

Customer Information

If It Was Only This Easy!



Donning his new canine decoder, Professor Schwartzman becomes the first human being on Earth to hear what barking dogs are actually saying.

Steve Hiller
UW Libraries

hiller@u.washington.edu

So Many Methods . . .

- **Surveys**
- **Focus groups**
- **Observations**
- **Usability**
- **Interviews**
- **Data mining**
- Counts (manual and automated)
- Logged activities
- Critical path analysis

Customer Surveys: Some Caveats

- Potentially long lead time needed
 - Survey design, human subjects approval, campus coordination
- Expense (direct and indirect costs)
- Tends to measure perceptions not specific experiences
- Survey population factors
 - Sample size, representativeness, response rate, **survey fatigue**
- Expertise needed for design, analysis and interpretation
- Understanding and using results may be difficult to achieve

Gresham's Law Adapted to Surveys

- **Many Bad Web Surveys Drive Down Response to All Surveys**
 - Logistically easier to use Web-based surveys
 - Can construct surveys without understanding of good survey methodology
 - Response rates falling
 - Increasingly difficult to generalize from respondent results to entire population

Qualitative Provides the Context

- Qualitative information from comments interviews, focus groups, usability can often tell us:
 - How, why
 - Value, impact, outcomes
- Qualitative information comes more directly from users:
 - Their language
 - Their issues
 - Their work
- Qualitative provides understanding

Observational Studies

- Describe user activities in terms of:
 - what they do
 - how they do it
 - how much time they take
 - problems they encounter
- Can be obtrusive or unobtrusive
- Can be tied in with interviews or usability
- Well-developed data collection method is essential
- Room counts/customer facilities use most common
- Quick and inexpensive; can use sampling

Interviews and Focus Groups

- High degree of customer involvement
- Clarify and add context to previously identified issues
- Customer defined language and issues
- Objective and effective interviewer/facilitator needed
- Analysis more complicated
- Look for patterns, themes, consistency but those not generalizeable to broader population
- Interview/focus group themes can be followed up with other methods

Focus Groups Caveats

- Need minimum number of participants
- Participants share certain characteristics
- External facilitator
- Not representative
- Complex logistics
- Wandering discussion
- Transcription costs/time
- Complicated analysis

Good Assessment Starts Before You Begin . . . Some Questions to Ask

- Define the question
 - What do you need to know and why
 - What will it cost; who will do the work
- How will you use the information
- Where will you get the information
 - Existing data
 - New data (where or who will you get it from)
- How will you get the information (methods used)
- How will you analyze the information
- Who will act upon the findings

Customer Surveys: Questions Before You Begin

- What information do you need
 - Actual or perceived
- Who do you need it from
- How will you use it
- Is a survey the best way to get it
- Can you “piggyback on an existing survey
- How soon do you need the information
- What resources are available and/or needed
- How will you analyze results

Why Use Customer Surveys?

- Acquire both quantitative and qualitative information
- Can generalize from sample population & respondents
- Analyze data for entire group, within group, between groups and over time
- Customize questions, length, format and timing
- Useful for importance, satisfaction, information seeking use and behavior, use patterns
- Can corroborate evidence from other sources
- Can analyze “gaps”
 - Importance/satisfaction, perceived/actual, “visibility”

Customer Surveys

Increasing the Response Rate

- Use surveys sparingly
- Make survey as short as possible
- Keep it simple; avoid jargon – use “their” language
- Make it easy to answer and respond to
- Understand organizational survey environment
- Explain why it’s important
- Target your audience
- Offer incentives/Do follow-up reminders