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## A SAURAGE RESEARCH WHITE PAPER

# VOICE OF CUSTOMER

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## Are Those Customers Saying the Right Things?

In this age of hyper-intrusive, instantaneous analytics, companies seem to continuously demonstrate how important it is to understand their customers. Unfortunately, even with technological augmentation, that's not as simple a proposition as one might think. Yes, leave it to a marketing research company to go and complicate a simple proposition.

In reality, truly actionable insight requires more than conducting a customer satisfaction survey. It requires being able to successfully differentiate between what customers say they want, what they really need, and how your company can meet those needs. While straight-up surveys do serve a purpose, they can make the mistake of framing the conversation from the company's perspective only.

## Maybe It's Time to Ask the Right Questions

Companies need a way to fill in those wide knowledge gaps between survey questions. Rather, they need a way to allow their customers to fill in those gaps themselves—in their own words, with their own stories. Aptly named, Voice of Customer (VOC) research provides a foundation for initiating, developing or expanding a product or process in terms of better understanding a customer's needs and expectations at critical stages in their experiential journey.

**Researcher:** What quality do you most admire in a tortilla chip?

**Respondent:** Nacho cheesiness.

In the illuminating exchange above, the respondent is more than likely basing his/her answers on options that already exist in the marketplace. For the company, the only strategy resulting from this insight would be to mimic an existing solution. This approach also illustrates a flawed presumption made by many companies: that their customers are so obsessed with their products that they are continually thinking about ways to improve them. Deep down, we all know customers have other things going on in their lives.

An effective VOC gets at the heart of those other things. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, it uncovers behavior-influencing wants and needs, expressed in the customers' own words, organizes

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them into a hierarchy prioritized by the customer, then connects those needs with a company's products and solutions, in a continuously evolving customer-centric process. In short, it listens.

The information derived comes in handy for new-product development, product extensions, process improvement, product mix or customer-service policies. It could inform and alter your marketing and advertising. It could lead to better products, new markets, and fresh opportunities.

### Our Methodology

At Saurage Research, we begin with a benchmark study to establish empirical evidence on the impact of business initiatives or the outcomes of interventions. Then, we run a qualitative pass to add color, depth, and context—getting down to the issues that affect behavior or perspectives by listening to the target market, current customers, former customers, and employees. Then, we conduct experience mapping to better understand where customers encounter friction.



To avoid bias or outside influence, we conduct one-on-one interviews, making it a point to transcribe everything. Here, we discover through language and context what the customer really means. In the transcribed words of noted author and researcher Gerry Katz, “Human beings are incredibly clever at kind of twisting what was said to confirm some underlying belief that they hold.”

We also conduct internal interviews with sales and product teams, which help us bridge the gap between customer and company, designing solutions, based on real behavior, that meet real needs. Integrating what customers really want with internal processes, sales approaches, program implementation is critical to determining the messaging behind successful marketing.

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### Cultivating the Very Best Kinds of Relationships

Really, that's the key. An effective VOC program is more than just research. It's a path forward. The process itself makes a great first impression. Beyond that, it shows your customers that you're actually listening to them, not simply managing your own agenda. This is how you build the best kind of relationships—ones that deliver a competitive advantage, and last a very long time.

We'd love to hear your voice. For a complimentary consultation on your very own VOC, contact Saurage Marketing Research at **800.828.2943**.

### About Saurage Marketing Research

We are a full-service marketing research firm. We provide the answers that drive successful business strategies. Accurate, usable data – packaged so that so that you can understand it and act on it successfully.

Since 1987 we have worked closely with companies in many industries. It is rewarding to see our research used to create (or redirect) national advertising campaigns, bring faltering businesses into the black, and turn unconvincing promotional programs into success stories. We know our business and understand your needs. To request a bid or for more information, contact us now.

