



Voice of the Customer: Innovations, Insights, and Institutionalization

GIL 2012 Think Tank Summary
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Interactive Session at GIL 2012

- Audience divided in three groups
- Groups rotated to brainstorm on each topic area
- Groups presented top challenges and best practice in each area

Thoughts From the Facilitators to Set the Stage

“Lots of companies
talk to their customers.
That doesn't get you
to understand needs.
Listening to customers
is how you determine
the needs.”

“Don't ask the
customer to design
your product.”

“Remember that
you're prioritizing
requirements, not
solutions.”

“I became a good interviewer when I began to
believe that I didn't know the answer before I
asked the question.”

Defining Best Practices in Three Key Areas

1. Finding **new sources** of VOC data
2. New ways to think about determining what **matters to customers**
3. New capabilities for **institutionalizing VOC**

1) Finding New Sources of VOC Data: Challenges

Focusing on being customer-driven leads to better innovations and insights that you can bring into the product development processes.

- Answering the question “Who is the customer?”
 - Seems trivial but it’s not
- Getting time and input from customers
 - Harder with industrial products
- Not listening only to the “squeaky wheel”
 - Is feedback only from outliers?

2) Finding New Sources of VOC Data: Best Practices

You can argue with data sets all day long. You need direct, first-person observation.

- Programs for customer involvement are tailored to specific customer types
- Thought leaders from outside the company provide input
- Mechanisms for gathering feedback are easy to use

2) Determining What Matters to Customers: Challenges

A significant obstacle to finding new ways of thinking about what matters to customers is setting aside preconceived ideas about outcome.

- Believing you need to listen
 - Maintaining objectivity
 - Overcoming parochialism
- Customers can't articulate needs
 - Requires creative questioning
- Level of "noise" when listening
 - Data overload

2) Determining What Matters to Customers: Best Practices

*What gets in the way of customers doing their jobs? Prioritize **that** data. Then you can brainstorm in whatever area you end up in.*

- Focus on the customer's problem rather than your company's product
- Prioritize customer data correctly
- Use mix of qualitative and quantitative analysis to examine customer feedback

3) Institutionalizing VOC: Challenges

Institutionalizing VOC requires embedding the process in the everyday activities of individuals across all corporate functions.

- Ownership issues
 - Marketing vs. engineering
- Resistance to change
 - Organizational inertia
- Long timeframe
 - Success stories can take months or years

3) Institutionalizing VOC: Best Practices

You can argue with data sets all day long. You need direct, first-person observation.

- No single group responsible
- Customers seem real rather than abstract
- Results of the process are obvious and positive

Summary

- Stay in the customer's space
- Prioritize requirements, not solutions
- Remember that VOC is not about asking customers what they want

Next Steps

More on Driving Innovation with Voice of
the Customer

at www.pdcinc.com

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