

Achieving Growth through Surveys

Growth is an all-inclusive term. It can mean an increase in revenue, for example. It can also include an increase in member/client satisfaction. It can even include an increase in awareness about the mission and activities of your organization. The process discussed below will help increase growth in any and all of these areas.

The challenge all organizations face is how to communicate effectively with their members/clients. This task is made more difficult now than ever because so many sources compete for their attention. If you are, however, able to communicate effectively with your members/clients, it engenders trust and commitment. Research demonstrates that members/clients who trust and are committed to an organization become its most effective advocates. And member/client advocates are one of the most effective, if not the most effective, ways to spur significant growth.

At KC Surveys we have developed a process that we have found to be very effective for follow-up with surveys (This process also works well with follow-up for focus groups). This process helps instill a culture of member/client focus throughout the organization. Here are the main elements of this process which you will find are relatively easy to implement:

1. Chose a site in your newsletter and on your website where you will provide regular updates—ideally at least quarterly—on your progress in addressing needs identified in your surveys. This site should be near the front of your newsletter and in a most visible location on your website.
2. Label this section for your updates with a caption such as "Follow-up of 2012 Survey". Unless you label this section appropriately, the members/clients will not readily make the connection between what you are reporting and your follow-up on survey results. (This is a critical point because we all want to see that what we suggested in a survey has an impact. It demonstrates that an organization cares and correspondingly we in turn are much more likely to care about that organization.)
3. The updates should be authored by a key management figure and/or board member i.e. the CEO and/or the Chair of the Board. Whether either of these individuals actually writes these updates is optional; however, their names must appear as the authors. This ensures to the members/clients that follow-up of the survey results is taken seriously by the key authority figures in your organization.
4. Each update article should address only one issue at a time. This ensures that members/clients are not overwhelmed by a myriad of follow-up details about various issues being addressed at the same time. The regular reporting of one issue at a time helps the members/clients to appreciate that consistent progress

is being made on addressing survey issues. This regular reporting, therefore, promotes greater trust between your organization and your members/clients.

5. These update articles should be written so that most, if not all of the members/clients, at least skim over them. To do this in the newsletter article begin by highlighting the key points in your article with a series of short bolded bullets (in effect it is like providing an executive summary), and then provide the full text of the article after these bullets. For the article on the website, begin the article with the bolded bullets and then hyperlink it to the full article, so members/clients have the option to skim over the bullets, and if they choose, read the full article.
6. Try and use a graphic with each article. Research demonstrates that people are more likely to read articles that include graphics. Graphics can include statistical charts of various kinds, appropriate cartoons and even pictures, usually of people relevant to the article. Research also demonstrates that most graphics significantly improve readers' understanding. Using graphics, therefore, helps readers to better understand the significance of what you are reporting.
7. Ensure that regular survey updates are provided at key organizational events, such as at the AGM and conferences. Whether these updates are provided in written form or given orally, they should be presented by key association figures, such as the CEO or chair of the board, again to confirm that follow-up of survey results is taken seriously by the key authority organizational figures.
8. Lastly, after a year of providing quarterly updates and before your next survey, it is advisable to provide a summary of what has been accomplished. Such summaries help members/clients appreciate more fully what has been achieved. With this summary, it is often useful to invite your readers to score a scaled question or two to gauge how you are doing in addressing key member/client needs identified in the survey. The response to these types of questions, if you receive a reasonable response rate, will provide you with a sense of how well you are doing. Should you not be satisfied with the trend you observe, this is the time to strike a focus group. Focus group sessions complement surveys by identifying additional ways to make further improvements in addressing these key member/client needs. To maximize the effectiveness of your focus group and engage your members/clients to provide further feedback, use the same process outlined here for surveys.

While the follow-up process with survey results being proposed here is relatively simple to implement, it is unfortunately usually missed, or underutilized, in most surveys. The author used this process to increase growth significantly in the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA) over a period of six and a half years. KC Surveys now helps organizations use this process to achieve significant growth.

Remember, demonstrating to your members/clients how you are progressing in meeting their needs identified in your surveys is a sure way of earning advocates for the services you provide. And increasing the number of member/client advocates is one of the most effective, if not the best, ways of achieving significant growth in your organization.