



# CHANGE TOOLKIT

## Tool: Customer Feedback

Used in:  
**DISENGAGE**

### My Notes

### What is it?

For most organisations customer feedback is constant. And it's what keeps them in business and moving forward. Sales figures are feedback. Complaints are feedback. In between those two extremes are all the formal consultation methods such as surveys, polls, bulletin boards, focus groups, user groups etc. designed to tell you what customers think about your products, services or people. Increasingly these are supplemented by informal channels, notably social media: what are people saying about you on Twitter? Do you have a Facebook fan page, or are you all the rage on mumsnet?

All of this feedback has its uses, but in principle it is telling you three things: who are your customers; what are they like and how do you appear to them? Knowing this means you can decide whether or not you're happy to appear this way to these groups of customers. If you're not happy you can work either to change your customers' minds about you, or to change your own minds about yourselves! Either way it's called re-positioning.

### Why use it in a change process?

You're probably a customer focussed organisation and the change you're engaged in is all about making sure you meet customer needs and exceed customer expectations. So you've planned your latest changes based on what your customers are saying, and you'll go back to them when you've **Implemented** the changes and before you **Embed** them (just in case they're not what people expected).

So far, that's just good business. But there's another part of the change curve where customer feedback can be extremely useful.

In the **Disengage** stage the **Change Leader** is looking for ways to get people to see that where they currently are is not the best place to be. Often, we're all blinkered by our own entrenched view of the status quo. Another perspective can be very useful; from a business point of view, none more so than some well-deployed customer feedback. Remember, customer feedback is all about how 'they' see 'us'. And this is one instance where the customer is always right: no matter what we think we're offering in terms of product or service levels, if the customer sees something different their view wins when it comes to deciding whether they take us up on our offer, or do so in a positive frame of mind.

## What do I need to do?

### 1. Get the full picture, as the customers see it.

As a change agent, talk to the people in your organisation who understand the customers best. That's probably going to be a mixture of people, and might include the marketing, communications or performance teams that carry out formal research, the people delivering services and the people who get the informal feedback or can observe customer behaviour (for example, reception staff). Find out what all these people know. What customer feedback do they have? What areas does it cover? How fresh is it? How accurate is it? Which customer groups does it cover? What picture does it paint of the organisation or its services and people?

### 2. Get the organisation to recognise itself in the picture!

Faced with the tricky task of getting people to 'let go' – to disengage from their current position – try to find those nuggets of customer feedback which show starkly what we look like to the people we are serving and which pose the challenge 'this is where we really are...is this really where we want to be?'

For service industries, and particularly the public sector, this approach is a useful one to have ready for those teams who make a lot of noise about being customer-centric and who use potential negative impact on customers to justify their resistance to change. To be able to gently persuade them that the customers themselves don't value the status quo can be invaluable in restarting progress along the change curve.