



Four Common Methods To Solicit Client Feedback

Most nonprofit organizations have a mission to serve specific individuals or groups of people. To hold true to their mission, nonprofits need to make sure that their clients are satisfied with the organization's programs and services. As they are in business to serve these individuals, everything they do should be related to providing programs and services that best meet the needs of their clients, resulting in client satisfaction and success. This article provides four methods in which to obtain client feedback and to assess whether or not, or to what degree, clients are satisfied with the services they receive.

1. Verbal feedback. This is where an agency employee or third-party representative can ask the client directly how satisfied they are with the services they have received or are receiving. Some clients may not be comfortable speaking with an agency employee. In this case, the organization might want to consider contracting with an outside source that specializes in obtaining and analyzing feedback. Although the solicitation of feedback should be structured to some degree (a specific number of questions should be consistently asked), you will also want to ask open ended questions to solicit as much information and feedback as possible. For example, instead of asking "Were you satisfied with the job seeking skills program you recently completed?", you could ask "How satisfied were you with the job seeking skills program you recently attended?" Or, instead of a question, you could simply say "Describe your experience with the job seeking skills program you recently completed." This type of statement generally solicits more detailed information.
2. Written survey. The written survey is a tool agencies can send to their clients, via e-mail or regular mail. Clients can either identify who they are or remain anonymous; this should be their choice. For clients who elect to identify themselves, they may want to discuss their feedback with an agency representative beyond what they provide in the survey. These types of surveys should ask a pre-determined set of questions, designed to solicit meaningful feedback and satisfaction with services/programs. Although some questions may require a "yes" or "no" response, it is important to have open ended questions that encourage clients to open up and fully express their feedback and level of satisfaction.
3. Likert scale. This type of scale has a number of pre-determined levels of satisfaction. For example, you could enact a Likert scale that has a rating system of 1 to 5, with 1 being "very satisfied" and 5 being "very dissatisfied." Although this type of scale can solicit some feedback regarding a client's level of satisfaction, it is quantitative instead of qualitative. It will give you

some idea of a client's satisfaction but you won't get the details, unless you ask the client to elaborate on his or her numerical rating response.

4. Focus groups. This is when you ask a group of clients to meet, with the intention that they will provide feedback and share their satisfaction level with programs and services. You'll want to come equipped with a specific set of questions to ask these individuals. The questions should be designed to engage group members in meaningful dialogue. If clients are shy or intimidated, this might be an excellent forum to encourage them to open up, especially if their peers start talking and they can see that their peers' feedback is welcomed and satisfaction taken seriously.

Although there may be other ways to solicit feedback and satisfaction, the four methods listed above are common and used quite frequently. However you decide to solicit feedback and satisfaction information, make sure that your clients can either remain anonymous (via a conversation with a third-party representative or through a written survey) or feel safe in knowing that their responses will not hinder or prevent them from receiving needed services, or result in service providers treating them any differently. After all, every client needs to be treated with respect and feel they have a voice in shaping the organization's programs and services to best meet the needs of current and future clients, thus helping the organization to accomplish its mission.

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If you want to make positive changes in your professional life, and create the job or career you desire and deserve, then working with Executive & Life Coach, Sharon L. Mikrut, is the solution. Although her specialty is in partnering with nonprofit executive directors and managers to maximize their resources in a competitive environment, she is passionate about working with all individuals committed to personal and/or professional growth. Visit her website (<http://www.createitcoaching.org>), Nonprofit Professionals blog (<http://www.createitcoaching.com>), or Empowerment blog (<http://www.createitcoaching.net>) and sign up for her free nonprofit or life coaching newsletter.