

## How to Avoid the 9 Pitfalls of Measuring Website Success

### How can you really measure website success?

Most traditional approaches—web analytics, focus groups and industry trend research—provide useful but limited business intelligence. These metrics provide accurate data for some of your past successes (number of visitors, conversion rates, total sales, etc.) but they fall short of providing you with predictive information.

Increasingly, savvy web managers recognize the importance of measuring success from the perspective of their customers. But, not all customer satisfaction metrics are created equal.

**You need a scientific approach to customer satisfaction analytics, one that can answer the following questions:**

- How can you increase conversions of your website visitors into online—or even offline—customers?
- How will the online experience influence likelihood to return to your website and recommend it to others?
- What makes your online customers likely to buy again?
- Which key factors will increase your customers' satisfaction and loyalty?
- What are the business payoffs of increasing customer satisfaction?

Without the right tools, these questions are difficult to answer. That's why smart marketers have expanded the way they measure web success to take into account the all-important customer perspective.

### What You'll Learn in This Report:


- *How to choose a reliable metric for measuring website success*
- *How to improve customer loyalty*
- *The business and economic payoffs of increasing customer satisfaction*

Best-in-class measurement methodologies allow you to understand the underlying attitudes and behaviors of your web visitors so that you can accurately pinpoint which improvements yield the greatest returns.

This report looks at nine pitfalls of measuring website success, as well as what you can do to make customer satisfaction analytics a strategic and forward-looking measurement tool....  
**starting today!**

### **PITFALL #1:** **Muting the Customer's Voice**

Every second of every day, your web server cranks out mounds of clickstream data. Analyzing these files will show you how your server performed in response to past visitor requests. Standard web analytics record past behavior, but they leave out the voice of the customer in the process of measuring the success of the website. To measure your site's



success from the perspective of your customers, you need to complement behavioral measurements with a scientific methodology that allows you to capture the voice of your customers during their site visit with accuracy, reliability and precision so you can have confidence in your assessment.

**PITFALL #2:**  
**Making Inaccurate Inferences from Incomplete Information**

Suppose your web analytics tool reveals that visitors spend a great deal of time on a certain page on your site. Do you infer that your content is A) wonderful—because your visitors can't seem to tear themselves away; or B) problematic—because your visitors get stuck on that page and don't move on to explore other areas of your site? If you focus only on the "WHAT," you won't know for sure. You can make much better business decisions when you also have insights into the "WHY," instead of guessing what's important to your site visitors by studying clickthroughs or time-per-page statistics.

**PITFALL #3:**  
**Using Lagging vs. Leading Indicators**

If you only measure after an activity has occurred, then you may fall into the trap of focusing solely on lagging indicators. Looking backward at what has already happened, instead of forward to the future, puts you at risk. Customer satisfaction is a leading indicator of behavior, when measured using the time-tested scientific methodology of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). Monitoring customer satisfaction can tell you how your site visitors will behave in the future: whether they'll buy from you, engage in positive word of mouth recommendations and return to your website.

**PITFALL #4:**  
**Using Lab Testing Environments**


Traditional usability testing has its place. But, don't make the mistake of assuming that all of your website visitors will behave and feel the same way as your usability test group. To truly find out how to improve your website to drive satisfaction and loyalty, you need to get input from the source: your customers while they're on your website. You'll need a Voice of Customer metric that has statistical reliability to focus usability efforts. Usability audit reviews, guided by customer satisfaction insights, can then help you pinpoint areas of opportunity that will yield the greatest returns.


**PITFALL #5:**  
**Listening to Self-Proclaimed Experts Instead of Customers**

Today, many companies rely on "expert" analysis of their websites to determine if they're good. Yet experts rarely reflect the needs and perceptions of your actual site visitors, so experts may tout your site as a success while actual users struggle to accomplish what they want. There's no substitute for analyzing the actual customer and the intrinsic customer experiences during the site visit for maximum accuracy and relevancy. Listening to your customers first-hand is always far better than listening to second-hand (or even third-hand) inferences garnered from "experts."

**PITFALL #6:**  
**Relying on Non-Scientific Survey Design**

Online surveys are everywhere! However, if your survey cannot ensure that questions are produced, phrased or presented in a manner that adheres to a consistent, scientifically-oriented





methodology, you may receive misleading results. Before you implement a real-time online survey, make sure that your questions are phrased in a way that insures reliable and valid outcomes so that you can make the best decisions possible. To have relevant data for comparisons over time, you must build consistency into your survey design, or risk gathering false or misleading data.

### **PITFALL #7:** **Using Unsound Survey Deployment**

You learned this fact in Stats 101: random sampling is best. And yet, many online surveys use census or judgment sampling. These deployment methods may be impractical for larger populations or not applicable due to the problems in generalizing the results to the population at large. And what about surveys that only measure one page of your website at a time? You run the risk of not taking into account the interdependencies of different areas of your website that create a cumulative site experience. As a result, you could make a change that might not solve the issue...or that could even create a new problem.

### **PITFALL #8:** **Employing Unproven Survey Methodologies**

Methodology matters. Garbage in yields garbage out. In order to intelligently relate the voice of the customer to corporate objectives, you need to utilize reliable statistical methodology. The methodology of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) has been extensively tested and validated and is the only measurement methodology with a proven link between customer satisfaction and financial performance. In fact, academics, the media and business leaders consider the ACSI methodology to be the “gold standard” for customer satisfaction measurement and for predicting the impact of satisfaction on behavior.

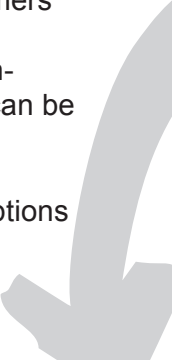
### **PITFALL #9:** **Measurement for Measurement’s Sake**

Finding out how satisfied your site visitors are should be a means to an end, not your end goal. You need actionable results that validate your hypotheses and guide you in making wiser business decisions. With the cause-and-effect methodology of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), customer satisfaction measurement becomes a means to prioritize improvements to your website based on what will have the greatest impact on site visitor satisfaction *and behavior*, such as future purchases online or offline. So, the data you receive is both forward-looking and actionable.

### **How to Avoid the 9 Pitfalls**

By integrating best practices from the fields of web analytics, market research and online surveys with the advanced methodology of the American Customer Satisfaction Index, ForeSee Results offers a level of customer understanding and business insight that makes a positive difference to your bottom line. ForeSee Results makes sure you avoid website measurement pitfalls by focusing on these best practices:

### **Web Analytics Best Practices**

- “Voice of Customer” Responses: Incorporate the collective perceptions and attitudes of customers’ website experiences.
  - In-Session Data Collection: Uses flexible non-obtrusive deployment and short surveys that can be answered in 2-3 minutes.
  - Real-Time Surveying: Provides immediate responses to your website customers’ perceptions at the point of experience.
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## Market Research Best Practices

- Scientific Question Models: Order and phrasing of model survey questions is carefully designed for actionability and consistency with deep benchmarks across measured industries and functions.
- Survey Length: A partitioned survey that reduces survey length by more than 50 percent.
- Continuous Monitoring: On-going measuring and monitoring queries customer thoughts in real time.
- Statistical Sampling: Random selection of representative sample of the overall website population.

## Online Surveys Best Practices

- ACSI Methodology: Nationally recognized methodology that systematically ties website elements to customer satisfaction and future behaviors with bottom line impact.

## About ForeSee Results

ForeSee Results is the market leader in online customer satisfaction management and specializes in converting satisfaction data into user-driven web development strategies. Using the methodology of the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), ForeSee Results has created a model that scientifically quantifies the elements that drive online customer satisfaction and predicts future behaviors, including the likelihood to return to the site or recommend the site to others. ForeSee Results, a privately held company located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, can be found online at [www.ForeSeeResults.com](http://www.ForeSeeResults.com).

*For more information about ForeSee Results and ways you can harness online customer satisfaction to drive your business goals, contact us at (800) 621-2850 or visit [www.ForeSeeResults.com](http://www.ForeSeeResults.com).*