Henley Centre for Customer Management

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B2B Customer Experience Factors: Understanding the relationship with SME Customers – Interim Report

Tony Harrington, Dr Anne Dibley and Professor Moira Clark

March, 2015

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1. Executive Summary

As part of the 2014 programme, our members asked us to extend the research done in 2013 ("Measuring Customer Satisfaction And Understanding Customer Effort In A B2B Context" - Tony Harrington and Andrew Bryan) to incorporate the SME customer sector.

This project was set up to explore customer experience factors in the SME segment and to address a number of questions:-

- What are the most important factors that contribute to the customer experience from both the supplier's and the SME customer's perspectives?
- From the customer's perspective, what about the relationship with the supplier requires the 'most' or 'least' effort and what changes do customers suggest?
- Where a customer has both a personal and a business relationship with the supplier, how does this impact their views?

The approach was to develop an online survey for completion by SME customers and their supplier. Initially, seven companies and the Henley SME Forum volunteered to participate in the research. However, it proved to be extremely difficult to go from agreement to be involved to actually getting survey responses and, in the event, the survey achieved the following result:-

- A good response was achieved from 2 companies with around 40 SME responses for each company
- A poor response was achieved from 1 company and from the SME Group so their data is currently of limited value
- There were other companies that would still like to participate and there are 3 offers to participate at a later date.

Analysis of the responses showed that useful conclusions could be made from the data collected so far but that it would be more valuable if more companies were persuaded to participate in the future. As a result, this report has been prepared as an interim statement of what has been learnt and to provide specific feedback to the participating companies. With member's permission, further responses will be sought at a later date to refine the learning and provide feedback to more companies.

This report presents the results of analysis from the survey on a company-by-company basis. Most of the data is only relevant at company level but consolidated results are shown where possible.

The results from the analysis of responses lead to a number of initial conclusions.

- SME companies look to their suppliers to deliver against their promises in a responsive, consistent and proactive manner. Their priority is to have their problems solved in a timely manner.
- Relationship factors are more important in the B2B relationships between large companies than for SME's.. The SME customer is much more interested in just having the

service performed with a minimum of fuss and doesn't really want to develop a relationship.

- Questions about customer effort (or the ease of doing business) are as valuable in the SME segment as in any other in terms of identifying opportunities for improvement.
- Businesses should consider whether their SME customers might also be a customer in their personal home life. If so, they should be aware that this will have an effect on their satisfaction – and could be either positive or negative

2. Literature Review

2.1. Customer Experience

Our literature review encompassed an examination of journal articles exploring B2B customer experience quality, and the factors that have been found to enhance B2B customer experience.

Customer experience can be defined as, "the customer's subjective response to the holistic direct and indirect encounter with the firm, and customer experience quality as its perceived excellence or superiority (Lemke et al, 2011: 846).

Lemke et al (2011) identified the following seven key factors for customer experience quality in B2B markets, based on a qualitative study using repertory grid technique:

- **Extent of personal contact**: this includes talking to a real person, face-to-face or by phone or email. It does not include anonymous web-based communication, or communication based on standardised paperwork.
- **Flexibility**: the ability to modify offerings in response to customer needs.
- **Implicit understanding of customer needs**: this might be, for example, where the supplier has a good understanding of the customer's context, and/or a good understanding of the customer due to prior knowledge or experience.
- **Knowledge**: the extent to which the supplier can add value through the knowledge and expertise that it has.
- **Proactivity in checking that everything is okay**: proactive follow-up with the customer, rather than making assumptions; showing attention to detail.
- **Pro-activity in eliciting customer's objectives:** where the supplier listens to what the customer says it needs, and asks questions about this, rather than telling the customer what it can offer.
- **Promise fulfilment**: where the supplier delivers against its promises, and the commitments it makes.

2.2. Ease of Doing Business

It is useful to add the importance of the 'ease of doing business' to the above insights. Following a survey conducted with over 75,000 people, and hundreds of structured interviews with customer service leaders, Dixon, Freeman and Toman (2010) came to the conclusion that instead of trying to 'delight' their customers, suppliers should, "forget the bells and whistles, and just solve their problems" (2010: 116). They argue that solving customers' service problems quickly and easily is the best way to make customers loyal.

In addition, Dixon et al (2010) provide the following advice:

1. Don't just resolve current issues, head off the next one.
2. Arm reps to address the emotional side of customer interactions.
3. Minimise channel switching by increasing self-service 'stickiness'; for example, by improving self-service elements on the website.

4. Use feedback from disgruntled customers to reduce effort for customers.
5. Empower the front line to deliver an 'easy' experience

One could argue that there are some overlaps here with Lemke et al's (2011) research findings: understanding customers' needs, flexibility and promise fulfilment, as discussed by Lemke et al (2011) are all also implicit in Dixon et al's (2010) advice to suppliers.

Clark and Bryan (2013) advise companies that using the term 'easy' when attempting to measure easiness/effort is more intuitive and understandable to customers than using the term 'effort', and that using the term 'easy' therefore elicits more accurate research results. Their research revealed that B2B companies tend to have a broad view of making their company easy to do business with, focusing on all areas of continuous process improvement, rather than simply customer service performance (Clark & Bryan, 2013)

2.3. Multi-Channel Customer Experience

Customer experience can clearly be impacted by a firm's ability to provide customers with a seamless, easy multi-channel experience. The following factors have all been identified as important (HCCM, 2012)

- **Choice:** whether the customer can select an appropriate channel or is steered towards a particular channel by the supplier.
- **Personalisation:** the degree to which information is personalised within a particular channel environment.
- **Customisation:** whether a firm can offer a tailor-made solution to the customer's problem
- **Consistency:** whether the customer experience is consistent over time, regardless of channel

Clark and Perkin's (2012) study revealed that, with increasing channel choice, it remains challenging for many organisations to maintain consistency across a multitude of customer touchpoints. In addition, the ability to balance consistency, while also fully exploiting the unique attributes of each channel, still remains an aspiration for many companies.

Wilson and Daniel (2007) assert that a firm needs to combine resources in new ways to face the multichannel challenge, and should utilise dynamic capabilities to transform its B2B channel strategy.

While it is clear that superior multichannel experiences can be a source of competitive advantage for firms, for many companies, this remains a 'work-in-progress' (Clark & Perkin, 2012).

2.4. Role of Online Content

Katona and Sarvary's (2014) research indicates that online content marketing can play an increasingly important role in creating a positive customer experience among B2B customers. When a B2B customer is looking for a new supplier, research indicates that a supplier's online marketing content can strongly influence decision-making, before any contact has been made with that supplier (Katona & Sarvary, 2014). This suggests that suppliers would be well-advised to consider how they might develop relevant online content to attract potential new customers, as well as to inform and enhance the experience of existing customers.

2.5. Critical Success Factors for Strong B2B Relationships

A feature of a genuinely successful B2B relationship will be that customer experience is positive. In Dibley and Clark's (2009; 2011) qualitative research investigating the critical success factors for strong, strategic B2B relationships, many of the findings echo those captured in the above discussion on customer experience factors; for example, understanding customer needs; knowledge; promise fulfilment. However, the following additional factors also emerged as important (Dibley & Clark, 2009; 2011):

- **Demonstrating commitment to the customer's success**: the extent to which a supplier may be willing to forego short-term gain because it is committed to working towards longer term, mutual goals and benefits with the customer.
- **Clear roles and accountabilities:** the degree of understanding that exists regarding 'who is responsible for what' within the supplier and customer teams.
- **Coming up with innovative solutions:** the extent to which a supplier presents its customers with innovative solutions to problems.
- **Openness, transparency and willingness to share information:** the degree to which suppliers and customers are willing to 'open their books' and share sensitive information.
- **Responsiveness:** the supplier's speed of response to customers' queries.
- **Compatible culture and values:** The extent to which the supplier and customer have compatible ways of doing business and similar values.
- **Mutual dependence:** the degree to which both firms are dependent on each other.

In addition, in Parry et al's (2012) research with software customers – which involved semi-structured interviews, then an online survey with current and prospective customers – the authors highlight the importance of a supplier demonstrating professionalism, and employing people who are proficient, skilled and highly-trained. Their study indicates that these supplier attributes are critical for strong relationships with customers, superior performance and value creation.

Other supplier attributes considered critical to successful relationships are identified by O'Cass and Ngo (2012): having a strong market and customer focus; a high product innovation capability; and strong capabilities in marketing and relationship marketing.

Williams and Sims' (2011) quantitative research with sales managers in large B2B organisations focuses on identifying the salesperson/relationship manager attributes required for successful B2B relationships. They identify the following critical success factors for salespeople:

- Strong internal relationships within his/her company.
- The ability to earn trust.
- A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities.
- An understanding of his/her accountabilities.
- The ability to display leadership in product/service management.
- A strong customer orientation.

2.6. Conclusion

In this literature review, we have identified a number of factors that previous research has suggested are important in creating a positive customer experience. It should be noted that research into customer experience with SME customers is rather limited and, as a result, the majority of the research studies cited here were conducted with large supplier and customer organisations. This fact makes our current study all the more valuable, and means that it will be interesting to see whether the findings of this study concur with those seen in previous academic literature.

3. Project Methodology

The approach taken was to develop an online survey for completion by SME customers and their supplier. The initial questionnaires were discussed with interested members at one of their workshops and refined to reflect their comments. The final questionnaires were then uploaded to our internet server to provide a simple mechanism for distribution and completion of the survey that covered:-

- Metrics - How the supplier measures customer satisfaction with the business relationship
- Key Relationship Factors – ranking their importance in the business relationship. These 14 key factors were identified from previous research (see section 2: Literature Review).
- Ease of doing business - How easy is it to do business with the supplier
- Crossover - Where a customer has both a personal and a business relationship with the supplier, how does this impact their views

Through members and other contacts we sought to find a number of companies that would be prepared to take part in the research and would assist in getting responses from their own people (the supplier) and from a number of their SME customers.

Initially, seven companies and the Henley SME Forum volunteered to participate in the research. However, it proved to be extremely difficult to go from agreement to be involved to actually getting survey responses. The main reasons were that when we wanted to conduct the survey the supplier companies did not want to overload their customers and, in a number of cases, customers had either been surveyed recently or were about to be surveyed for other reasons.

In the event, the survey was conducted through August, September and October 2014 with the following result:-

- A good response was achieved from 2 companies with around 40 SME responses for each company
- A poor response was achieved from 1 company and from the SME Group so their data is currently of limited value
- There were other companies that would still like to participate and there are 3 offers to participate at a later date.

Analysis of the responses showed that useful conclusions could be made from the data collected so far but that it would be more valuable if more companies were persuaded to participate in the future. As a result, this report has been prepared as an interim statement of what has been learnt and to provide specific feedback to the participating companies. With member's permission, further responses will be sought at a later date to refine the learning and provide feedback to more companies.

We are very grateful to the companies, and customers, who agreed to be surveyed for this project. While specific responses are deliberately kept anonymous, the companies who were interviewed are shown in the following table.

Company	Name	Company Responses	SME Responses
1	Make It Cheaper	2	37
2	NHS Blood & Transplant	5	43
3	Global Payments	3	2
4	Henley SME Group		2

Table 1: Companies that were included in the research

The survey responses were then analysed to identify common points or differences and the results are described in the following sections.

4. Summary Of Analysis Process

4.1. Metrics

In the customer survey we asked:-

- Does the supplier measure your satisfaction with the relationship with them?
- How often is your satisfaction measured?
- Are the results shared with you?
- Do you see any action resulting from the measurement effort?
- Is there something about your company relationship with the supplier that you feel should be measured but isn't?

In the company survey we asked:-

- How do you measure customer satisfaction with the relationship?
- How often is satisfaction measured?
- Do you use the same measure for all customers?
- How are customer representatives chosen?
- What is a good result?
- How is the result used?
- Is there something about your company relationship with the customer that you feel should be measured but isn't?

The analysis then reviewed and compared the two sets of results in order to identify any useful findings.

4.2. Key Relationship Factors

The 14 key relationship factors that respondents were asked to rank in importance were developed from a number of previous research studies. To assist in the analysis phase of the project, we decided to group these key factors about the business relationship into three categories.

Alignment (A)

How you align your company's resources (expertise, skills, processes) and culture with your customer's characteristics, needs and requirements.

The factors included in this category were:-

- Knowledge and understanding of your business
- Flexibility or solution customisation
- Channel choice
- Access to knowledge, expertise and innovation
- Consistency
- Compatible culture and values

Relationship (R)

How you interact with your customers in daily/on-going business processes.

The factors included in this category were:-

- Having personal contact with the supplier
- Proactive follow-up
- Proactive approach to understand objectives
- Responsiveness

Emotional (E)

How you engage with your customers emotionally.

The factors included in this category were:-

- Keeping promises
- The availability of information on social media
- The ability to earn trust
- Commitment to your company's success

We collated the results for each company, both from the company and from the customer perspective and identified the top seven factors. The analysis then reviewed and compared the two sets of results in order to identify any useful findings.

We also looked at overall results. These are included for completeness but it is the view of the authors that the results from a survey of this nature are most valuable at an individual company level.

One additional question put to each respondent was:-

- Finally, are there any other factors that you consider to be important in assessing the customer experience in a B2B context?

The qualitative data returned from this question was reviewed and analysed to identify the most frequently mentioned items.

4.3. Ease of Doing Business

In the customer questionnaire we asked:-

- How do you rate the supplier in the context of 'being easy to do business with' on the scale of 1 to 7:
- As a customer, what transaction or interaction with the supplier takes the most effort for you? Please describe the situation.
- As a customer, what is the easiest transaction or interaction you have with the supplier? Please describe the situation.
- Can you compare the ease of doing business with the supplier to any other suppliers that you deal with?

- If you could run the supplier business for a day, what changes would you make?

In the company questionnaire we asked:-

- How do you rate your own company in the context of 'being easy to do business with' on the scale of 1 to 7:
- From a customer perspective, think of a transaction or interaction for which you feel the customer has to put in a great deal of effort. Please describe the situation.
- Is there an interaction with customers that your organisation does not like to have or frequently puts off having because it takes a lot of effort? Please describe the situation.
- From a customer perspective, think of a particularly effortless transaction or interaction with your organisation. Please describe the situation.

The analysis then reviewed and compared the two sets of results in order to identify any useful findings. While the quantitative rating question is looked at both at company level and from an overall perspective, the answers to the qualitative questions were reviewed and analysed to identify the most frequently mentioned items and are specific to the company.

4.4. Impact of personal and business relationship

To understand if there was any impact, we asked in the customer survey:-

- Do you deal with any supplier in both your personal life and your business life? If you answered “Yes”, does your personal relationship affect your view of the B2B relationship? and in what way?

Clearly, this question is not relevant to the company survey so only customer responses were analysed.

5. Company 1

5.1. Metrics

Customer Responses

The customer responses are summarised in the four charts below:-

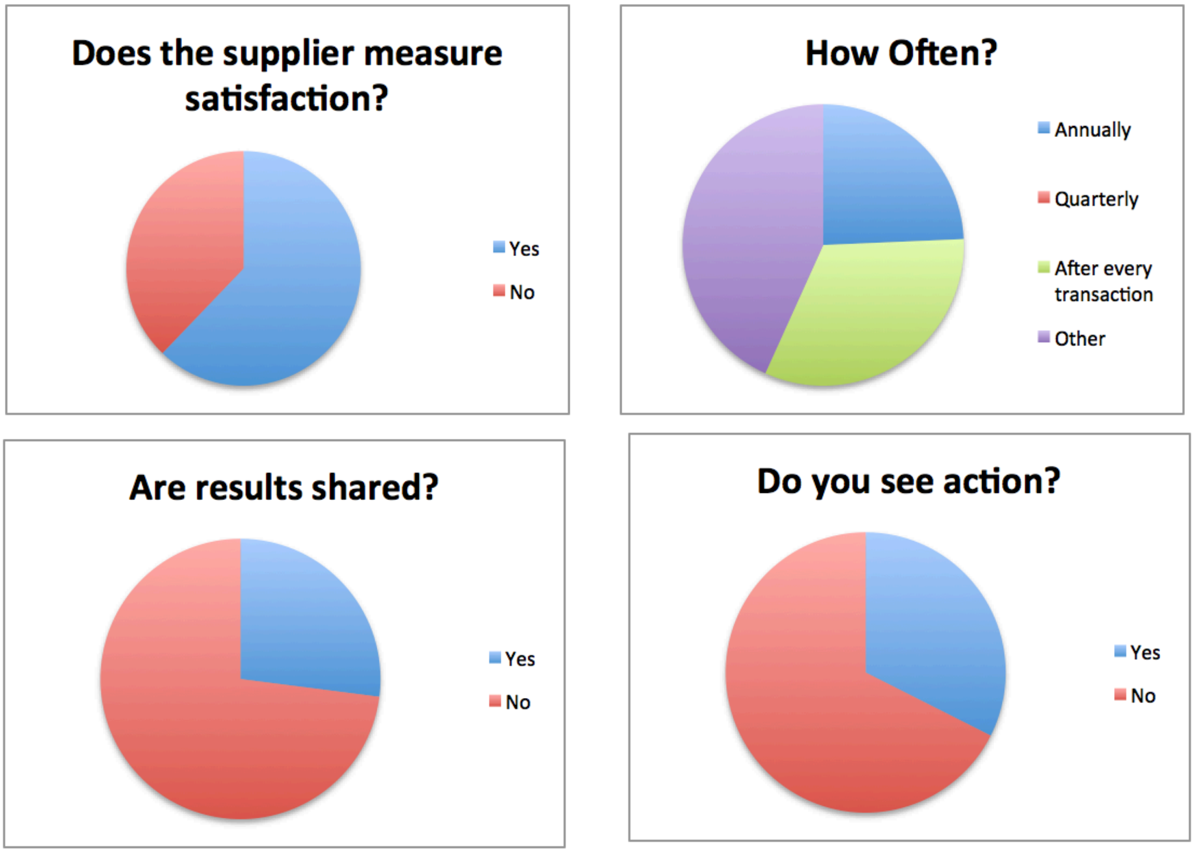

Figure 1: Overall customer satisfaction – Company 1

The majority of customers (62%) are aware that their supplier measures satisfaction but have differing views as to how often this is done. Most customers say that they don't see any results from the survey and don't see any action taken as a result of sharing their views.

Company (Supplier) Responses

The supplier respondents are consistent in maintaining that:-

- We measure customer satisfaction (CSAT) using both Net Promoter Score (NPS) and Customer Effort Score (CES).
- We measure after every transaction.
- The data is used internally to drive improvements and is fed back to customer facing staff

There is also recognition that customer satisfaction needs to be measured at more points in the life cycle of the relationship – not just at the initial transaction.

The most obvious conclusion here is that the supplier company should make more effort to show customers that it is worth their while responding to the surveys. This could be by making the results more visible and/or showing how the company takes customer views onboard and makes changes as a result of their input.

The lack of clarity in terms of whether satisfaction is measured and how often is probably because the survey is not seen as important to the customer so they don't remember much about it.

5.2. Key Relationship Factors

The seven factors rated most highly for the customers and for the company are shown in the figure and table below. We have also plotted the seven most highly ranked factors from previous research into B2B customer experience (Lemke, Clark & Wilson). It should be noted that this previous research looked at B2B relationships between large companies, not the SME segment.

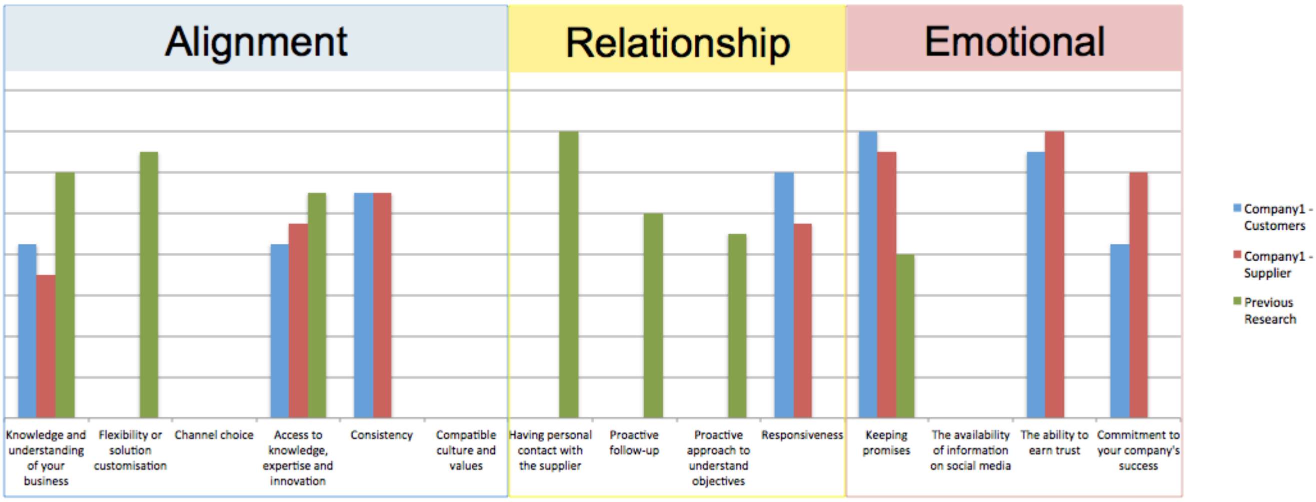

Figure 2: Key Relationship Factors – Company 1

Customers View	Company view
1. Keeping Promises (E)	1. Ability to earn trust (E)
2. Ability to earn trust (E)	2. Keeping Promises (E)
3. Responsiveness (R)	3. Commitment to your company's success (E)
4. Consistency (A)	4. Consistency (A)
5= Knowledge & understanding of your business (A)	5= Access to knowledge, expertise & innovation (A)
Access to knowledge, expertise & innovation (A)	Responsiveness (R)
Commitment to your company's success (E)	7. = Knowledge & understanding of your business (A)

Table 2: Top 7 Factors – Company 1

Respondents from both the company and the customer agree on what the seven most important factors are, they differ in what the order of importance is. The views are, in general, closely aligned but it is worth noting that:-

- Both the company and the customers view the emotional factors as being most important. SME customers want to be able to trust their suppliers to deliver against their promises in a responsive, consistent and proactive manner.
- SME customers don't see that the company needs to be particularly committed to their success. Their priority is to have their problems solved in a timely manner.
- Knowledge and understanding of the customer's business is more important to the SME customers than the company thinks.
- Conversely, the company appears to give more significance to commitment to their customer's success than the customers do.

Comparing the results to previous research, it is clear that while three of the factors identified in previous research are considered important in the context of SMEs, the results show a marked difference.

- In the 'Alignment' category, flexibility or solution customisation is not seen as important for the SME customer. This aspect of organisational alignment is perhaps more relevant for larger/different types of organisations. Multi-channel choice did not emerge as a critical factor, consistency of interaction is key, regardless of channel.
- In the 'Relationship' category none of the previously top ranked factors apply to the SME customer but responsiveness is highly rated. Relationship priorities for SME customers tend to centre around efficient interaction in daily processes, rather than on more extensive relational approaches.
- In the 'Emotional' category, the ability to earn trust and a commitment to the customer's success are both rated highly by the SME customer but were not previously prioritised.

When asked what additional factors should be considered when assessing their customer experience, customers identified the following:-

- Quality and personalisation of communication (in a clear and concise way)
- Ease of access to the right person
- Having customer service agents who can actually listen and respond correctly rather than reading from a pre-drafted script for any problems.
- Value for my time

5.3. Ease of Doing Business

We asked the company respondents to rate themselves on a seven-point scale for the question "How easy are you to do business with"? The result was a rating of 5.

We also asked the customers how they would rate the company as a supplier with the same question and scale. Their rating came out at 5.84.

So the customer believes that the company is easier to do business with than the company does. This is consistent with previous research ("Measuring B2B Customer Satisfaction And Customer Effort"; Harrington & Bryan; Dec 2013) and illustrates that the company tends to underrate itself because of internal understanding of some of the difficulties that customers face,

The analysis of qualitative text responses to the questions to the SME customers about customer effort is summarised below. The size of text represents the frequency of occurrence of that response. The company should review these comments to see if there is scope for performance improvements.

Most Effort Required

- Over communication (telephone calls, emails and paperwork)
- Unclear communication
- Speaking to the right person
- Timely communication (I want to book a call when I can have all paperwork to hand)
- Clarifying seasonal usage against tariffs
- Finding information Making the final decision
- Lack of follow up after sale
- Writing to cancel existing supplier
- T's and C's
- Preparing contracts
- Returning paperwork by Post or Fax
- Follow up with the paperwork

Least Effort Required

- Dealing via phone
- Finding best tariff
- Dealing via email
- Contract renewal
- Changing supplier
- The sales process
- Handling multiple businesses
- Retrieval of customer information
- Discussing options

Suggested changes

- Increase knowledge of staff
- Implement proper follow up procedures after the sale
- More personal service, less scripting
- More focus on customer retention
- More focus on customer needs
- Call regarding renewals closer to the actual renewal date so that all information is available
- Improve customer information to avoid repeating information at every contact
- Take the onus for changing out of my hands.
- More choice on communication methods

5.4. Impact of personal and business relationship

59% of the SME customer respondents said that they had both a personal and a business relationship with at least one supplier.

The analysis of qualitative text responses to the question to the SME customers as to whether the personal relationship had an impact on the business relationship is shown below. Again, the size of text represents the frequency of occurrence of that response. If the company has both personal and business customers, it should review these comments to see if there is scope for performance improvements.

- You want to feel valued in both contexts
- No longer have a business relationship as a result of personal experience
- Change of utilities suppliers in the business context is much more convenient
- I tend to trust them more
- Expectations can lead to dissatisfaction

A suggestion for change that was made in the context of this subject and that the company should consider was:-

- Offer the same level of service & affordability to business customers for their personal business.

5.5. Summary

Company 1 appears to have a good understanding of its SME customers. However, there are a number of areas highlighted by the survey response that could form the basis for some performance improvements and better customer relationships.

6. Company 2

6.1. Metrics

Customer Responses

The customer responses are summarised in the four charts below:-

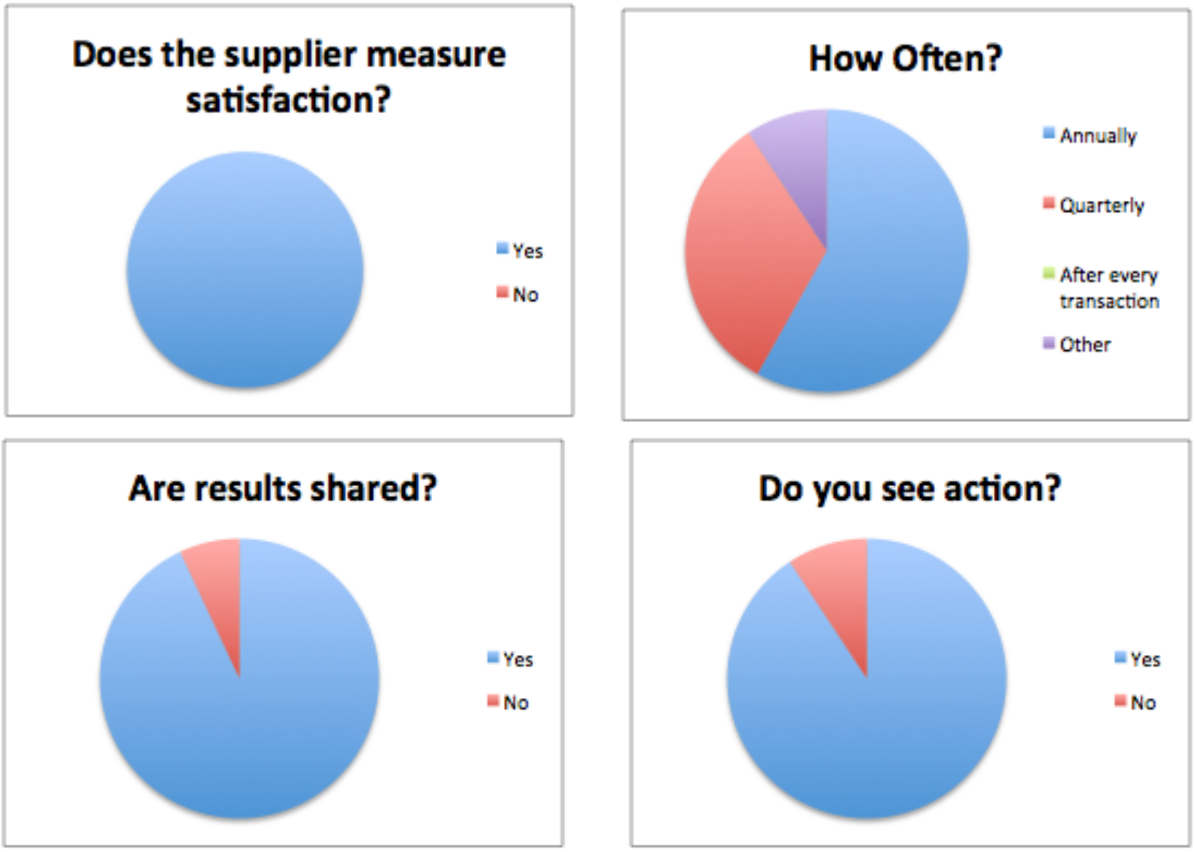

Figure 3: Overall customer satisfaction – Company 2

The majority of customers (62%) are aware that their supplier measures satisfaction but have differing views as to how often this is done. Most customers say that they don't see any results from the survey and don't see any action taken as a result of sharing their views.

Company (Supplier) Responses

The supplier respondents are consistent in maintaining that:-

- We measure customer satisfaction (CSAT) using a multiple question survey.
- We measure quarterly
- The data is shared to a limited extent

The company also states that it is introducing a "how easy are we to do business with" question.

Again, the obvious conclusion here is that the supplier company should make more effort to show customers that it is worth their while responding to the surveys. This could be by making the results more visible and/or showing how the company takes customer views onboard and makes changes as a result of their input.

6.2. Key Relationship Factors

The seven factors rated most highly for the customers and for the company are shown in the figure and table below. We have also plotted the seven most highly ranked factors from previous research into B2B customer experience.

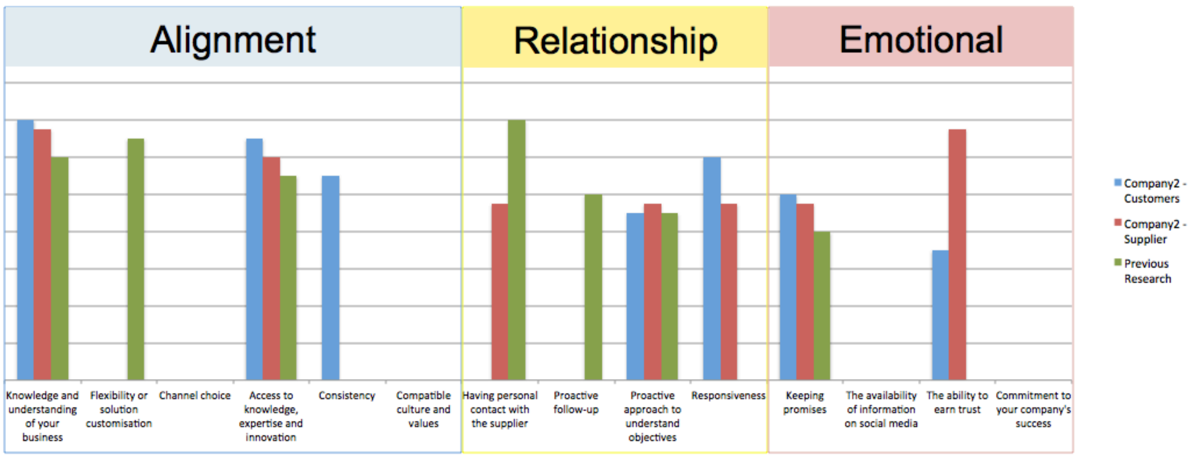

Figure 4: Key Relationship Factors – Company 2

Customers View	Company view
1. Knowledge & understanding of your business (A)	1= Knowledge & understanding of your business (A)
2. Access to knowledge, expertise & innovation (A)	Ability to earn trust (E)
3. Responsiveness (R)	3. Access to knowledge, expertise & innovation (A)
4. Consistency (A)	4= Having personal contact with the supplier (R)
5. Keeping Promises (E)	Proactive approach to understand objectives (R)
6. Proactive approach to understand objectives (R)	Responsiveness (R)
7. Ability to earn trust (E)	Keeping Promises (E)

Table 3: Top 7 Factors – Company 2

Respondents from both the company and the customer agree on six of the seven most important factors are, they differ in what the order of importance is.

The result here when compared with that of Company 1 clearly shows why we believe that the analysis is best focused at the company level. Company 2 provides a highly technical service so is much more "knowledge based" and the degree of knowledge and understanding is very important to the customer.

- Both the company and the customers view the alignment factors as being most important. The customers want the supplier to have an excellent understanding of their needs and to be able to provide expertise to them in a consistent manner.
- Being responsive and keeping promises are both seen as more important to the customer than the company believes. The customers are also less concerned about the ability to earn trust than the company thinks.
- The company gives more significance to having personal contact than the customers do. Customers want an efficient, consistent service from professionals who really understand their needs.

Comparing the results to previous research, it is clear that four of the factors identified in previous research are considered important in the context of SMEs, the results show a number of differences.

- In the 'Alignment' category, flexibility or solution customisation is not seen as important for the SME customer. This aspect of organisational alignment is perhaps more relevant for larger/different types of organisations. Multi-channel choice did not emerge as a critical factor; consistency of interaction is key, regardless of channel.
- In the 'Relationship' category there is little agreement on the top ranked factors but responsiveness is highly rated. Relationship priorities for SME customers tend to centre around efficient interaction in daily processes and a desire to understand what is needed, rather than on more extensive relational approaches.
- In the 'Emotional' category, keeping promises and the ability to earn trust and are both rated highly by the SME customer.

When asked what additional factors should be considered when assessing their customer experience, customers identified the following:-

- Degree of customer understanding
- Timeliness and quality of issue resolution
- Partnership and Trust

6.3. Ease of Doing Business

We asked the company respondents to rate themselves on a seven-point scale for the question "How easy are you to do business with"? The result was a rating of 5.

We also asked the customers how they would rate the company as a supplier with the same question and scale. Their rating came out at 5.88.

So the customer believes that the company is easier to do business with than the company does. This is consistent with previous research (Harrington & Bryan) and illustrates that the company tends to underrate itself because of internal understanding of some of the difficulties that customers face,

The analysis of qualitative text responses to the questions to the SME customers about customer effort is summarised below. The size of text represents the frequency of occurrence of that response. The company should review these comments to see if there is scope for performance improvements.

Most Effort Required

- Dealing with RCI
- Laborious paper based process
- HLA matched platelet ordering
- Out of hours service
- Occasional difficult encounters
- Inflexibility on non-standard products
- Referrals for cross matching
- Referrals to H&I laboratories.
- Occasional issues with transport and delivery
- Product changes and system changes
- Auditing the blood supply and usage process
- Following up on incidents involving the failure to supply blood
- Incorrect data
- Hospital Liaison and sorting of queries
- Use of hard-copy financial data
- Chasing up incorrect billing
- Contract approval
- Web site - difficult to find information quickly.

Least Effort Required

- OBOS ordering system for routine products
- Dealing with Customer services
- SP-Ice
- Dealing with NHSBT issues department
- Dealing with H&I (Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics) Hospital Services
- Product requests and dealing with the RCI department.
- Order amendment
- Obtaining clinical advice
- ITS Project pilot

Suggested changes

- Order & Delivery
  - Provide a weekend delivery service (24/7 service)
  - Introduce delivery charges based on distance
  - Improve order & delivery process to allow reduced stock and wastage levels
  - Keep a full range of products at the Leeds centre ready for immediate dispatch
  - More blue light drivers
  - Implement proactive demand management for supply of blood components
- Ensure all staff spend at least 1 day and 1 night in a busy customer environment
- More localised RCI
- One initial point of contact for all queries
- Limit the number of electronic communications sent out by the service to essential only.
- Promote regular interaction/stakeholder groups more than once every 6 months (Listen to customers more effectively)
- Improve sendaway facility and introduce ITS across the country

6.4. Impact of personal and business relationship

37% of the Company 2 customer respondents said that they had both a personal and a business relationship with at least one supplier.

The analysis of qualitative text responses to the question to the SME customers as to whether the personal relationship had an impact on the business relationship is shown below. Again, the size of text represents the frequency of occurrence of that response. If the company has both personal and business customers, it should review these comments to see if there is scope for performance improvements.

- Builds on existing relationship
- Improves confidence
- Any lack of transparency and consistency becomes more evident

6.5. Summary

Company 2 appears to have a good understanding of its customers and is making an effort to make things easier for customers. There has been some success but there are a number of areas highlighted by the survey response that could form the basis for some further performance improvements and better customer relationships.

7. Company 3

There were too few responses from Company 3 customers to allow any comprehensive analysis of their results. Some limited value might be obtained from the subset of results presented below.

7.1. Metrics

Customer Responses

The customer responses are summarised in the four charts below:-

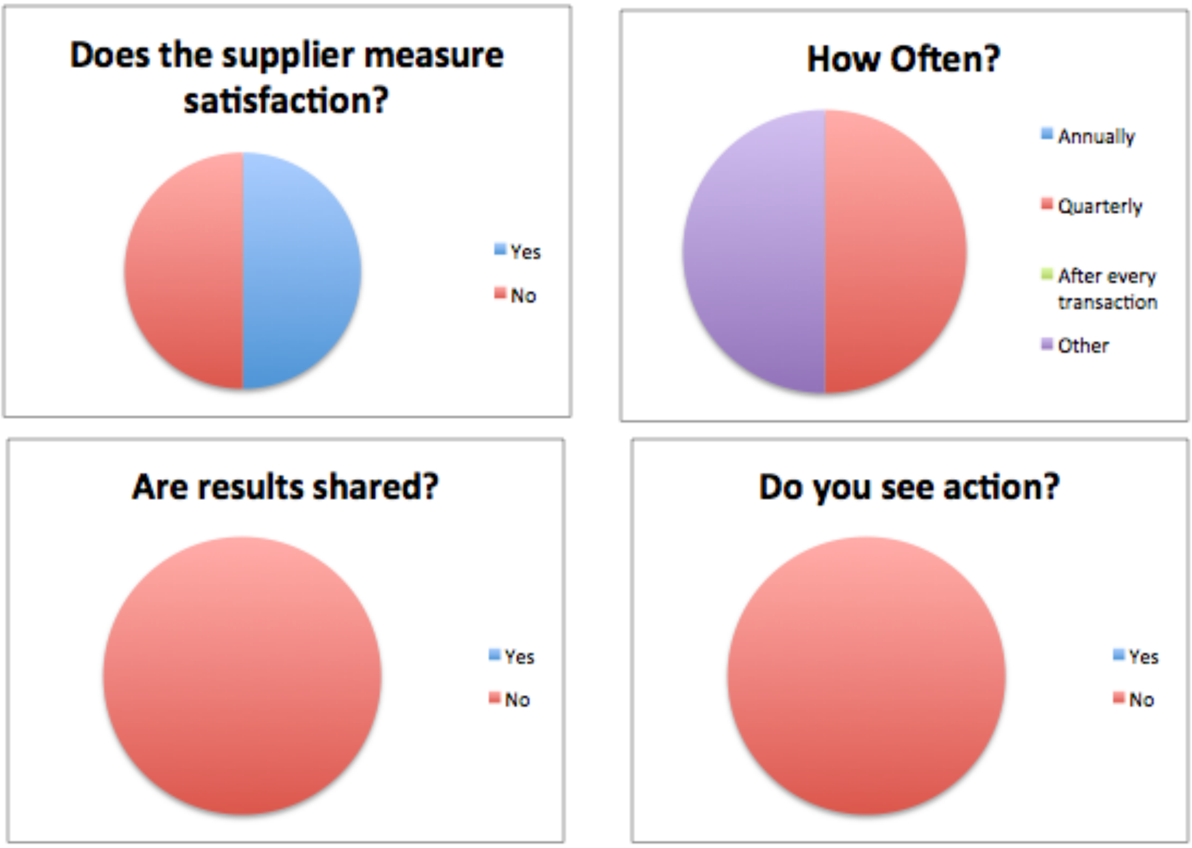

Figure 5: Overall customer satisfaction – Company 3

Insufficient responses to comment

Company (Supplier) Responses

The supplier respondents are consistent in maintaining that:-

- We measure customer satisfaction (CSAT) with a subset of customers using surveys, review meetings and telephone.
- We measure monthly
- The data is not shared with the customer but is used to drive improvement

The company also states that it would like to extend the survey to all customers in the future.

The company admits to being more reactive than proactive. More effort to survey a wider spectrum of customers and visible action based on that feedback might be an appropriate course of action.

7.2. Key Relationship Factors

The seven factors rated most highly for the customers and for the company are shown in the figure and table below. We have also plotted the seven most highly ranked factors from previous research into B2B customer experience.

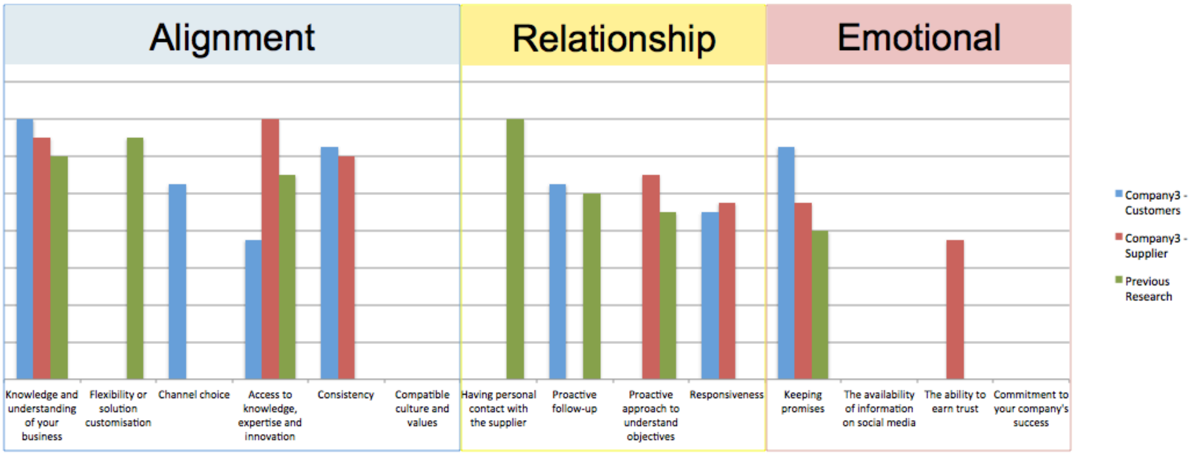

Figure 6: Key Relationship Factors – Company 3

Customers View	Company view
1. Knowledge & understanding of your business (A)	1. Access to knowledge, expertise & innovation (A)
2= Consistency (A)	2. Knowledge & understanding of your business (A)
Keeping Promises (E)	3. Consistency (A)
4= Channel Choice (R)	4. Proactive approach to understand objectives (R)
Proactive follow-up (E)	5= Responsiveness (R)
6. Responsiveness (R)	Keeping Promises (E)
7. Access to knowledge, expertise & innovation (A)	7. Ability to earn trust (E)

Table 4: Top 7 Factors – Company 3

Given the small number of responses, no further commentary is offered for Company 3.

7.3. Ease of Doing Business

We asked the company respondents to rate themselves on a seven-point scale for the question "How easy are you to do business with"? The result was a rating of 4.33.

We also asked the customers how they would rate the company as a supplier with the same question and scale. Their rating came out at 2.50.

Again, it would not be fair to comment on this result given the small number of responses.

There was no valid data collected from customers about the ease of doing business but there were two suggestions for review on possible improvement areas:-

- Focus on improving customer service
- Be more responsive – for example company sales representatives responding to requests for information from customers.

7.4. Impact of personal and business relationship

No data collected.

7.5. Summary

There were insufficient responses from Company 3 to form any clear view.

8. SME Group

There were too few responses from the SME group customers to allow any comprehensive analysis of their results. Some limited value might be obtained from the subset of results presented below.

8.1. Metrics

Customer Responses

The customer responses are summarised in the four charts below:-

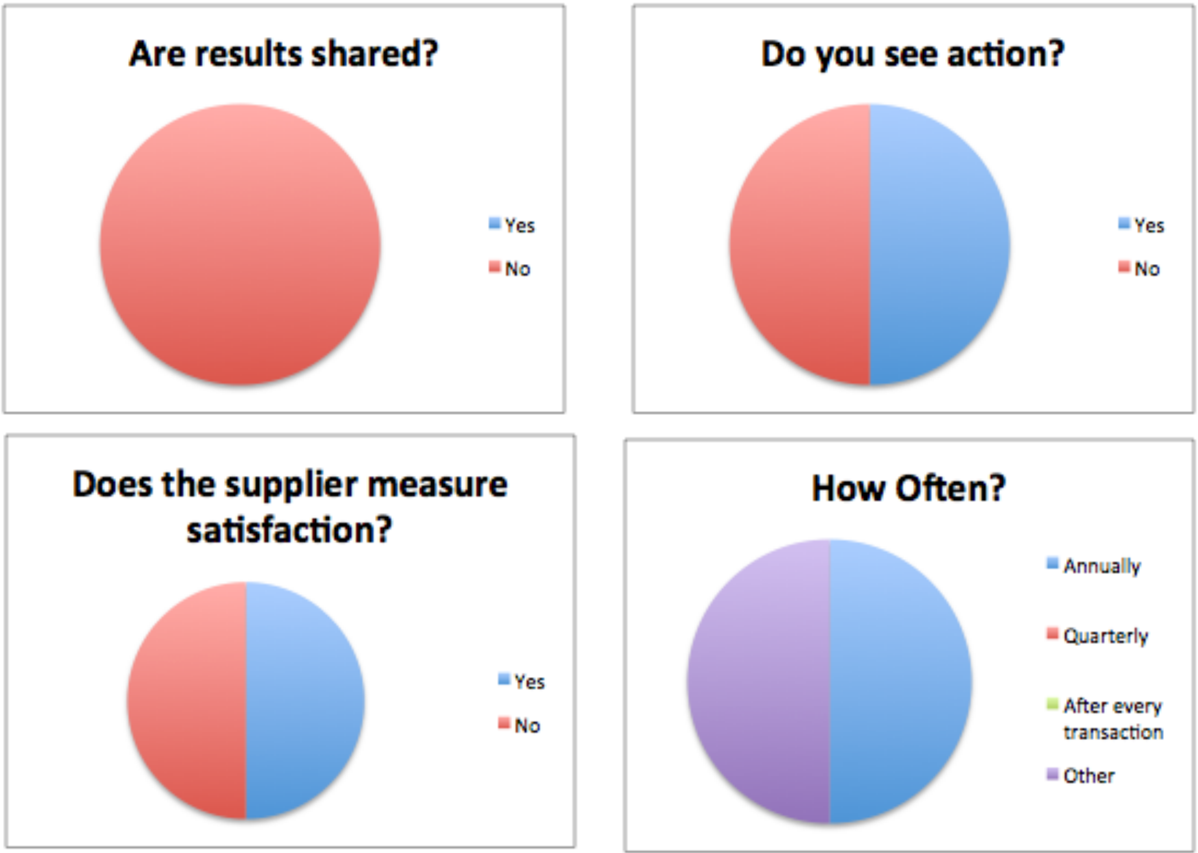

Figure 7: Overall customer satisfaction – SME Group

Insufficient responses to comment

Company (Supplier) Responses

No data available.

8.2. Key Relationship Factors

The seven factors rated most highly for the customers and for the company are shown in the figure and table below. We have also plotted the seven most highly ranked factors from previous research into B2B customer experience

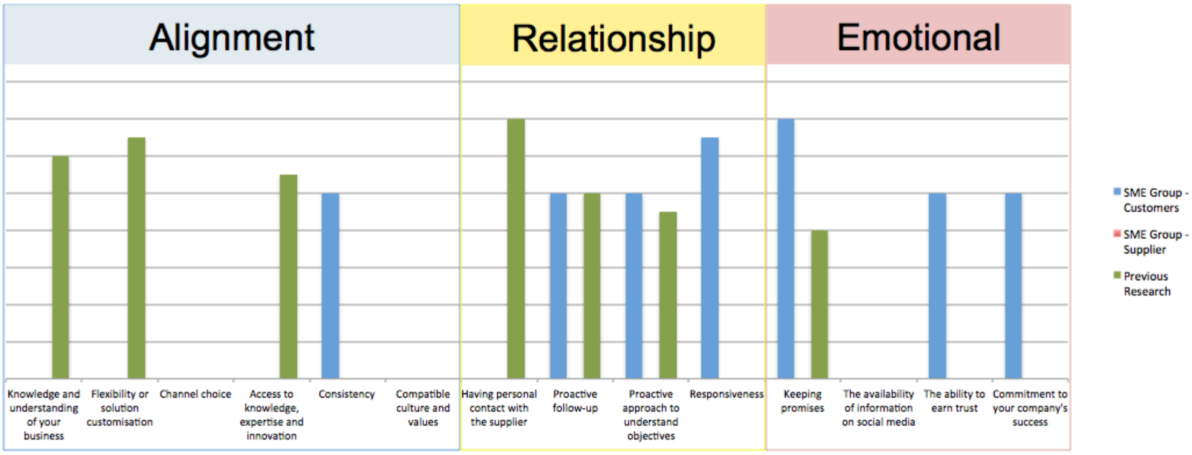

Figure 8: Key Relationship Factors – SME Group

Customers View	Company view
1. Keeping Promises (E)	No Data
2. Responsiveness (R)	
3= Consistency (A)	
Proactive follow-up (R)	
Proactive approach to understand objectives (R)	
Ability to earn trust (E)	
Commitment to your company's success (E)	

Table 5: Top 7 Factors – SME Group

Given the small number of responses, no further commentary is offered for the SME Group

8.3. Ease of Doing Business

We asked the customers how they would rate the company as a supplier with the same question and scale. Their rating came out at 3.5

Again, it would not be fair to comment on this result given the small number of responses.

There was no valid data collected from customers about the ease of doing business or suggestions for review on possible improvement areas.

8.4. Impact of personal and business relationship

No data collected.

8.5. Summary

There were insufficient responses from the SME Group to form any clear view.

9. Overall

Most of the data collected in the survey is relevant only at company level. The following subset of results from the analysis is included for completeness and can be used to make some general observations

9.1. Key Relationship Factors

The seven factors rated most highly for the customers and for the company are shown in the figure and table below. We have also plotted the seven most highly ranked factors from previous research into B2B customer experience.

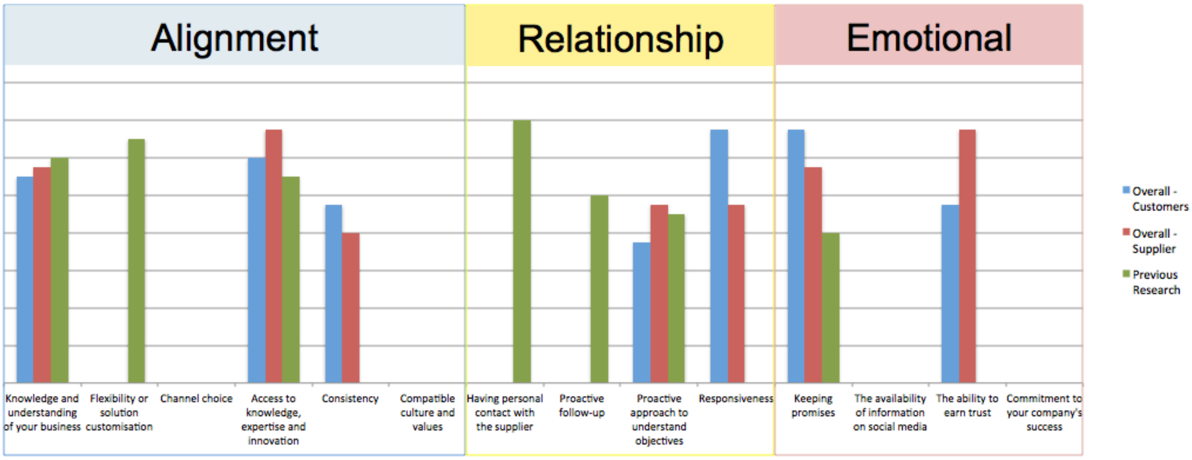

Figure 9: Key Relationship Factors – Overall

Customers View	Company view
1= Responsiveness (R)	1= Access to knowledge, expertise & innovation (A)
Keeping Promises (E)	Ability to earn trust (E)
3. Access to knowledge, expertise & innovation (A)	3= Knowledge & understanding of your business (A)
4. Knowledge & understanding of your business (A)	Keeping Promises (E)
5= Consistency (A)	5= Proactive approach to understand objectives (R)
Ability to earn trust (E)	Responsiveness (R)
7. Proactive approach to understand objectives (R)	7. Consistency (A)

Table 6: Top 7 Factors - Overall

9.2. Ease of Doing Business

We asked the company respondents to rate themselves on a seven-point scale for the question "How easy are you to do business with"?

We also asked the customers how they would rate the company as a supplier with the same question and scale.

The figure below summarises our findings.

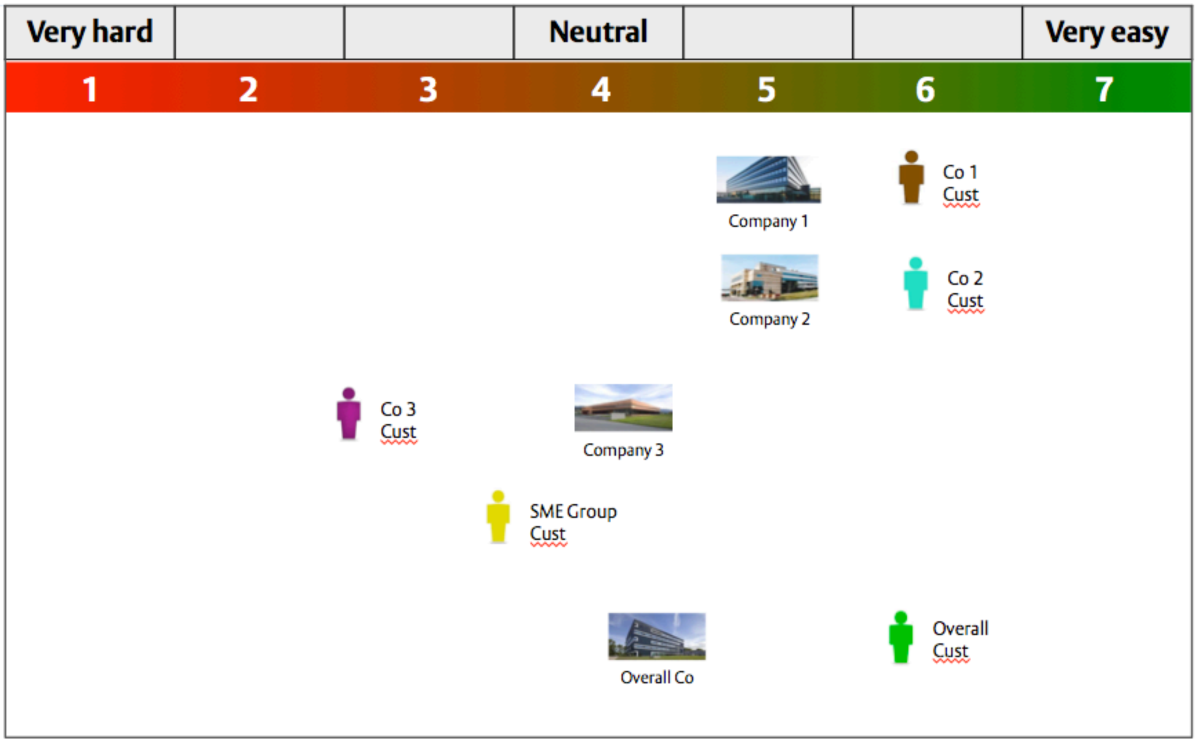

Figure 10: Ease of doing business – Overall

So, in general, the customer believes that the company is easier to do business with than the company does. This is consistent with previous research ("Measuring B2B Customer Satisfaction And Customer Effort"; Harrington & Bryan; Dec 2013) and illustrates that the company tends to underrate itself because of internal understanding of some of the difficulties that customers face,

The 'ease of doing business' approach is an excellent vehicle for identifying areas where improvements can be made but is only appropriate at a company level.

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The Henley Centre for Customer Management

The primary objective of the Henley Centre for Customer Management is to promote customer focus and service excellence best practice through observing practice in leading companies and synthesising this into useful knowledge that helps members to improve their own customer management and customer service plans and implementations.

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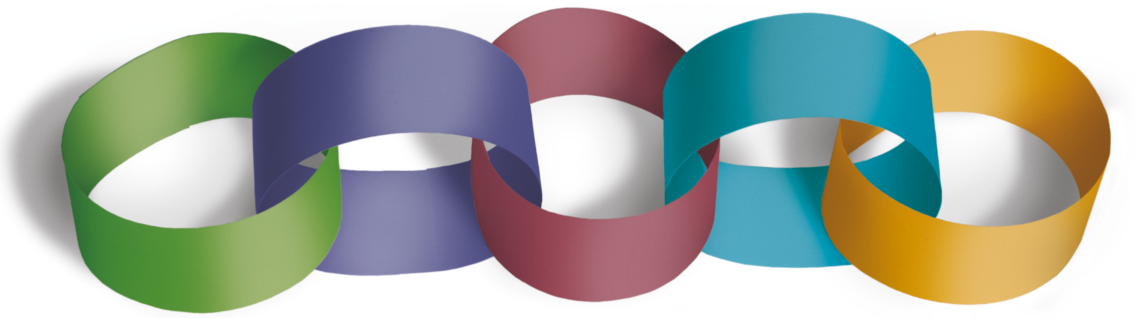

Centre Contacts:

Director	**Assistant Director**	**Client Relationship Executive**
Professor Moira Clark	Tony Harrington	Sandy Martin
Tel: 01491 571494	Tel: 07815 938534	Tel: 01491 418710
moira.clark@henley.ac.uk	tony_harrington@btinternet.com	sandy.martin@henley.ac.uk

Henley Business School,
Greenlands, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 3AU

Maximising Value through Relationships