

Customer Research

YOUR CUSTOMER RESEARCH

Customer research is very important when planning an effective, customer focussed website. Having a clear idea about your customers wishes and concerns - questions they may have - ways you can help them etc, should be the first stage in planning the structure and design of your website. Research is the first phase of our structured approach to effective website development.

“ Plan
to
Succeed ”

Try not to make your questions specific to your company (i.e. "what would be useful to you on x website about y product" rather than "what would be useful to you on OUR website about OUR product"). The reason for this is that your customers may not give you objective answers for fear of being impolite. Being objective and speaking in the third person makes it easier for your customers to make good impartial comments.

Don't gravitate towards customers with whom you have a good working relationship - be objective. Indifferent customers, unhelpful customer (even unhappy customers) often provide a far more insightful set of answers. Be sure to understand the reason behind your questions before asking your customers - often they will not understand the subtleties of the questions you are posing, and you may need to clarify.

If you have account / project managers, sales staff, or any staff that have regular contact with customers, it is also often wise to debrief them regarding the kinds of things customers ask, or have problems with. Technically speaking, if something crops up more than once, you can view this as a potential grey area for your customers - one which you can clarify with your website.

On completion of this exercise, you should have a clear idea of a website structure and feature set that is targeted to your specific market, and one which will make your customer's lives easier - thus adding value to your brand and marketing.

- Ask your customer if they have the time to answer your questions.
- Don't favour customers with which you already have a good relationship.
- Pose your questions specifically to your industry, but not your company.
- Understand the reason for the questions yourself, before asking your customers.
- Make sure your customer understands the question.
- Aim to make your customers enthusiastic about your project - it's for them too.
- Always thank your customers for their time and help.

Suggested Research Questions

1. If a competing company came onto the market, what information about them would you look for before you made a decision whether to use them or not?
2. What kinds of information about your industry, would you find useful in your day-to-day work?
3. When you were new in your role, was there anything in particular you found difficult or unclear? Is there something (information, tools etc) you believe would have helped you to settle into your role faster or more efficiently?
4. If you could find one thing on a website anywhere that would make your working life far easier, what would it be?
5. Would you be interested in regular news and updates about your industry? If yes, would you prefer to receive them by email, or view them on a website?
6. What one word or phrase would you use to describe how you perceive a prestige company to be? (e.g. handmade, sophisticated, professional, traditional etc)
7. On a personal note, is there anything in particular that interests you about this industry? Is there something you've always wanted to know, but were unable to find out?
8. Thank you for your help - would it be possible to email you a notification of our new website launch? If so, what is your email address?