such as simple polls (yes/no), multiple choice, rating, and ranking, to unstructured ones like open-ended free-response questions. Skipping open-ended questions means you may miss out on a great opportunity to learn more about why a customer answered the way they did.

TRY TO KEEP YOUR SURVEY SHORT, BUT WARN PEOPLE IF IT'S LONG

If it take more than 3 minutes to complete the survey, you should tell respondents that up front, or make it worth their while. The golden rule: Survey length can vary within reason *if* expectations are set appropriately before someone begins filling it out.

DON'T SURVEY EVERY TIME

Statistical significance is important, so make sure you have enough responses to a survey. Survey too often, however, and it's very likely that the answers you get back will be garbage, *ergo*, still statistically insignificant.

ALLOW CUSTOMERS TO GIVE FEEDBACK ON THEIR TERMS

Send surveys via email, create polls on Facebook, or consider including a ubiquitous "feedback" button or link on your site, in your product, and/or in your app.

TAILOR YOUR SURVEY TO THE TYPE OF FEEDBACK YOU WANT

Do you need quick validation on whether a feature is working as expected? A simple "I like this" survey, with the option to provide additional details, should suffice. Do you want to drill deeper or are you interested in broader feedback? Create a longer survey.

USE YOUR SURVEY TO CREATE A DIALOGUE WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

Creating a dialogue may be obvious when you use social media, but it's critical to maintaining a longer-term customer relationship. If all of your surveys only *take* information from your customers and do not result in a feedback loop, you're missing out on a robust channel of additional feedback.

BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT TRACKING

Let users know whether their answers are being submitted anonymously. You'll likely get more honest feedback with anonymous surveys but at the expense of being able to follow up or to track how a specific user's sentiment changes over time.

KEEP IT CONSISTENT

If you plan to use a survey to track changes over time (a “longitudinal survey” vs. a one-time survey), keep the questions consistent to minimize bias or contamination in the results. And if the results need to be strictly kosher, consider documenting your methods so future generations of product managers who inherit your survey understand your approach.

FOR AN ANONYMOUS SURVEY, ASK FOR EMAIL/CONTACT INFO

Ask customers to include an email contact info if they are open to having you follow up with them. If they opt-in to a follow-up, be respectful of their time.

CONSIDER INCLUDING THE GOLDEN QUESTION

Which is: **“What is the likelihood that you would recommend us to your friend or colleague?”** This is the question used to identify a Net Promoter Score (NPS). It provides a simple, referenceable metric. We encourage you to consider using NPS or a CES (Customer Effort Score) to create an ongoing benchmark.

To Sum It All Up



Surveys are a low-cost, scalable way to capture customer feedback. They help you turn anecdotes into facts, and can be used to formulate, support, or disprove a hypothesis. When designing a survey, remember to:

- Think about its purpose and the target audience and make sure each question is there for a reason.
- Design surveys with the end in mind, and understand how you want to use the data.
- Make sure your survey is structured in such a way that it is easy to analyze.
- Most importantly, be strategic about when to survey your customers to increase the likelihood they'll respond.

Share this ebook!



Build Better Products.

Help your customers help you know what to build next with our all-in-one product management platform.



- + Leverage customer feedback to discover new opportunities and diagnose customer pain
- + Collect actionable data & easily prioritize feature requests
- + Engage your customers to validate your ideas

VISIT [USERVOICE.COM](https://uservoice.com)

**Start your free
14-day trial today!**

uservoice 