

Title:

The Top Ten Client Feedback Questions

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Summary:

Perhaps you are interested in finding ways to get clients to give you feedback about the products and services you offer. Here is a list of 10 questions you could use. Select a few that suite your situation. The key is to ask the question and then allow the client uninterrupted time to answer. Your job is to just listen!

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Article Body:

As program chairperson of my SCORE * chapter I am always looking for new presenters to address the group. I frequently ask my fellow business counselors to give me some ideas for topics of interest to them.

In August one member approached me with an idea. He suggested inviting some of the clients that the counselors had worked with this year to one of our meetings to give us some feedback on our counseling techniques -both the highs and the lows.

Five clients were invited to our meeting and they were asked the first 5 questions of this Top Ten list. We learned a lot from the answers we got.

As 2005 comes to a close and we begin 2006 perhaps you are interested in finding ways to get clients to give you feedback about the products and services you offer. Here is a list of 10 questions you could use. Select a few that suite your situation. The key is to ask the question and then allow the client uninterrupted time to answer. Your job is to just listen!

1. What was the greatest benefit you derived from my service**? This question helps you to understand what is working. Sometimes you will be surprised by the answer. Our SCORE chapter has a limit of 3 counselors at one location to counsel one client. Our client panelists said the more counselors

the better! We have now eliminated the restriction on the number of counselors.

2. What would you like to see more of when you work with me? For our session the panelists told us some counselors introduced themselves by telling about their business background during the sessions while others did not. The clients said they wanted to hear the qualifications of the counselors who were working with them. Are you forgetting to be consistent when delivering your product or service to your clients? We were! ☺

3. How could I improve my service? Clients often have ideas that are easy to implement but somehow you haven't thought of. SCORE does both email and face to face coaching. These were face to face clients who wondered if they could get support between sessions through email. Easily done now that we know it might be helpful. (Our email addresses are already on our SCORE business cards!)

4. Is there anything you would like to see me stop doing? This question gives the client the opportunity to tell you about something that isn't useful to him or her. It was suggested in our session that sometimes it is difficult for the business owner to meet with the counselor because the owner can't leave his/her place of business. The SCORE clients wondered if it would be possible for the counselors to occasionally meet them at their own place of business. The answer was "Yes". Again not something we had thought to offer consistently.

5. Is there anything you didn't get from my service that you were looking for?
Here is an opportunity for the client to tell you other services that you might provide. If you are looking for ways to expand your offering this question is important. In the SCORE session one client wanted to know how he might get a counselor who actually worked in or owned the specific type of business that he had. Access to a database of the counselors in our chapter and their background would be helpful to the counselors and our clients. We will be putting one together. (We did have one counselor with exactly the right background for this client.)

6. Has my staff treated you with care, attention, and courteousness? This would be an important question for a service provider with an administrative staff to ask. Clients don't always complain about their experience with your staff but might share something significant when asked.

7. Is there an issue that I have not spent enough time on for you? Sometimes clients allow you to move forward but are still thinking about a previous issue. This kind of question helps them to revisit areas they may have not understood and still have an unanswered question.

8. Am I doing what you want me to do? Most of the time we are doing what we think the client wants. It is good to check once in a while to find out if you are actually doing what the client wants.

9. Where have we been less than proactive in addressing your concerns? It may be that the client is expecting you to move into different areas that you think are being covered by other vendors or staff members. "Being proactive" may have a broader definition to the client than you are using. Asking this question might uncover new business.

10. Is our billing clear? Are you getting value for your money? The bill is often a source of anxiety for the client. He/she needs to know exactly what he/she is being billed for. Does your bill show that? This final value question is critical to insuring your client is satisfied with your product or service.

*SCORE - This is an organization that is part of the Small Business Administration in the US. SCORE volunteers are experienced managers and business owners who counsel small business owners without charge.

**I have used the word service here and also client. You could just as easily substitute product and customer.