

Best Practices

3 METHODS FOR GATHERING FRONTLINE INTELLIGENCE

What do customers want? Ask the frontline employees who interact with them every day. These employees are a rich resource of customer knowledge. They know the most common customer complaints, hear their repeated requests and notice trends.

They also have ideas for how the company could serve their customers better. In most companies, however, there's not a way for frontline employees to share this valuable intel with corporate. Brand marketing may not realize a significant opportunity to gain customer share. Operations may be completely unaware of a tiny fix that could reduce customer complaints.

In Tribe's national employee research, 84 percent said having a way to communicate with top management was "very" or "extremely" important. Give them a method for sharing feedback.

Here are three possible channels for sharing customer knowledge:

1 Mobile app

Mobile can be an excellent communication channel for frontline workers, since they probably don't have a dedicated computer at work. This employee population is more likely to own a smartphone than a home computer.

A collaborative app could allow frontline employees to post an observation or suggestion. Frontline employees in other locations could "agree" with the post if they're seeing the same issue with customers, or "like" a suggestion they think might help. Employees can also add a comment to share how they've handled a similar customer issue in the past, or build on an idea someone else has suggested.

2 Reverse cascade

Frontline employees are generally accustomed to getting most of their internal communication cascaded through their direct managers. You could train managers to help communication flow in the reverse direction as well, particularly for customer insights and problem-resolution. You'll need to establish a process for this, and treat it like any other channel of communication

In addition to a process, you might need to motivate managers. You could use gift cards or some other reward, or if recognition feels more appropriate to your culture, post a monthly photo on your intranet or in your internal newsletter to recognize both the manager and his or her idea-contributing employee.

3 Contest

Tribe once developed a contest for a hotel brand to solicit input from frontline employees. In the back room of each property, we stationed a huge cardboard kiosk with a tear-off pad. Although anyone in the company could submit an idea online, a huge percentage of the entries were handwritten, in English, Spanish and one or two other languages.

Want to know what your frontline knows?

Whether you want to go high-tech or low, Tribe can help. Please reach out to:

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Tribe's experience includes work with some of the world's top brands.



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What does Tribe do?

Our core practice areas are:

- + Strategy and Measurement
- + Vision and Values
- + Internal Branding
- + Change Management
- + Recruiting and Retention
- + Training and Development

We also share our expertise through our industry magazine The Tribe Report, monthly Best Practices one-pagers and the GoodCompanyBlog.com.

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