

How to Match B2B Customer Satisfaction Survey Questions to B2B CX

Learn: 4 best practices for your surveys based on what makes B2B CX unique.



Written by: **Martha Brooke**,
Interaction Metrics Chief Analyst
Blackbelt 6 Sigma + CCXP Certified

ABOUT INTERACTION METRICS

Interaction Metrics is a data-driven Customer Experience Consulting Company that provides scientific surveys, service evaluations, and workshops.

© 2022, Interaction Metrics, LLC. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction is strictly prohibited.



How to Match B2B Customer Satisfaction Survey Questions to B2B CX

According to McKinsey & Company, consumer companies score 65% to 85% on customer satisfaction. But the average score for B2B companies is under 50%. That's a big divide. One reason B2B companies are underperforming is they often copy their B2B customer satisfaction survey questions from consumer-facing companies.

Using the wrong survey design is guaranteed to give you low response, faulty data, blurry insights, and vague next steps.

One reason B2B companies are underperforming is they often copy their B2B customer satisfaction survey questions from consumer-facing companies.

Let's get that fixed. First, I'll touch on the five main differences between business and consumer CX. Then I'll give you a few best practices for designing your B2B customer satisfaction survey questions for better results.

Difference #1: The B2B Spend

Most obviously, B2B customers are different than consumers because they spend a lot more. For example, a runner might shell out \$300-\$500 on sneakers each year. But Nordstrom, Big 5 Sporting Goods, etc., are spending millions of dollars per year on pallets of sneakers. Sure, some consumer

purchases like the new Tesla or house are spendy, but very few of us would repeat those purchases year over year.

Difference #2: Multiple Decision Makers

Next, to get to that high spend, many executives (both influencers and leaders) are involved.

Typically, to achieve a signed contract, Procurement Specialists, Managers, and Directors all weigh in—and this is as true for the vendor as it is for its customers.



Difference #3: A True Partnership

B2B customers often come up with ideas for how to upgrade products. And sometimes they even produce entirely new ideas for ways to approach the business!

As Dennis Fitzgerald, Vice President of Customer Satisfaction for Yaskawa America, says, “many of our OEMs work so closely with their end-users that they develop unique solutions that help us reimagine what the next generation of our products could be.”

Basically, B2B customers are so deeply involved in the distribution and use of products and services that an ongoing dialogue often affects both parties.

Take Intel, for example, where Barbara Roos Head of Customer Advocacy & Culture, says their B2B customers are “intrinsically involved in the development of our products, giving us feedback, telling us what their end customers want and need. They also keep us apprised of what trends are happening with their customers and how those trends then, in turn, impact what we deliver and make possible with our products.”

“B2B customers are intrinsically involved in the development of our products, giving us feedback, telling us what their end customers want and need.”

Barbara Roos, Intel

Difference #4: Many Touchpoints & Lots of Interaction!

B2B customer relationships are more complicated than consumer relationships. For instance, Mike Cross, Chief Customer Officer at CXera points out, “you have to teach your B2B customers how to use your products, help them along the way, and continually check in to ensure they’re gaining value and having a good experience”.

It comes down to this: with B2B CX, multiple touchpoints spanning many departments are involved. The customer’s journey can include tech support, supply chain management, consulting, field service, and more.

And B2B customers may interact as frequently as weekly, daily, or even hourly with their providers.

Difference #5: Customer Expectations are High

Finally, with so much complexity involved in the B2B relationship, it makes sense



that these customers have high expectations. Part of what's going on is that B2B customers are accustomed to the sleek experiences afforded by consumer giants like Amazon, Nike, and Apple.

**“Low quality B2B market research can lead to bad decisions.”
Chris Wells, Adience**

Mike Cross adds that “B2B buyers are doing a lot of their own research up front these days, allowing them to find a company that will fit exactly what they need. If they choose you, you have a very limited time to meet these expectations, or they’ll get frustrated and spare no words in letting you know.”

Matching B2B CX To Your Survey Questions

Chris Wells from Adience quips “low-quality B2B market research can lead to bad decisions.” This is especially true if a survey is poorly constructed, asks the wrong questions or fails to reach enough customers.

To remedy this situation what follows are **four best practices to inform your B2B customer satisfaction survey questions and design.**

Best Practice: Don't Annoy B2B Customers, Use a Suppression Process

Consumer-facing companies have so many customers that it's ok if they lose some along the way. But with B2B, every customer counts! That means you never want to bombard B2B customers with your surveys. You don't want them feeling frustrated or annoyed.

For example, with your tracking study where you evaluate all aspects of a customer's satisfaction with your company, surveying once per year is all you should do.

But for operations feedback, while you want to survey often, you also want to scour your list and make sure you contact your customers strategically and only at key interaction points. Operations feedback includes tech support, client services, inside sales, etc.



For example, if a customer has had multiple repairs in a month, you should not survey about each repair but instead find out about the repairs experience in aggregate. Alternatively, tease out one repair each month and get feedback on that.

Best Practice: Customize and Demonstrate Listening

Tweak your survey questions to reflect the true interests of your B2B customers. You never want to come across as ho-hum and you always want to show that you are profoundly invested in customer listening.

For example, a great way to start an open-end interview with a B2B customer is: “We’re truly interested in everything you have to say about ABC Company and the XYZ marketplace.”

Or, if you must ask the NPS question, and your audience is distributors, ask something like: “How likely are you to go out of your way to recommend ABC Company to your customers?”

Best Practice: Account for Multiple Perspectives

Your customer base probably includes Presidents, IT Technicians, Marketing Managers, and Procurement Specialists, all of whom have their own take on how your company is doing. Your survey questions should reflect that.

Questions for IT might get into nitty-gritty engineering details. But questions for Procurement might be limited to the ease of getting credit, and invoicing processes.

Basically, each persona needs a set of questions relevant to their own interests. Otherwise, you risk getting bogus data or lots of NAs. If customers need to use NA, you failed to think your survey design through.

In addition, for each of your personas, ask questions that identify expectations and others that uncover perceptions. The delta between the two offers a rich perspective on satisfaction.

“We need to keep going back to the value exchange between ourselves and our B2B customers.”
Pamela Herrmann,
OnQFinancial



And don't forget that for each customer, you'll want to find out what's most important to them. Then use that to set a weighting factor included in your satisfaction score.

Scores should be calculated and tracked per customer and for each customer account.

Best Practice: Does a Customer Want a Callback? Do it!

Considering that expectations from B2B customers are high, you need to show you care.

So for your operations surveys, ask the customer if they want a follow-up call to go into more depth with their issue or to discuss anything else about your company. Allow the customer to state when they would like to be contacted—and then follow through!

If you are in B2B CX, this is the time to concentrate on best practices—and apply hacks to get more from your surveys in place.

Shouldn't B2B Customers be the Most Satisfied?

Since B2B relationships are worth more than consumer ones, you'd think that B2B companies would excel with the Customer Experience. But going back to the McKinsey report, they don't.

Pamela Herrmann, VP of Marketing at OnQFinancial says "in my career spanning

nearly every aspect of CX, it's B2B companies that struggle the most. At OnQ, we've found that we need to keep going back to the value exchange between ourselves and our B2B customers. Only then, when we write each survey question to address that value, do we get the data we need to continually succeed."

Given inflationary pressures and supply chain woes, if you are in B2B CX, now is the time to concentrate on best practices—and **apply hacks to get more from your surveys in place.**

Start by examining your B2B customer satisfaction survey questions.

- Are they relevant?
- Are they interesting?
- Do they show listening?



- And are you following up? Not only when you must, but when customers would benefit from a deeper conversation.

For B2B CX has unique characteristics. Could your B2B customer satisfaction survey questions align better with what makes your company special?

Basically, could there be a better marriage between your customers and your surveys? Employ the best practices outlined above for better surveys and more actionable learnings.

Toward smart surveys and B2B CX success!

Want to discuss your B2B Customer Satisfaction Survey Questions?
Contact us [here](#).

