Why Your Clients "Hate" Paper or Electronic Surveys and Prefer FCW Interviews

By Cole Franklin

FCW has conducted client satisfaction and proposal win-loss interviews with thousands of C-Suite and other executive decision makers. Over the years these executives have shared their opinions of the strengths and weaknesses of their service providers, as well as their opinions of best business practices. While virtually all of these executives believe that conducting client satisfaction surveys is important, many of these executives have shared their dislike of paper and electronic surveys. This paper will share our research findings as to why the vast majority of executives "hate" paper and electronic surveys and why they have a strong preference for the FCW methodology.

Many companies today employ Paper or Electronic Surveys (PES) to monitor client satisfaction. Unfortunately, these methods have significant drawbacks including:

- Limited participation, which skews the validity of the survey. Paper surveys have as little as a 2% response rate and rarely exceed 15%. Electronic or web-based surveys perform a little better, getting as much as a 20%-40% response. The problem is that we do not know what the 60%-80% of the non-respondents think.
- Rushed responses from participants, which limits the quantity and quality of information.
- One-way communication which does not allow further probing of important issues, or the chance to "drill down" and identify New Business Opportunities.
- PESs are an "impersonal" approach and leave negative impressions with clients.

Many interviewees that we have polled tell us that Paper or Electronic Surveys are ignored and go straight to the trash.

- "I get these things online all the time and honestly, I ignore them."
- "If it was a paper survey or an e-mail I would hit the delete button."
- "I hate those surveys… I just do not go out and do them."
- "You get a lot of paper surveys, and I'll be blunt with you, I probably do 10% of them."
- "Paper makes me crazy and I have a lot to do."

It's not that your clients don't want you to improve. They simply "don't have time," and don't believe "clicking some boxes" will provide "personal, valuable feedback". Unlike

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PESs, **FCW has ~100% participation rate**, meaning the scope of information FCW delivers is comprehensive and trustworthy. FCW is persistent and flexible when it comes to scheduling the phone interviews – something for which interviewees have expressed their admiration and appreciation.

- "I know it's been such a challenge for you to nail guys like us down because we're a pain in the neck when it comes to it… it's great and you've been a pleasure to deal with."

An overwhelming majority, **92% of interviewees prefer the FCW conversational interview style** to a PES. Our free-flowing conversational format provides interviewees an easy and convenient medium to provide highly detailed responses without the inconvenience of physically writing them out.

- "I think with [FCW] you're more than likely going to respond in more details because you're talking instead of clicking buttons. Is it really a good use of your time to sit there and write a paragraph of comments? Not necessarily."
- "I'd rather spend this time and do it right and talk about it rather than answer pre-packaged questions."
- "I think [FCW's process is] great. A website, and survey monkey, and those kind of things you can't say everything that you need to say. I think an interactive format like you and I have done is perfect."
- "I'd rather do a conversational feedback like this that's more freewheeling than actually answering a 1 to 10…Quite frankly, a lot of them we receive… it's more like punching holes in a card - it's just hard and there are a lot of vague areas in them."

The conversational format allows clients "to elaborate or ask clarifying questions" to provide a better understanding of the context of the information "that you don't really have online". Without being prompted, **72%** of interviewees volunteered that FCW's process provides their vendor with better quality information.

- "[FCW's process is] good because it feels like it's a whole lot more comprehensive… This one seems like it's much more focused on really taking a deeper dive into the details and the issues, which I think is good. It will serve [them] well."
- "You would never get these answers from me in a paper survey."
- "I think sometimes in paper surveys, people tend to take the quick and easy way out, whereas I think a survey like this, you have the opportunity to probe a little more. I think you can't get away with saying the least amount and having it be done with. I think they are definitely going to the right route [with FCW]."

- “For them, [FCW is] the best way that they can have a true impression of what is being thought by their customers with some of the emotive language that can be used. That is where the value add comes from. It’s not just yes, no, 3, 4, 5, you know. This is what is going to give them their best insight into what people really think.”

The personal touch of a phone call with a knowledgeable business executive “is becoming rarer,” and it makes the clients feel like they are not just a valued client, but a valued individual. By allowing them an opportunity to provide direct and candid feedback on the issues that matter most.

- “If I had a choice of doing this this way, versus doing it on the internet and clicking some boxes, this is more personable. I’ll probably appreciate it more”
- “I think that it’s a wonderful idea. It’s more detailed than a lot of other reviews. The 1 to 5, blah, blah, blah. I hate those kind. I’d rather verbally talk about it. It is much better”
- “[PESs are] very impersonal… you can just click your way through without really even thinking about what you’re doing.”
- I think I’m giving them more than if I just checked a box. For me, I like to deal with people on the phone because a lot of times they’ll say “things are okay”, but you can hear the frustration in their voice. I don’t get that when we’re on e-mail.

What your clients think of you and your firm is important: Perception is Reality. So would you rather send your clients an “impersonal” Paper / Electronic Survey, or would you prefer that your clients say this about you:

- “They actually care about what their clients think, and what they want. They want to improve their relationships with their clients and build long, sustainable relationships.”