

## VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

During a customer satisfaction survey conducted by Research Solutions in Tanzania and Burkina Faso on the mobile phone industry, key factors that measure the extent to which customers are satisfied with the services of their mobile communication providers were identified.

Key findings from this study are outlined here.



**Plus:  
New Appointments**

## VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

Voice of the customer is a term used in business to describe the process of capturing the customers' requirements in order to effectively respond to their ever changing needs. In order to effectively respond to customers' needs, it is imperative to establish what those needs are. This information can be obtained through both direct and indirect means.

There are many methods to gather the information. These methods include focus groups, individual interviews, contextual inquiries and ethnographic techniques among others. Whatever technique one chooses, the metric involved must have some of the following characteristics:

- ◇ **Credibility** - the metric should be widely accepted. It should have yielded good results in the past and thus trustworthy.
- ◇ **Reliability** - the metric must be consistent enough to be applied across multiple channels.
- ◇ **Precision** - the metric should be specific enough to provide insight into the subject.
- ◇ **Accuracy** - the results of the metric must be representative of the entire base and not an outspoken minority group within the target group. The metric must also be able to provide results that can be acted upon and can enable future predictions to be made.

One particularly popular and effective way of identifying the voice of the customer is by conducting usage and attitude survey, also commonly abbreviated as U&A. A U&A survey aims at establishing the customers' attitudes towards products or services and brands. This survey provides information on the perception of the product/service, usage patterns and attitudes towards the competitive products. The other important aim of U&A is to establish the consumer language. This can rightly be described as both 'the voice of the customer' and 'the language of the customer'. Effective communication with the market demands the use of consumer language.

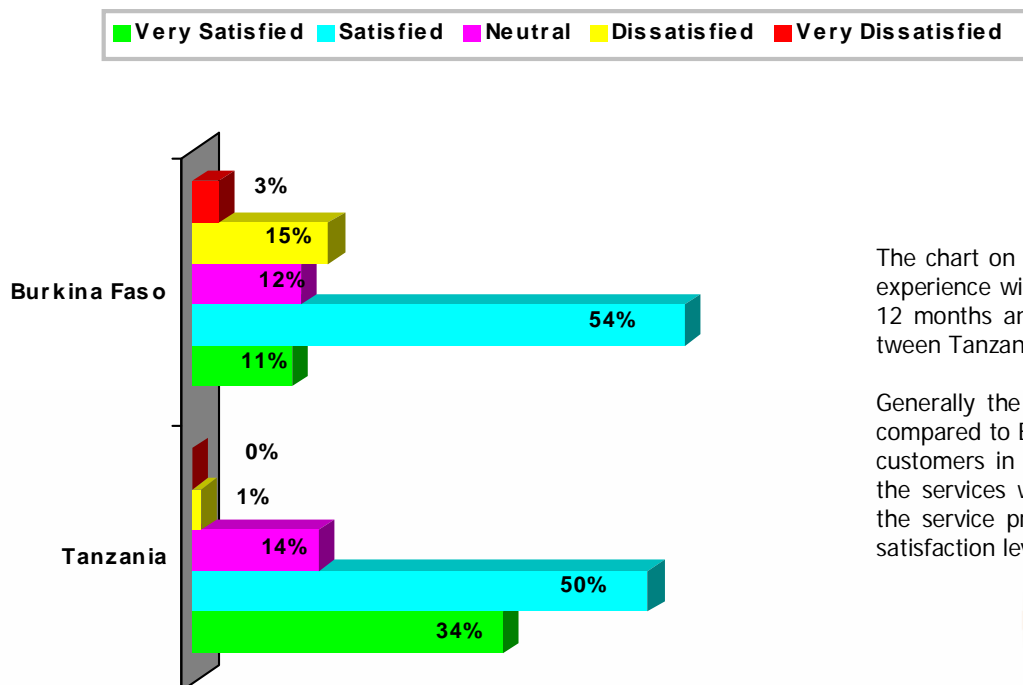
Ultimately, the aim of establishing the Voice of the Customer' is to put in place measures to improve customer satisfaction and increase the number of loyal customers. Successful marketers are those that strive to increase product loyalty amongst the target group. Loyalty is extremely valuable because it has a huge impact on market share. It is undeniable that each customer who switches from Brand A to Brand B raises Brand B's market share while at the same time lowering Brand A's market share. In most markets there is a fairly high degree of this brand switching or "churn". Churn is a pool of potential customers that smart competitors pursue. In a competitive world therefore, customer loyalty cannot be taken for granted. Customer loyalty is dependent on the level of satisfaction associated with the product or service.

In order to design long term customer satisfaction tracking survey, it is important to understand the voice of the customer. This enables researchers to establish the attributes that need to be measured in such a survey and ensure that the survey measures customer satisfaction drivers.

Research Solutions recently carried out a customer satisfaction survey in Tanzania and Burkina Faso. The survey covered the mobile phone industry and measured customer satisfaction levels with their service providers.

The process started by conducting qualitative interviews to establish attributes that are important to the customer in the mobile phone usage. The main reason mentioned for using mobile phones was to catch up with family and business. After eliciting the various attributes from the qualitative survey, a quantitative customer survey was done to measure the extent to which customers are satisfied with their mobile communication providers and how the latter score on the different attributes.

### CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WITH THEIR MOBILE SERVICE PROVIDER IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS



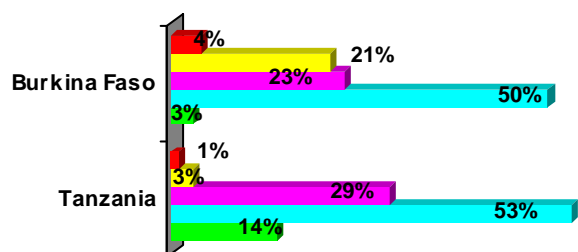
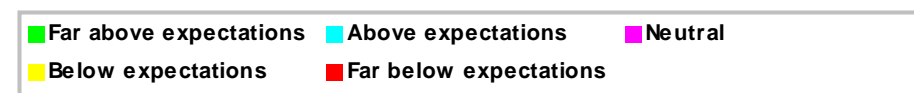
The chart on the left indicates the measure of customer experience with their mobile service provider in the past 12 months and shows the difference in satisfaction between Tanzania and Burkina Faso.

Generally the level of satisfaction is higher in Tanzania compared to Burkina Faso. Thus the Voice of 30% of the customers in Burkina Faso is "we are not satisfied with the services we are getting". This calls for action from the service providers in order to improve the customer satisfaction level.

## VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

Customers have expectations on services delivery and it is important for the marketers to meet those expectations so as not to disappoint the customers. In most cases the levels of satisfaction could be attributed to the fact that the providers are perceived not to have met the customers' expectations/needs. The results of this experience are shown below.

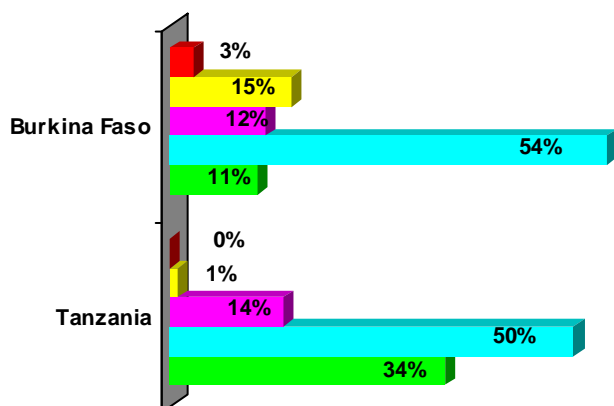
### CUSTOMER PERCEPTION OF THEIR MOBILE SERVICE PROVIDER IN MEETING EXPECTATIONS



Holding all other factors constant, customer decisions from these experiences may have an impact on the market shares. The chart below indicates the customers' reaction to using the current mobile service provider as a primary provider.

Therefore it is important to get information on the voice of the customer and especially the customer's expectations in order to respond accordingly. This will improve customer loyalty and retention.

### CUSTOMERS' LIKELIHOOD OF USING CURRENT MOBILE SERVICE PROVIDER IN FUTURE AS A PRIMARY PROVIDER



The likelihood of using the current mobile provider as their primary provider in future is a reflection of the current levels of satisfaction with their providers. In Tanzania, customers have a higher likelihood of using their current providers as their main providers, compared to Burkina Faso.

## NEW APPOINTMENTS



**Paul Kaberia**  
**OPERATIONS MANAGER**  
 HQ, Nairobi  
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Paul holds a BA in Anthropology and Socio-cultural studies degree from the University of Nairobi. He has a wealth of experience in operations having worked for over 12 years in a variety of roles with companies such as Independent Communications Associates (InCA), Direct Digital Services and Market Power International.

At research solutions his considerable skills in operations management, training and logistics are put to good use as he controls the operations of data collection and data entry teams across the continent.



**Jovenary Raphael Kabile**  
**HUB OPERATIONS MANAGER**  
 SOUTHERN AFRICA HUB  
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Jovenary holds an advanced diploma in Accountancy and is currently pursuing a National board of accountants and auditors certification. He brings in a wealth of experience in account management, purchasing and logistics having worked in a variety of roles for over 9 years in Tanzania. Jovenary joins Research Solutions Limited from Lina's Company Tanzania where he previously held the position of account manager. At Research Solutions his considerable skills in operations and project management are put to good use as he manages our operations in the East African Hub.

## NETWORKING

Successful leaders do not become successful all on their own – they learn to rely on others to help them achieve their goals. In the words of the Harvard Business Review, **'Successful leaders have a nose for opportunity and a knack for knowing whom to tap to get things done. These qualities depend on a set of strategic networking skills that non-leaders rarely possess.'**

In today's professional and business circles, networking is an essential skill for successful leadership. Despite this, many managers still shy away from networking, claiming it is a waste of time that could be better spent on the operational part of their work, what they consider their "real job". Others simply believe that networking is a polite form of exploitation that lacks sincerity. They believe all their efforts should be focused on "what they know" and not on "who they know" and find networking ethically distasteful thus want no part in it. Still others just can't be bothered and consider networking work they should best avoid.

The reality is that good leadership is not dependant on hard technical skills but on softer relational skills. It should be self-evident that all managers need to build good working relationships with the people who can help them do their jobs, and at its core this is exactly what networking is. According to H Ibarra and M Hunter, who followed the careers and behaviours of 30 emerging leaders, there are three distinct forms of networking:

**OPERATIONAL NETWORKING** is geared towards achieving current work goals more effectively and generally involves colleagues. Obviously the better your relationship with people with whom you work, the more influence you will have over coordination and cooperation and the more likely you will be to get your work done well and on time. In operational networking, the participants and roles are clearly defined and thus this type of networking is perceived as easier and is more frequently practiced. Its value is so self-evident, it is sometimes not perceived as networking at all.

**PERSONAL NETWORKING** is much more extrovert and thus considered more difficult by many managers. It is more recognisable as networking and involves identifying and connecting with like minded individuals outside your organisation. Forums for this include professional bodies, church and social bodies as well as organisations such as Rotary, Toastmasters, etc. In personal networking, relationships are less clearly defined and individuals are not always easy to identify. However personal networks can be well worth the effort providing huge opportunities to learn and grow both professionally and personally.

**STRATEGIC NETWORKING** is the most useful but least practiced of the three networking forms identified. This form of networking requires the structured development of relationships that provide opportunities to advance your professional/business goals. These relationships require careful planning as individuals are identified and selected to meet your specific strategic needs. In the aforementioned study, this was considered the most powerful form of networking yielding the highest returns in terms of business and professional growth.

Successful networking is not easy and requires work. You want to make sure the following types of relationships are represented in your network:

**ROLE MODELS:** People who have the qualities, abilities or styles you admire. They may already have influenced who you are and where you want to go.

**MENTORS:** People who share their knowledge and techniques with you. These should be valued advisors with whom you share a special bond. Studies indicate that successful people have, on average, three mentors during their careers.

**DEVIL'S ADVOCATES:** With their ability to challenge the status quo, these people force you to reconsider your ideas and attitudes. Even though you may sometimes detest them, they stimulate your thinking and help you achieve your best.

**CONTACTS:** The essence of networking is interacting successfully with all types of contacts in an organised, purposeful manner. Being organised and purposeful starts with a few simple steps:

- ◇ The first step is to develop a positive attitude towards networking, appreciating its necessity and legitimacy.
- ◇ The second step is to make time to network. Understand the value it can deliver and allocate time accordingly.
- ◇ Next you must establish the 4W's: why, who, where, when. Consider what you want to achieve and what you have to offer in return.
- ◇ Thereafter it is necessary to create opportunities to meet the right people and then to follow-up, turning contacts into relationships.

Remember though, that networking is a two-way commitment. It is not simply about getting what you need from your contacts. You must be willing and prepared to reciprocate. To get the most from your network you need to provide a reasonable level of help and support to the people within your network, particularly the ones who can or do help you the most.

The ability to build and exploit strategic networks is considered a key test of leadership. For managers to successfully move into leadership roles, they must reorient their network focus from the internal/current to the external/future. They must actively seek out contacts that build their businesses and help them meet their professional goals. All three forms of networking are necessary to build and develop your career and meet your business goals but it is important not to shy away from strategic networking since this form signals the difference between managers and leaders.

Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought (**Albert Szent-Gyorgyi quotes 1937 Nobel Prize for Medicine, 1893-1986**)

## WISDOM & WIT

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**"Our research indicates that our ideal customer is attractive, intelligent, and has never heard of our competitors."**

**"Women are not afraid to stop and ask for help, so they will demand more, in terms of customer touch points, from any product, service or marketing campaign. If you incorporate the higher information-delivery and customer service standards of women into the development of your product or service, or its web site, you are bound to give men a bit more than they even thought to ask for."**

**(Andrea Learned, Co-Founder and Director of ReachWomen LLC)**

**"There are two ways to live: you can live as if nothing is a miracle; you can live as if everything is a miracle."** (**Albert Einstein**)

**"Sometimes when I'm talking, my words can't keep up with my thoughts. I wonder why we think faster than we speak. Probably so we can think twice."** (**Bill Watterson**)

**"Any communication or marketing professional needs cross-cultural research and communication skills to be able to succeed in the future."** (**Marye Tharp**)