



Listening to Voices

Why

Teams that do not truly understand the *customer* needs of their process struggle to define the objectives of their process improvement project. Without knowing the quality of existing output and how it compares to what is required, we don't know what really needs to be improved. Hence we must listen to customers.

Those who have most experience of the process are usually the *people* within the process itself. Hence we should benefit from listening to what they have to say.

There will usually be evidence from the *process* itself in terms of measures and outputs. Hence we should find out what they are suggesting about how well, or otherwise, the process is operating.

Process improvements should be focussed on delivering what is important to the *business* and what key metrics are saying about how well we are achieving.

What

'Listening to Voices' is a technique for interpreting what customers of the process, process evidence, people in the process and people in the business say about a process in a specific, measurable and articulate manner in order that we can analyse it objectively & quantitatively. This helps the improvement project focus in on customers' critical requirements of the process (CTQs).

How

1. Identify the customers of the specific process being examined.
2. Capture customer requirements directly from the customers themselves (e.g. interviews, customer complaints, surveys, focus groups).
3. Challenge the customers' responses to determine more clearly what the specific underlying issues really are.
4. Determine a way of measuring how material the issues are.
5. Define what success and/or failure looks like.
6. Articulate the critical requirements of the process (CTQs/Success Measures).

TRANSLATING CUSTOMER NEEDS TO CTQS

Voice Of The Customer	Key Issue	CTQ	Defect Definition
If I'm not put on hold, I always seem to get the wrong department or person	The customer wants to be put through quickly to the right person	Customer gets to the correct person the first time Customer is answered promptly	Customer gets the wrong person Customer waits too long
You send me an invoice at different times of the month	Consistent monthly billing	Customer bill received on specified day of month, every month.	Bill received before specified date Bill received after specified date

A particularly powerful tool for eliciting what customers want and how they translate in to what specifically our processes need to deliver to meet their needs is Quality Function Deployment (QFD).

This captures the critically important *customer* dimension. Evidence should also be collated, which articulates what the *people*, *process* and *business* are saying about the issue being investigated.