

## **The Competitive Edge of Surveys – Finding the Gaps.**

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### **Abstract**

Increased business competition, new methods of analysis, and the use of Business Intelligence software provides the modern manager with a new set of dynamic decision-making opportunities. Customer surveys have always been a critical part of gathering business intelligence and while their importance has tripled in recent times the development of new techniques and more interesting ways of analysis have lagged behind. Current developments in data fusion between quantitative and qualitative surveys and new technologies give us better opportunities for conducting analysis and posting results faster. One of the biggest problems has been ease of filtering for multifaceted questions, providing gap analysis results, and the display of fast and clean images. PowerPlay is best suited for this new type of display and exploration of surveys. The secret is within the way the incoming data can be coded, which allows for new dimensions of exploration of customer surveys.

Happy satisfied customers, a dream come true or a logistical nightmare? If the customer is always right, then just how much effort do we need to keep the dream alive?

With the ever increasing need for fast and clean information, and the current freedom of customer's to shop around for the best product and service. Trying to understand what the impressions of customer's can be an important weapon to use in the competitive market place. However the time and energy involved in first of all gathering their views, and then the process's involved with gaining an understanding of their view point, has been most often difficult and resource intensive. It has basically been the function performed by the bigger organisations.

In recognition of the need by any organisation to conduct feedback activities from their customers, people are searching for techniques to gain a more perceptive understand. However, much of the trouble hasn't been in the collection of the data, but more in the analysis of the responses as well as the reporting of the findings, with the added bonus of speed and understandability.

When trying to develop the best survey instrument there are many different considerations like;

- Qualitative or quantitative or an combination,
- Number of questions to ask,
- What type of questions,
- How many demographic questions,
- What incentives do we offer,
- Single answer or multi answer questions,
- What issues do we need to cover,
- Who are our survey customers,
- Who are our survey clients.

In appendix one, is a copy of an all round survey we have designed for the purpose of examining a gap in the customer's expectations and in their experiences. The survey exemplified is uses a combination of qualitative or quantitative, as well as demographics.

PowerPlay is well suited for the Information / Intelligence Analyst who wishes to explore the data and investigate the various golden nuggets of knowledge that can be derived from a good customer survey. However, when the data

One of the beauty of the PowerPlay product is the easy of which a fast and clean

There are many different types of survey and questionnaires and every body is a critic and has their own favourite survey type. This type of survey is nothing new, but it combines three different survey methods in a workable method. Here is a useful one for the manager to have in his box of tricks.

This survey method combines gap analysis, quantitative and qualitative methods. First of all you need to get your basic demographic questions. Then you need to set out your question. Each question deals with an issue. Every issue has three parts to it. The first is the how important is the issue to your user. The second part is how well your product or service fill the users needs. The third part is getting the user to explain why they feel the way they do.

### **Gap analysis**

Gap analysis is a tool for quantifying the difference between a customers expectations and experiences with regard to a product or service. This also demonstrates to what extent the product / service is important to customer.

People answer 2 sub questions to each question,

- **What were your expectations of the product / service?**  
[Very Low] [Low] [Medium] [High] [Very High]
- **What were your experiences of the product / service?**  
[Very Low] [Low] [Medium] [High] [Very High]

This provides the information for the gap, then they answer the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the question,

- **Please write a few words to help explain your answer.**

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This technique combines the areas of qualitative and quantitative together, to give the researcher a strong instrument for analysing the gap. When you combine all three techniques together, to get a powerful tool. The gap analysis shows us where we are under satisfying, satisfying or over satisfying our clients. The quantitative analysis allows you to compare between different issues, and the Qualitative analysis allows the researcher to be able to understand why the user responded as they did. Once this has been achieved it is then possible to explore the results for patterns, and to follow up other useful information.

An example of a gap analysis would be,

There are a total of 138 responses in this example.

- 65 persons / 47% of respondents had a positive outlook towards your product / service.
- 24 persons / 17% of respondents had a satisfied outlook your product / service
- 49 persons / 35% of respondents had a negative outlook towards your product / service

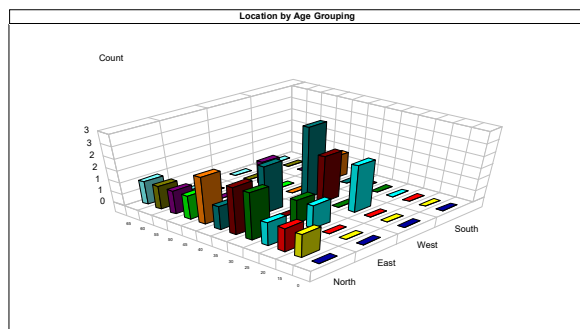
In the light grey area is a group of customers which believe that the product / service has been of greater benefit than their expectations. Thus 30 people / 21.7% of the respondents have a level of low satisfaction.

<b>VH Expect</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>H Expect</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>M Expect</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>L Expect</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>VL Expect</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>VL Find</b>	<b>L Find</b>	<b>M Find</b>	<b>H Find</b>	<b>VH Find</b>

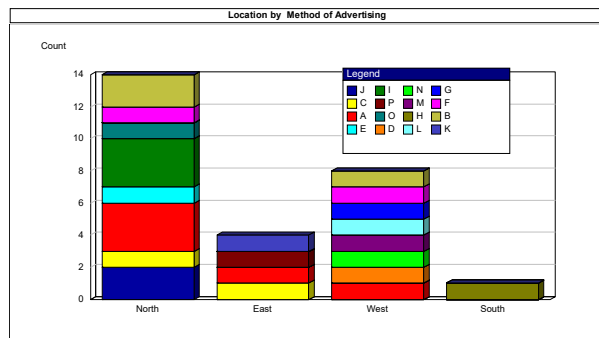
## A Worked Example.

For this example, we are looking at a pilot survey about people who have purchased a Microwave Oven, with the set of extras, like browning tray, dishes and special cleaning fluid. A sample of some of the survey questions is in Appendix 1.

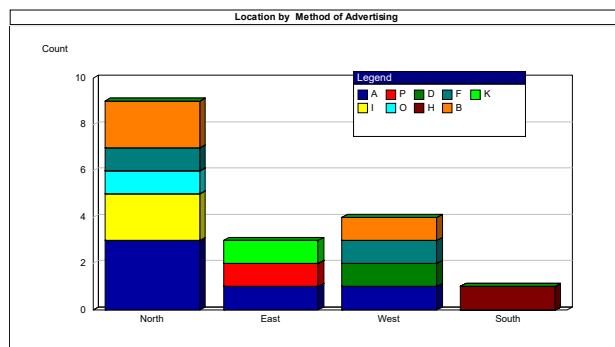
This is an example of a 3D bar graph, where you can see the range of responses from a geographical location to the store. This shows that the majority of people come from the north, but the biggest single age group comes from the west.



Each combination of choices chosen in the survey can be examined in a set. So the Dark Blue (Newspaper, TV & Radio) can be examined, and then subdivided if appropriate. As we can see in this example, Other colours like Yellow (Person and Web) & Red (Radio & TV) also tell some stories on the best advertising methods to reach the current set of customers.



The way the data is coded, it is also possible to examine each specific variable of data by a specific method of advertising, which is ungrouped. Hence the example to the right is of the data filtered by Radio only.



The following table is a gap analysis of the respondents concerning the how well they liked the microwave oven performance. As can be seen in the table below, just over 47% of the respondents stated that the microwave oven performance was better then they expected. 12% of the people believe that the microwave oven performance was average, and 41% believe that it under performed. 18% of the respondents stated that that had a mid range negative impression about the product. This could then be broken down further by age, income or another variable.

VH	5.88%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
H	17.65%	11.76%	5.88%	11.76%	5.88%
M	5.88%	0.00%	0.00%	5.88%	5.88%
L	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	11.76%	5.88%
VL	0.00%	0.00%	5.88%	0.00%	0.00%
	VL	L	M	H	VH

The following table is a gap analysis of the respondents concerning the how well they liked the set of extras. As can be seen in the table below, just over 52% of the respondents stated that the set of extras was better then they expected. 29% of the people believe that the set of extras was average, and 17% believe that it under performed.

VH	0.00%	11.76%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
H	0.00%	23.53%	5.88%	5.88%	0.00%
M	5.88%	5.88%	11.76%	0.00%	5.88%
L	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.88%
VL	11.76%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.88%
	VL	L	M	H	VH

It is also possible to examine customer expectations between different product lines or services. For instance, when you compare the table bellow, you can see where peopme had different expectations with regard to quality between the microwave oven and set of extras.

VH	0.00%	0.00%	5.88%	0.00%	0.00%
H	11.76%	23.53%	11.76%	0.00%	5.88%
M	0.00%	5.88%	5.88%	5.88%	0.00%
L	0.00%	5.88%	0.00%	0.00%	11.76%
VL	0.00%	0.00%	5.88%	0.00%	0.00%
	VL	L	M	H	VH

## Reading List.

Gap Analysis - AMA Handbook for customer satisfaction by Alan Dutka. Published by the NTC Business books in 1992.

Grounded Theory - Basics of Qualitative Research: grounded theory procedures and techniques. By Anselm Strauss & Juliet Corbin. Published by sage publications in 1990.

Problem Solving - Solving reshelving backlogs in a university library: a case study in interactive problem solving techniques with TQM applications. In Australian Library Journal Feb 1995, (44,1)

**Appendix 1.**

**Post Code** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age in Years** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sex** Male / Female **Income \$** \_\_\_\_\_

**How did you hear about the Product / Service.**

Newspaper / Magazine  Radio  Television  Internet  Person

**What were your expectations of Product A?**

[Very Low] [Low] [Medium] [High] [Very High]

**What were your experiences of Product A?**

[Very Low] [Low] [Medium] [High] [Very High]

**Please write a few words to help explain your answer.**

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**What were your expectations of Product B?**

[Very Low] [Low] [Medium] [High] [Very High]

**What were your experiences of Product B?**

[Very Low] [Low] [Medium] [High] [Very High]

**Please write a few words to help explain your answer.**

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**What were your expectations of Product C?**

[Very Low] [Low] [Medium] [High] [Very High]

**What were your expectations of Product C?**

[Very Low] [Low] [Medium] [High] [Very High]

**Please write a few words to help explain your answer.**

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## Appendix 2

This is a further diagrammatical explanation of what the Gap Analysis table demonstrates.

### Equal – Where every thing is balanced.

<b>VH</b>	<b>Extreme</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>VL</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extreme</b>
	<b>VL</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>VH</b>

<b>Satisfaction</b>	<b>Dissatisfaction</b>
This is where the customer's satisfaction & dissatisfaction are balanced, as well as their expectations & experiences. This is to say that the customers are contented with the product / service.	

### Low – Feelings are slight.

<b>VH</b>	<b>Extreme</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>VL</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extreme</b>
	<b>VL</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>VH</b>

<b>Low Satisfaction</b>	<b>Low Dissatisfaction</b>
Low satisfaction is where the customer thinks that the product / service is just above where they expected it to be.  Their opinion may be easily be shattered and drop down in their satisfaction level, if they find a change they didn't expect and disagree with.	Low dissatisfaction is where the customer thinks that the product / service is just below where they expected it to be.  However, their slightly negative perception may well be because of a misguided or poor understanding of the product / service, and it may be possible to move these people up a few levels, with little resource impacts.

### Medium – where customers have some decided opinions.



<b>VH</b>	<b>Extreme</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>VL</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extreme</b>
	<b>VL</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>VH</b>

<b>Medium Satisfaction</b>	<b>Medium Dissatisfaction</b>
<p>Medium satisfaction is where the customer thinks that the product / service is above where they expected it to be.</p> <p>These customers are more comfortable with the product / service and are more likely to ride out any discomfort that may arise.</p>	<p>Medium dissatisfaction is where the customer thinks that the product / service is below where they expected it to be.</p> <p>These customers have a greater discomfort with the product / service and would need more resources to move them up the satisfaction scale.</p>

**High – their mind is made up, but they still could listen.**

<b>VH</b>	<b>Extreme</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>VL</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extreme</b>
	<b>VL</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>VH</b>

<b>High Satisfaction</b>	<b>High Dissatisfaction</b>
<p>High satisfaction is where the customer thinks that the product / service is well above where they expected it to be.</p> <p>These customers are more comfortable with the product / service and are more likely to ride out any discomfort that may arise</p>	<p>High dissatisfaction is where the customer thinks that the product / service is well below where they expected it to be.</p> <p>These customers have a great discomfort with the product / service and would need extra resources to move them up the satisfaction scale.</p>

**Extreme – these peoples views are set in stone.**

<b>VH</b>	<b>Extreme</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>L</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>VL</b>	<b>Equal</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extreme</b>
	<b>VL</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>VH</b>

<b>Extreme Satisfaction</b>	<b>Extreme Dissatisfaction</b>
<p>These customers are well and truly over satisfied with your product / service, and regard it in the highest esteem.</p> <p>It would be near impossible to lose them as customers.</p>	<p>These customers are so dissatisfied with your product or service, they might actually hate it.</p> <p>It isn't worth the resources to try and move them on purpose.</p>