

Voice of the Customer

What is it. Voice of the Customer is a disciplined, cyclical approach to obtaining, understanding, and prioritizing customer wants and needs (requirements). VOC is an element of, and derives from Quality Function Deployment

When do you use it. Whenever there is a need to identify, understand, and prioritize customer requirements.

Desired Outcome.

Greater understanding of customer requirements.
Increased/improved communication with customers.
Identification of what your customer believes to be the most important, least satisfying attributes of your products/services.

Key elements of deployment. One of the major dimensions of customer satisfaction is the determination of customer requirements. Before customer requirements are collected, consideration should be given to customer segmenting since customer segments may not have the same requirements. An example of segments would be:

New customers.
Long time customers.
Past customers that have gone to other suppliers.
Niche customers.

Typical steps in the VOC process are:

- Structured customer interview
- Develop key themes from raw "language data" obtained in interview
- Survey customers to verify accuracy of themes and to gather data on the relative importance and satisfaction in each theme area
- Construct "opportunity map" to graphically display relative importance/satisfaction in key theme areas
- Select most important, least satisfying themes for improvement
- Periodically repeat the cycle to assess progress and environmental changes

VOC results are often the impetus for P-D-C-A, benchmarking, and re-engineering initiatives. VOC is also the first step in QFD initiatives.