

The Customer's Customer

By Jack Miller

It's important to know what your customers are thinking. You talk to them all the time, so if you're paying attention, you should have a pretty good idea. Of course, if the only input you get is from your sales people, you may not have the full picture, and that's why you need customer satisfaction surveys, advisory councils, and other forms of customer insight research.

But more difficult, and even more important, is knowing what the customers' customers are thinking. After all, these are the people that drive your customers' decisions.

Understanding this can be critical to your strategy. Why do your customers buy what they buy? How do they choose the product? How do they choose a supplier? What factors do they consider? What is the balance of importance between price, quality, service, and sustainability? Which elements of price, quality, service and sustainability are most important? What process do they use to make these decisions?

You may also want to use a "pull strategy" to create "brand specific demand" with your customers' customers, i.e. get them to specify that their suppliers use your products or services. Brand companies, of course, do this all the time. The supermarket is the customer, but the consumer is the customer's customer, and the brands spend billions on market research and consumer advertising. The dynamics are different, of course, in the worlds of paper, print, and packaging, but the essential principles of marketing are the same.

Part of the challenge is that you may not know your customers' customers. Another part of the challenge is that your customers may not want you talking to their customers. This is where market research can help. Skilled market researchers can find the customers' customers and find out what they're thinking. Market researchers know how to ask the right questions and analyze the responses. Market researchers with industry-specific expertise can also probe to get deeper understanding of what's behind the answers.

If you need to know what your customers' customers in paper, print, and packaging are thinking, Market-Intell can help. We can keep you anonymous, if

need be, or get specific intell on what your customers' customers are thinking about you.

For Need to Know™ Market Intelligence in paper, print, and packaging, email jack.miller@market-intell.com or call 203 925 0326.

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