

Case Study Four

Customer Satisfaction - Opal's Solutions Division

The Client

Opal's Solutions Division delivers advanced IT communications to business customers throughout the UK. It is part of Opal Telecom, which provides services to over 100,000 business customers and is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Carphone Warehouse Group.

The Relationship

Customer Satisfaction UK has worked with Opal since 2005, for other divisions and for the business operations of its sister company Talk Talk. We have provided a range of services to help investigate, measure and improve customer satisfaction for customers and partners.

The Challenge

The Solutions Division has grown rapidly, both organically and through acquisition. It is committed to further success by providing market-leading solutions delivered by outstanding people and supported by exceptional customer service. Operating in an extremely competitive and rapidly changing marketplace, driven by demanding customers, it is essential that Opal is in touch with its customers. It must fully understand their experiences and needs to be able to deliver products and services which satisfy these to the greatest possible extent.

The Task

Based on our good reputation working with other parts of Opal, in 2007 Customer Satisfaction UK was asked to complete an investigation of the Solution Division's customers. The aim was to benchmark the current situation, help to drive performance improvements and maintain the division's successful growth.

- Initial informal consultation with key management ensured a project specifically designed to their requirements, built with the confidence and commitment of management and focused on key business goals.
- A programme of telephone interviews, conducted by our experienced and professional team, provided a reliable and detailed insight into the needs and experiences of a cross section of customers.
- Crucially, close involvement with the client in the interpretation of customer feedback meant that conclusions and recommended actions were practical and relevant. Importantly, we could also agree the best ways of presenting feedback and conclusions to win keen commitment from staff to the resulting improvement actions.

The Results

In general, customers reported high levels of satisfaction with their dealings with the Solutions Division, and in many cases they were **extremely satisfied**, making comments about the exceptional quality of service they have received.



Industry leading results emerged. For example, 98% satisfaction levels on product quality and 97% satisfaction with account management reinforced the focus Opal places on only selling what it can deliver. Opal viewed this as a key requirement when selling Wide Area Networks such as MPLS to customers reliant on Opal to underpin their own IT applications and security.

Remarkably, 90% of those interviewed considered that the division's staff were more enthusiastic and committed than those from any other suppliers they had dealt with. This particularly pleased Opal, confirming their success in ensuring that customers noticed a difference, and that their people take a genuine interest in customers' business and in customer satisfaction levels. Additionally, the data showed that as a result of good service and, specifically, good relationships with Opal staff, almost all customers were loyal and willing to recommend Opal to others.

However, customer feedback identified different opportunities to further improve the quality of its service and increase customer satisfaction. As a result, Opal has been able to implement practical actions to help improve customer satisfaction and increase efficiency, making it easier for customers to take advantage of its services, ultimately increasing customer retention, maximising revenue and improving market reputation.

Opal (Solutions Division) Head of Marketing says:

"We were impressed by Customer Satisfaction UK's tried and tested methodology and experience. This was effectively utilised to develop a thorough survey that provided our company with the insight we needed across all touch points with our customers. Based on the survey results, we implemented a plan across the business to focus on all areas of concern, as well as using the results in our sales and marketing messages. We look forward to using this invaluable survey on a regular basis to monitor our progress."

Three major initiatives were implemented as a result of this work, delivering real benefits:

1. Improvements to elements of marketing communications, ensuring that customers were more aware of the services and products available from Opal. The company will achieve practical benefits as a result, helping to increase sales to existing clients.
2. Several opportunities were identified in the customer base. Many expressed a willingness to work with Opal on future projects. 97% of customers were satisfied with sales account management, resulting in the development of more detailed account plans.
3. Implementing specific suggestions from customers to improve the quality and speed of response to enquiries, and ensuring that they were better informed about an enquiry's progress. The benefits of keeping customers better informed on progress are that they need to call the technical support centre less frequently, allowing more time to provide better solutions to customers and further increasing their satisfaction.

Opal derived direct commercial benefits and a clear return on investment as a result of the work by Customer Satisfaction UK.

Further surveys are being planned with Customer Satisfaction UK to maximise the benefits of this first survey, confirming the cost-effective impact of the actions taken and ensuring that they keep closely in touch with customers' needs and experiences in this challenging and rapidly changing market place.