

COLUMNS

## Mobile's role in delivering real-time product feedback

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The concept of real-time response is making a significant shift with the rapid adoption of smartphones across the country and around the world.

To date, the notion of real-time has referred to the ability to deliver Web results as soon as they are posted via a web site. This process has been most frequently anchored to the use of a computer with an Internet connection. Data is delivered as immediately as you can get to your computer, which may not be that immediately at all.

The real thing

We are now seeing – really seeing – what is happening in “real” real-time. The ease of implementation of easy-to-use mobile feedback systems allows virtually any organization to gather data when they can most effectively use it to make business decisions that can significantly affect performance.

The technology is being rapidly adopted across a variety of use cases.

The ability to easily deploy mobile data collection tools and report the results in formats that can be tailored to business needs is driving this activity. Here are some of the ways we are seeing this technology being used.

Better understanding customer feedback and sentiment presents a real opportunity for businesses in the hospitality sector. Taking a mobile approach presents opportunities in critical areas.

By actively looking for feedback via mobile, you can address any issues that your guests or customers may identify, in the moment. This real-time opportunity allows you to fix the problem before it affects another customer.

Think about the value of maintaining your existing customers versus the cost of acquiring a new one. Real-time feedback can save you real revenue.

For the majority of these customers, real-time feedback gives them the opportunity to tell you what a great job you have done (again). And there is no better time to invite them to join your email club than when they have just finished a great evening with you and are thinking about the next opportunity to return.

Mobile survey systems allow you to get this great feedback, share it with your staff and then ask your guests if they want to be part of your email club. Some systems even allow their email information to be automatically loaded into email marketing databases.

#### Feed the product

Product feedback is another area that can yield excellent results.

While the use of QR codes is still not mainstream, the ability to initiate feedback through use of codes or URL's on consumer packaged goods presents a significant opportunity.

The ability for users to access surveys by scanning codes or entering a URL on the smartphone enables them to provide feedback from the breakfast table as they are chowing down on their bowl of Cheerios.

Easy-to-implement incentives can be employed to encourage consumers to pull out their ubiquitous mobile device and provide their two cents without having to make a special trip to their computer.

Oh, and because the feedback is delivered in "real" real-time, the clarity of recall about things such as flavor, quantity and adjacent products at the table are better than ever.

In high-touch retail or restaurant environments, mobile devices can be provided to customers after experiencing a new product or service to obtain clear and exact insights about a new product or service.

Operational data collection and monitoring is another significant area for deployment of mobile technology.

Everything from store opening checklists to training validation and monitoring can now be easily handled via smartphones.

GPS-aware devices can ensure that data is completed when and where it is supposed to be. The days of paper-based checklists and transposing data to an excel spreadsheet are obsolete.

SLOWLY BUT SURELY, we will see the demise of those paper survey forms that we receive after each conference session we attend, instead being prompted by the moderator to grab our phones to scan the QR code on the screen or go to the URL to provide feedback.

It is important to remember there is one other critical element to keep in mind as you use mobile devices to mine data – the need for a sturdy and flexible backend.

The best platforms make it easy to create the data collection forms you need and give broad flexibility in reporting and data management/distribution.

At the end of the day, if you are getting “real” real-time data that is too difficult to access and leverage, it provides no advantage at all.

Take advantage of mobile feedback and data collection. The benefits of being able to really see what is going on in your business in “real” real-time can be a game-changer.

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