NICE Satmetrix

Response Rates to Rave About

Getting More from Your Email-Based Customer Experience Surveys

Overview

For managers of customer experience programs, survey response rates offer a vexing and ongoing challenge. The difficulty of driving higher levels of participation from customers is only increasing as surveys become more pervasive and customers become overwhelmed with requests to provide feedback. But, you can improve your response rates to email-based surveys if you follow these best practices.

What Can You Expect?

Let's start with response rate benchmarks. Satmetrix has found the following average response rates for email-based customer experience surveys:

	B2B	*B2C*
Relationship	**32%**	**13%**
Transactional	**23%**	**16%**

How do your response rates compare? If they aren't where you'd like them to be, this ebook provides helpful tips to improve response rates.

Sample for Success

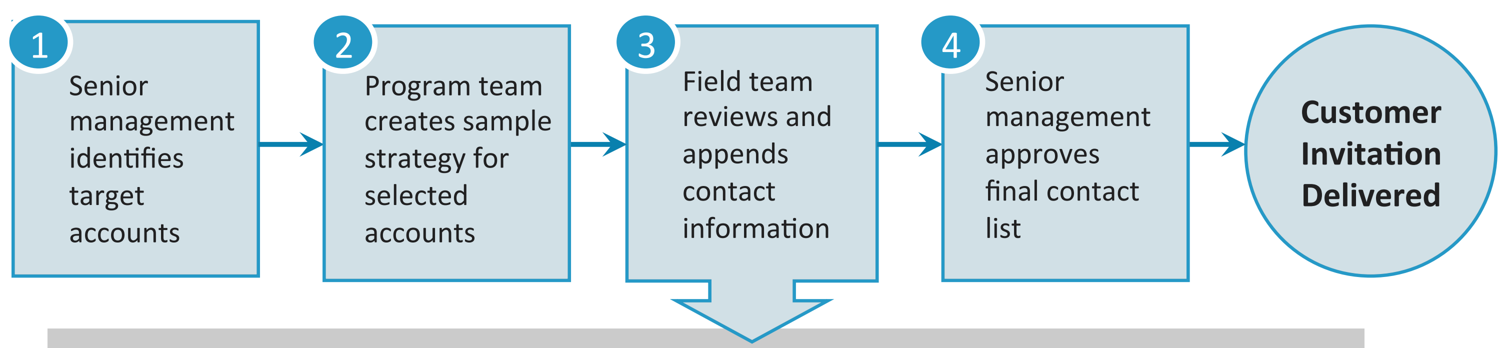
Before you can send a survey, select an audience. Survey recipient contacts are typically pulled from your CRM system. How accurate is your CRM data? Are you inviting the right people to take your survey?

Maintain Data Quality

In B2B relationship processes, your account teams should be responsible for ensuring data quality. Once you define your sampling strategy, i.e., the number of contacts and titles by account tier, your account managers should verify that the selected CRM data is accurate. Business leaders should then sign off on the removal of any contacts and review the final contact file. This gets business leaders to validate that the data is of value and is also protected from gaming the system.

A thorough review of B2B survey contacts using a process like this is your first step toward great response rates.

B2B SAMPLE REVIEW



Decision Maker	Influencer	End User
Job Title	**Job Title**	**Job Title**
Chairman	Director	Analyst
Chief Executive (CE, CEO, CO, CFO, COO)	Head of…	Consultant
President	Operations Mgr/Dir	Finance
Vice President (VP)	Products Mgr/Dir	Operations
Corporate/Global/Group Director	Purchasing Mgr/Dir	Researcher
	Research Mgr/Dir	

Sample for Success

Select Quality Contacts

In B2C relationship processes, be sure you leverage the best data source and choose survey respondents with an eye toward gathering the highest quality insight for your business. Some program managers are concerned that they cannot use contacts that have opted out of marketing email. Remember, this is not a marketing activity. You are not trying to sell them something; you are trying to improve their experience. This is a benefit to them.

Clean-Up Bad Email Addresses

In either B2B or B2C, check your bounce rates and identify contact owners who can address any bounced email addresses. Be sure to remove any invalid addresses from your source system to avoid the issue in the future.
This is the first filter of optimizing response rates.

Design for Deliverability and Beyond

When you send a survey, make sure its design invites great response rates too. Many aspects for your survey design affect response rates.

Time Your Delivery Properly

Transactional Surveys

Regardless of whether you're dealing with B2B or B2C companies, be sure to send your survey immediately after the customer's experience. Touchpoint (or transactional) surveys should ideally be sent within a day of the interaction you're asking about, and within a week at the most. Sending the survey too long after the experience will impact your response rates, since it no longer feels relevant to the customer.

Relationship Surveys

Be mindful of seasonality or business cycles. Avoid holiday seasons, and if your company is global, this means understanding holidays across the globe. For example, sending a B2B relationship survey during August in France or much of Europe would likely result in very low levels of participation.

Avoid Spam Filters

Are your email invitations spam resistant? Make sure your invitation makes it through spam filters and to your desired contact. Words like "survey" are spam magnets, so be sure to test your invitation subject lines. Use email marketing best practices to drive higher open rates.

Design for Deliverability and Beyond

Keep Invitation Text Relevant

Be sure your survey invitation is compelling. Keep it short and to the point, but explain to the customer what's in it for them. Ideally, your invitation text should:

- Reassure that the survey will only take a few minutes.
- Inform that responses guide strategic investments.
- Define a timeline for communicating identified actions.
- Provide examples of previous improvements based on customer feedback.
- Include an email address to submit questions (i.e. customerfirst@brand.com).
- Make it clear that you are doing something with the responses you receive. You're not just collecting a score.

Avoid Survey Toxicity

Survey toxicity, which lowers response rates, results from over-surveying customers. Establish touch rules that define how often you can send a survey to the same contact. These touch rules should extend across all surveys to that customer and should not be fragmented across your organization.

Generally, make sure any given contact has at least 90 days between surveys. Send relationship surveys no more than every six months.

Communicate for a Strong Relationship

The way you communicate with your customers both before and after surveys has a huge effect on response rates.

Establish Benefits with Relationship Survey Pre-Notification

Before you send an invitation for a relationship survey, send a pre-notification from someone the customer will recognize, for example your CEO, country manager, or business leader. Let them know the survey invitation is coming and what your process is for taking action. Consider sending the pre-notification from your email-marketing platform instead of your survey software. Your message should include “you will soon receive a request to participate in a brief survey.” This illustrates to the customer that the upcoming invitation is genuine and isolates issues between the communication, message, and the technology platform. The following sample provides some guidance.

To:

Subject:

Dear [Contact Name],

We are requesting your feedback on your overall experience with BRAND. You may have recently provided us with feedback based on a support request, or service engagement, but we’d like to understand how we are performing across all interactions with our company so we can prioritize our improvements and continue to support the areas that matter most to you.

Next week you will receive a request from Satmetrix (or other technology) to provide your feedback via a brief survey. The survey will take just a few minutes of your time. Your account team will follow up on any specific items, and toward the end of December we will share a summary of the actions we plan to take based on survey feedback.

Many of our experience improvements have come from previous feedback, including improving the onboarding experience, adding the new customer success team, and enhancing our product with self-service functionality. You will also see significant improvements to the end user experience in our upcoming product release.

Thank you for being a valued BRAND client. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Company Executive

Communicate for a Strong Relationship

Recruit Participants

In B2B relationships, we find active recruitment by your key decision makers and influencers to be critical to gaining participation. Account teams should let the customers know the process is kicking off, ask for their participation, and tell them what to expect. Account teams should receive daily reporting of non-respondents during the survey window (typically 3-4 weeks) so they can follow-up during the survey wave and remind customers to participate.

Holding account teams accountable for participation rates is a much better strategy than holding them accountable for the score. The score is an aggregation of the customer's overall experience; the account teams are best placed to help drive participation so you get a full view of your performance.

In transactional environments, frontline staff can inform the customer that they will receive a request for feedback and encourage them to participate. They should re-iterate that the information is used to improve the customer experience, and they should never, ever suggest that the customer give them a high score or game the system. Gaming offers no benefit to the company and degrades the customer experience.

Encourage Participation with Reminders

Sending an automated reminder email with the survey link 3-5 business days after the initial invitation is reasonable. Select shorter time periods for transactional surveys, and send relationship surveys within a week. Reminders should, once again, communicate the importance of their feedback. Best practice suggests one reminder for transactional surveys and two for relationship surveys.

Demonstrate Commitment Through Action

You should always communicate back to customers what you learned from survey responses and what actions you plan to take to improve their experience. Include non-respondents in your communication. This will make them more likely to provide feedback in the future, and it often generates a slight boost in non-respondent loyalty ahead of experiencing the structural improvements to which you've committed. Too many organizations miss this very important step.

In B2B environments, account teams should discuss results with both respondents and non-respondents in periodic business reviews or other customer meetings. This allows account reps to have a strategic dialog with customers outside the sales or service engagement, and it demonstrates your commitment to the customer experience. Arm your sales team with appropriate materials to support this discussion.

Customer Experience Software from NICE Satmetrix Can Help

Now that you've learned the many factors that contribute to great customer experience survey response rates, find out how industry-leading customer experience management can help.

Request Demo

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