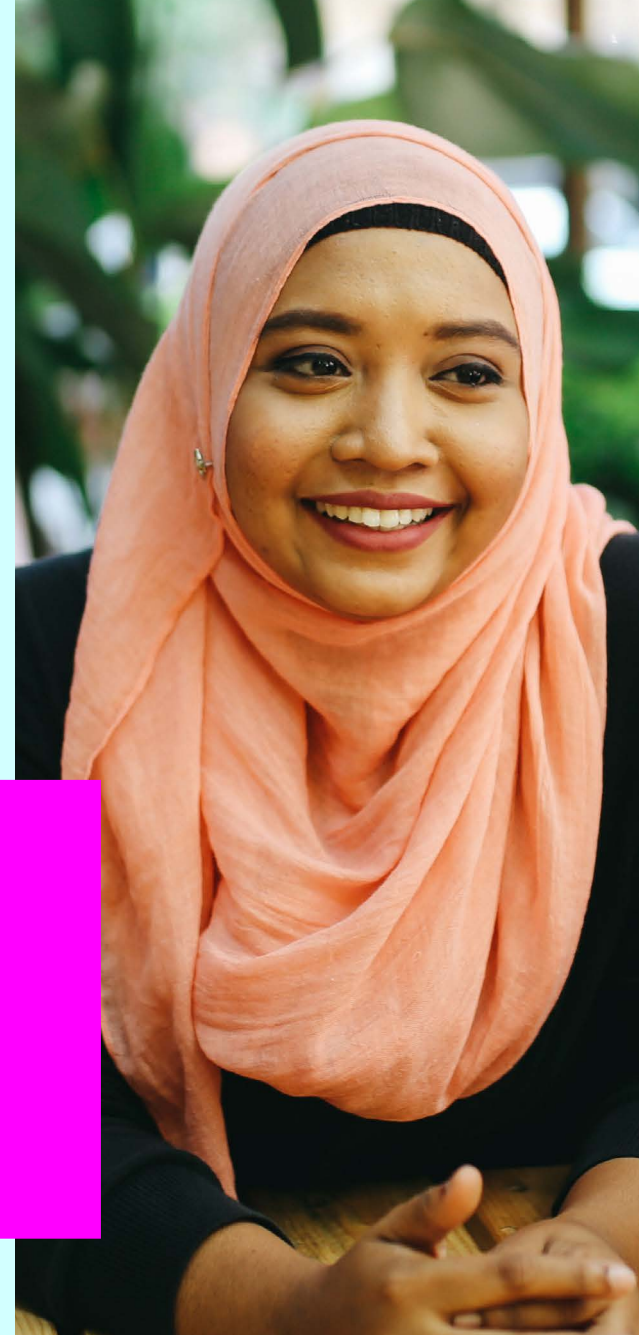# 5 Steps to Success
Voice of the Customer

Voice of the Customer Key Benefits

1   Retain (and gain) customers

2   Improve cross-sell and up-sell

3   Streamline processes

4   Drive change

5   Differentiate your company

Introduction

Creating a positive and consistent customer experience across multiple channels is one of the biggest challenges facing businesses today, and a solid Voice of the Customer program is core to meeting this challenge.

Building such a program, however, is far from simple and failure to do it well will result in "just another customer survey". Implement it effectively, though, and you'll drive business change, deliver ROI and create competitive advantage.

For dedicated CEM professionals, a VoC program is simply the "right thing to do". However, while some organizations just "get" it, for many, a lot of work is required to secure the financial and operational investment necessary to build a true VoC program. There is—quite reasonably—a call to demonstrate Return on Investment.

Senior-level support is vital to the success of a VoC program. The million-dollar question is how do you secure the right level of support from the individuals in your organization who can drive the program from the top? You will know who the movers and shakers are, and to engage these individuals it is critical to understand the key business issues they need to address and then demonstrate the role your VoC program can have in helping them to do so.

Addressing Business Issues

Increased Revenue

Reduced churn

Improve cross sell

Attract new customers

Reduced Cost

Process improvement

Compliance/ process consistency

Culture Change

Customer centricity/ brand promise

Cross functional change

Business Benefits of a VoC Program

The benefits are significant; delivering an excellent customer experience is the most effective way for both B2C and B2B organizations to differentiate themselves from the competition— and VoC is a vital component in improving the customer experience. As you're building a business case to your senior team, consider which of the key benefits most apply to your company, and tie financial implications to them. Here are a few examples:

— **Retain (and gain) customers**
A well-implemented VoC program contains alerts which enable you to re-engage with unhappy customers, resolve any outstanding issues and retain customers for longer. You'll also drive positive word of mouth and referrals as previously dissatisfied customers become your advocates.

— **Improve cross-sell and up-sell**
Use customer feedback to better understand how you can meet customers' needs through additional products and services. Use alerts to react quickly to create tailored offers which increase revenue with low cost of sale.

— **Streamline processes**
Every business, particularly those that have grown through acquisition, has legacy processes that confuse or infuriate customers. Use the Voice of the Customer, linked to the

Voice of the Employee, to reduce costs by identifying broken processes, streamlining them to create better customer experiences and reducing the time your customer teams spend resolving issues.

— **Drive change**
Real business change requires significant external pressures, and none is stronger than the Voice of the Customer. Use what your customers tell you to guide restructuring, create more effective customer touchpoints and build consistent processes that support your teams and create a customer-centric culture.

— **Differentiate your company**
Customer experiences are a key differentiator for both B2B and B2C enterprises. A VoC program is a crucial part of understanding, improving and optimizing industry-leading experiences which create loyalty and positive word of mouth. As products and pricing homogenize, customer experience is fast becoming the key battleground.

Once you have defined the linkage between your VoC program and the wider business objectives with key stakeholders, you need to demonstrate and measure success. If you have one, use your existing feedback program to demonstrate previous successes. It's crucial to focus on financial and operational wins early on since you're looking to achieve financial and operational support.

Once key stakeholders are engaged in the program, it is critical to build on this, to ensure long-term success. An important building block of this success will be your program steering group which should include senior stakeholders who can drive the program at a strategic level, support decision making, and approve budgets.

5 Steps to Success

Forsta has created an engagement model which outlines five key stages in building a successful VoC program.
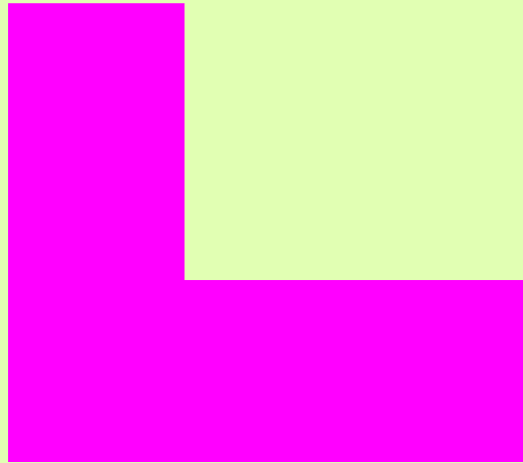
1 | Define

— Agree clear, phased objectives and success criteria. It is imperative to define the key business issues that you need to address – increasing revenue, decreasing costs through operational improvements, driving culture change – at the outset so that you can build a program that will influence key business and customer KPIs. Otherwise you run the risk of building a VoC program that languishes in a silo.

— Next, map the customer journey from the customer's perspective to ensure that you are prioritizing the right touchpoints. You must understand when and how they wish to engage with your brand. Identify the key 'Moments of Truth' for customers so that you have a clear understanding of which interactions bear the most impact on customer experience.

TIP

Start with just one or two touchpoints and make sure you're asking the right questions and taking the right action. As you prove your business case, expand your program to other touchpoints until you're covering and improving every angle provided by customers. Then you're in a better position to roll out your analysis further.

2 | Design

- Ensure that you design the program to deliver both tactical and strategic benefits, in line with your business objectives.

- Decide what channels your customers will find most engaging (web, mobile, telephone, paper, or others) and take into account both relationship surveys, which analyze the health of the relationship on an on-going basis (once or twice a year for example), and transactional surveys which are better suited to identifying issues and process improvements at key touchpoints. Ideally there should also be a way to relate relationship surveys to transactional surveys, and vice versa, so that you can identify the critical drivers of loyalty or dissatisfaction.

- Having carefully designed the most appropriate methods of data capture for your business, decide what reporting channels are required and build in closed-loop processes so that you can resolve issues as they occur.

TIP

Bring in stakeholders from across the company, not just those in customer-facing roles. Customer experience is impacted by sales, marketing, operations, finance and product teams. Understanding the role of each department at every touchpoint will ensure that the right team is brought together to resolve any issues identified.

3 | Listen

— Use multi-channel data collection to drive high response rates and deliver deeper insight. Identify a solution that will provide a secure and highly scalable way to gather customer feedback, automate alerts, and generate tailored reports that provide stakeholders with live insight.

— The most valuable insights are achieved when customer feedback is combined with other data that is available within your organization. Make sure you collect information from all sides of your organization – add VoC data to ERP and CRM platforms as well as employee feedback systems and external benchmarking data - to ensure that you are able to build a holistic, single view of the customer. What matters here is to gather robust, representative, balanced information, using appropriate and relevant channels and integrating it with your internal systems.

TIP

Bring your customer feedback alive by combining it with data from your financial systems. This will enable you to segment your client base and understand what is critically important to each segment and how to move

4 | Analyze

— Improve business results by analyzing data and creating a clear view of the issues and opportunities. It's vital that you cater to the needs of your audience when building reports if they're going to be engaging, so provide clear dashboards to the people who need an immediate view of what's happening, but ensure there's the ability for managers to dig into the data when they need to.

— As well as analyzing quantitative data, bring in additional insight through text analytics and media such as video so you can really bring the Voice of the Customer to life, whether you're talking to front line employees or board members.

TIP

Focus on sharing and celebrating results as often as you can to build a sense of community around the Voice of the Customer. Use positive customer feedback to reward and recognize your best team members, and use negative comments as an opportunity to train and develop those who may need a little help.

5 | Act

TIP

Have a predefined budget for the smaller changes that you need to make. This will speed up the process of implementing many of your activities by avoiding the need for board approval for everything. If you can make your business case easily and ensure budget and operational approval within your steering group, you'll see results faster – further proving the case for your overall program

— Beyond the analysis, it's vital to ensure real change takes place. From a tactical perspective, this means using alerts, for example about dissatisfied customers or poorly performing team members to improve problem resolution and retention, or about happy customers to motivate your employees and leverage positive word of mouth.

— To achieve strategic results, undertake root cause analysis to identify the cause of issues that occur regularly. For example, by redesigning a key touchpoint, such as your website, or even your reception area, you may be able to dramatically reduce customer complaints or increase satisfaction. Once you understand what improvement activity needs to take place, prioritize it and make it the responsibility of a member of your steering group.

— As well as making these changes, use your VoC solution to monitor the changes that are taking place so you're able to measure the results. This will also help individuals see how their actions have a real, immediate impact on customers so they can change their own behavior to drive great experiences.

What Next?

A VoC program needs to evolve and change with your organization. Review your goals and revise them to keep up with the changing demands of your markets. Be prepared to examine all aspects of this program on a regular basis with a cross-functional team of experts to seek continuous improvements, to re-focus on new issues as they arise and to adjust your business priorities along the way.

There is a lot to consider, but don't let that put you off taking those first vital steps. By starting small, making sure you're getting it right, and taking action when you need to, you'll learn the lessons unique to your business and will be able to grow and develop the program effectively. The ultimate proof point of a VoC program is change, so set achievable goals, implement in stages and use the Voice of the Customer to make your company more competitive, one step at a time.

To find out how Forsta can set you on the path to VoC success, visit **www.forsta.com**
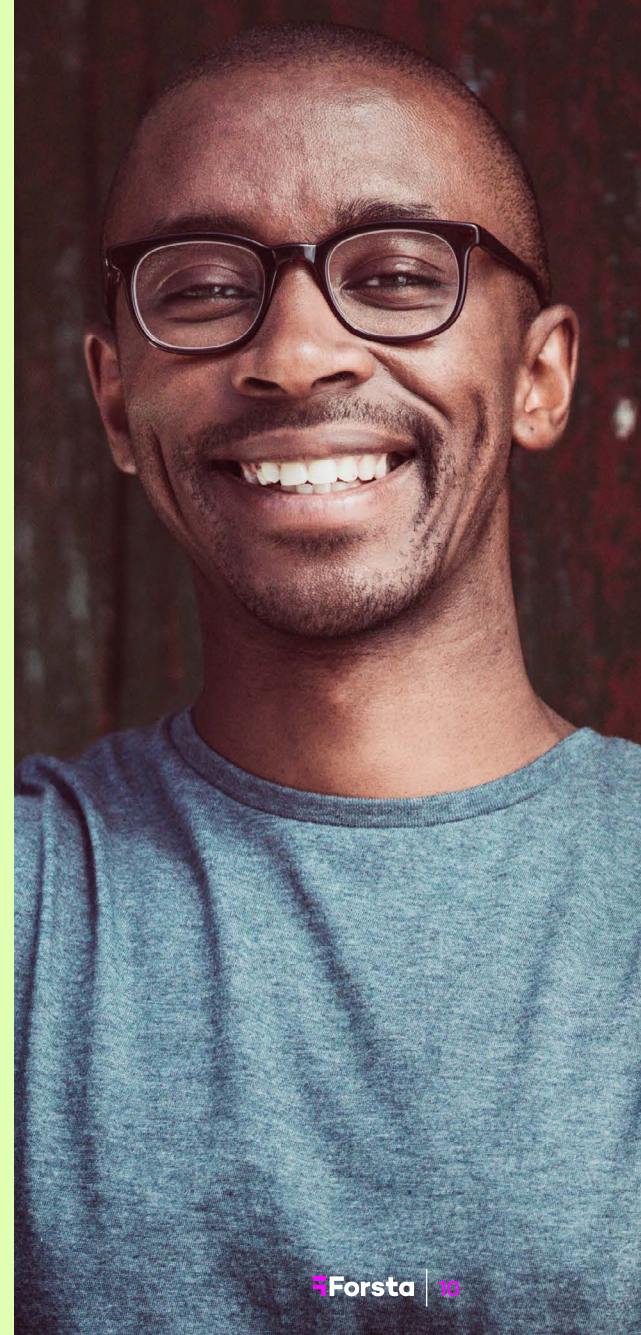
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