



Land Mines vs. Gold Mines

How to ask customers for feedback to build better relationships and drive sales

by [Andrew Cooke](#), [Blue Sky GPS \(Growth & Profit Solutions\)](#)

Too often businesses adopt pessimistic mindsets when using customer surveys, with the surveys being focused on problems and what has gone wrong – your “land mines”. This is so the business can identify what has gone wrong, focus on what can be improved (or avoided), and to allow customers to vent. However, this does not help businesses to build a long-term, positive relationship with customers as it focuses on the negative.

Rather, think about using your customer surveys as opportunities to not only listen to your customers, but to subtly influence your customers’ perceptions. So how can you do this?

Instead of asking people what has gone wrong, ask them what has gone right – your “gold mines”. For example, asking a compliment question such as “What went well during your visit?” or “What did you enjoy about the purchase experience?” creates tangible benefits for the business. Research has shown that when businesses do this several things happen:

1. Customers who are surveyed using a compliment question are more likely to spend more in the following year than customers who are surveyed without a compliment question.
2. Satisfaction measures are increased.
3. Being asked to give positive feedback boosted spending even among customers who reported having had poor experiences.

Why is this?

There are two key reasons. Firstly, memory is malleable, so asking customers to recount positive experiences may make the memories of those experiences more salient and accessible in the future, enhancing customers’ overall perceptions. Secondly, people tend to compliment what they like and to like what they compliment – so if a customer answers positively they will also be likely to act in a way that reflects this so that they are self-consistent in how they think and act.

This is not to say that you should use this to try to manipulate people. You can only affect how they perceive things in the short-run, but you cannot change the reality. However, this approach helps you to just focus on your “land mines” (your weaknesses), but to focus on your “gold mines” (your strengths). What customer questions will you use and how will you use them with your customers?



About Andrew Cooke

Andrew Cooke is the director and founder of Blue Sky GPS and is known for his work with executives, managers and teams in helping them to grow, develop and achieve results. Using a blend of consulting, facilitation and coaching he is noted for his ability in "bringing people potential to life". Andrew takes the time to understand and assist successful business executives in creating a customized plan that allows them grow and develop their leadership effectiveness. In doing this he guides executives to manage, direct and make change work for them and their stakeholders and teams in an increasing volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous business environment. From this he helps others to become more successful in both what they do and how they do it.

Andrew demonstrates a proactive attitude and empathy that blends enthusiasm, energy and a pragmatic approach in engaging leaders and their stakeholders. He has over thirty years of international business experience and insights on which to draw, and has worked with blue-chip clients and other leading businesses across a range of industries. Andrew is passionate about helping others to be more successful personally and professionally.

Qualifications & Accreditations

Andrew is an experienced international expert in executive coaching, leadership development and business consulting. He has qualifications, certifications and accreditations from recognized leading global organizations, including:

- International executive coach with certifications for Marshall Goldsmith Stakeholder Centered Coaching and Global Leader of the Future 360⁰ Assessment
- Masters of Business Administration (MBA), London Business School, UK
- Bachelor of Business BA (Hons), University of Plymouth (UK)
- Diploma from the Institute of Marketing (UK)
- Accredited DISC Facilitator & Coach