



Calling Up Attendance

>Abstract

This case examines a study by Prince Marketing for TCS Management Group. TCS Management Group, Inc., part of Aspect Communications, is the leading provider of workforce management software, especially related to call center management. The study discusses measures of customer satisfaction and aims to predict attendance at a two-day educational event, Users Forum.

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>The Scenario

Nashville-based TCS Management Group markets TeleCenter System, software used to forecast staffing needs for reservation centers, order centers, or customer service centers. Using TeleCenter System allows companies to have the correct number of people on duty at any given hour of the day or night, thereby optimizing the delivery of good service while holding costs as low as possible. TCS has an impressive list of customers, including American Express, British Airways, Sears, Amtrak, and Citicorp.

TCS was planning a special two-day educational event, Users Forum, for its 300-plus customers, but was unsure how many TeleCenter System users would attend. Scheduled at the Opryland Hotel, the forum would offer speakers, workshops, and presentations. While TCS would underwrite the costs associated with planning the meeting and preparing the presentations, customers would be responsible for paying a fee to attend, as well as their own hotel and travel expenses to Nashville. “Ten weeks before the forum, we weren’t sure whether we would have 40 people or 140 people coming to Nashville,” shared Jim Gordon, CEO of TCS.

While TCS had previously done most of its own customer satisfaction research, given the time frame of the need, it turned to Nashville-based Prince Marketing, who promised to design, conduct, and interpret survey results within 21 days.

Three objectives were set for the phone survey:

- Determine the likelihood of Users Forum attendance.
- Update the TCS software users database (for subsequent use in mailing quarterly newsletters, special announcements, and software updates).
- Measure the level of user satisfaction (with the company and its software generally, as well as regarding specific software features and issues).

Respondents were asked to rate on a 7-point scale the software’s ease of

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use, the usefulness of software-generated reports, and satisfaction with service. They were also asked whether they would recommend the software and why/why not; whether they were aware of the Users Forum; whether their company planned to send a representative; and whether the customer needed or wanted more information on the Users Forum. Prince faxed the names and addresses of respondents indicating an interest in the Users Forum to TCS, which sent promotional materials immediately.

Prince surveyed 315 customers: 161 users and 154 managers. Prince predicted that 115 people would attend the forum. Actual Users Forum attendance was 139.

On customer service, 34 percent of respondents gave TCS a 7, the highest point on the rating scale. Yet respondents also offered that they wanted shorter response time and longer operating hours for telephone support staff, including Saturday access. TCS CEO Gordon said, “We have redeployed some of our people, expanded Saturday coverage, and instituted a beeper system to increase our responsiveness.”

TCS received its lowest scores on ease of use, with 60 percent of respondents giving it a 5 or higher on the 7-point scale, while 16 percent refused to answer. The research confirmed anecdotal evidence and reinforced internal initiatives to improve ease of use.

Fully 84 percent said they would recommend the TCS system to colleagues, with 16 percent indicating they were too new to the software to form an opinion. TCS plans to use this endorsement to attract new users.

“The positive survey results created tremendous esprit de corps for the whole staff,” claims Gordon. “We were able to identify these concerns ahead of our Users Forum and develop appropriate responses. All in all, the survey told us we’re on the right track—and that alone justified our investment in the research.”

>Discussion

- 1 Build the management-research question hierarchy.
- 2 Discuss the communication methodology chosen.
- 3 Develop the preliminary analysis plan.
- 4 How would you deal with the 16 percent of the sample who were new to the software?
- 5 Discuss the advantages and concerns of incorporating or closely linking marketing activities with research activities.

>Sources

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