

# FEEDBACK Rules!

52 ways to listen to your stakeholders

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# The Rules

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## The Rules

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## INTRODUCTION

ORGANIZATIONS WOULD NOT exist without stakeholders—employees, customers, members, service recipients, business partners, and the like. Feedback from these constituents provides critical information. What are their needs and how well are you meeting them? How is your company or organization perceived internally and externally? How satisfied is a customer with a product you provide, or with a store visit or service experience? By listening and responding to your stakeholders, you achieve your goals more efficiently and effectively.

This book contains fifty-two rules to help you plan your program, execute it, and respond to stakeholder feedback. These rules come from the experience of the authors over the more than twenty years they have each been designing feedback and research programs for businesses and nonprofit organizations.

The book is divided into three sections. The rules in the first section, Ground Rules, pertain to the planning and setup of an effective survey or feedback program. Review these rules completely, as they constitute the building blocks of a solid foundation that must be in place before moving ahead.

Part two, Rules of Engagement, offer advice on the specifics of your feedback process. From choosing the audience to planning the content, these rules cover how to design your program so it will provide valid and useful information.

Of utmost importance are the Golden Rules in

part three. These are rules to help you make sense of the results of your feedback program. We recommend ways to communicate the results to your stakeholders and offer techniques for responding to feedback effectively.

It's exciting to embark on a program to get feedback from your stakeholders. We hope you find *Feedback Rules!* to be a practical and useful guide through the process.

PART ONE

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# Ground Rules





## Make sure you're ready.

YOUR COMPANY MANAGEMENT is considering a feedback program. How do you decide if the time is right? Assess whether or not the organization is ready.

Do these exist?

- A realistic budget
- The willingness to objectively accept the findings (good and bad)
- Buy-in across the organization
- The fortitude to make changes based on the results

Carefully consider these prerequisites. If the organization is eager on all fronts but has no budget for the research, the time isn't right. If the money is available but upper management isn't willing to accept the findings and make changes, don't spend the money, because nothing will result from the effort.

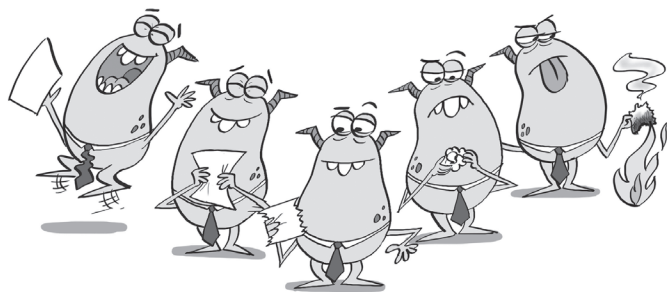
If you can answer "yes" to all four questions in the readiness test—ready, get set, and . . . go!



## RULE 2

### Be in it for the long term.

A **FEEDBACK PROGRAM** is a long-term investment, not the “flavor of the month.” Use the feedback program to show that you care about experiences on an ongoing basis.



A customer feedback program is a vehicle to tell you what you are doing right and where you need to improve. But it's also a way to show customers that you care about them. When the door is open for customers to tell you about their experiences, it magnifies the value of the program.

We had one past client who really did care about their customers' experiences. But when it came to implementing and using a feedback program, the commitment wasn't strong enough to stick with it. The store managers were not given access to the

system for about a year, and the responses were handled by a part-time employee who would deal with only the most burning issues. This created a situation that didn't benefit the customers or the organization. In the end, the company wasn't really in it for the long term and stopped using the feedback program.

Feedback programs are long-term investments. The value comes from offering an ongoing dialogue about experiences with your organization.

## RULE 3



### Who's your customer?

MY CUSTOMER? THAT'S easy—it's the person who shops at my store or buys a service my company offers.

Well, that's not always the right answer. Everyone has a customer. Your customer might be an internal one, such as another department that you support at work. Your customer might not be a paying one, such as a recipient in need of a meal from a nonprofit.

No matter who your customer is, listening to customers' needs is vital.

Employees within an organization sometimes lack a connection to the external consumer of their products or services. This is where focusing on the internal customers, such as other departments or locations, provides a basis for measuring and responding to feedback.

Whether internal or external, everyone has a customer and feedback is important. Listening and responding to customers show that we care about their needs and helps build loyalty.

# YOU GOTTA KNOW THE **Rules!**



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