The Five Steps to Ask for Client Feedback to Improve Your Business.

Honest client feedback gives you an opportunity to improve ‘YOU’

There’s no denying the importance for continuing to improve what you do and how you do it. You learn and keep up with the latest business news and ‘tools’ and techniques to help your clients achieve what they pay you for, but just **reading more** isn’t enough. And if you fall into this trap, you may be ignoring one of the most important parts of your professional service: *what your clients actually want and in turn what they say about you.*

In other words, what is your client feedback and **general satisfaction with your service** like? In any business, this is incredibly important.

Most mentors, coaches and other professional service organisations take time to reflect and assess their style and or effectiveness at some point in the year. As a member of the [Association of Business Mentors](https://associationofbusinessmentors.org) I’m fortunate to be able to attend a reflections retreat twice a year where, as professional business mentors and coaches, we question our own style, techniques and are challenged by our peers in what we do and how we perform. I would strongly recommend you join us, or a similar retreat in your own sector. Regularly reflecting and assessing yourself and your business is an amazingly refreshing (and often brave) form of feedback. When you analyze key areas, you find weak points and gaps in your understanding and methods and can quickly take action to improve upon them.

*Another way and one of the simplest is to ask your clients for feedback.*

Asking for feedback can be difficult at first

As you’ve probably found out in the past, just asking your client how you’re doing face-to-face can sometimes be both ineffective and or really scary.

That latter point has to do with our ego and or shyness, the fear of criticism or even failure is widespread as it manifests itself within many areas of our lives and permeates into our businesses.

We’ve all been there: Can’t get a client signed up? You “fail” at sales and marketing. Can’t get a client to do what you suggest? You “fail” at motivating and working with your client. These are perhaps extreme examples, but hopefully you understand what I’m saying.

As a result, you may not want to know what your clients actually say about you, in fear of risking a bruised ego. But if we are not aware of how we are perceived by our clients, potential clients, friends, family, or even that random guy on the street, then how can we hope to better ourselves just as we constantly preach that our clients should do?

Are you okay with just being “good”? I hope the answer to this is No! If you want to move from “good” to “great”, you really do need to seek out what you can do to improve yourself and your business.

5 steps to simply and effectively ask for client feedback

While there are many ways to solicit feedback, one of my favorite ways is to use an online survey, like **Survey Monkey** or **Typeform**. They’re reliable and reputable and offer free and paid plans.

One plus of using an online survey is that you can send standardised questions and gain feedback that can readily be evaluated as to your style, competency, effectiveness. Also, if you need to change anything in any way. You can make them anonymous or choose not to, I personally prefer to have a direct quote from a client I can use, to turn it into a case study, to prove to my potential clients that what I do is tangible, transparent, gains them benefit and of great value.

The benefit of an electronic form also means that you’re not asking clients face to face, perhaps putting them in a difficult position that would rather not have been put in.

The opportunity for this ‘distant’ approach allows your clients to be more open and honest with you, and ideally, provide you with more constructive criticism. The following is what I have found to be the best ways of going about putting together the perfect survey.

Step 1. It’s not about Ego

Don’t be afraid to find out certain things about yourself from the client’s perspective. It’s scary at first, but it’s always good to put yourself out there and open yourself up to criticism. It’s not about boosting your ego. It’s about **growing your business**.

*And, good, honest feedback helps you grow.*

Step 2. Figure out what you want to know

Really think about your questions but be sure to pose them so that they provide valuable insight to your services and business, not just stroke your ego. A question like, “Do you think I’m the best?” has no place in a feedback survey!

You want to ensure that your questions allow for high-quality answers. Spend a day or two just jotting things down you want to improve on, then take these ideas and break them down into smaller, simple questions. Think about things like your communication or coaching–is it clear and easy to understand? Or maybe your programs themselves–are your programs easy to follow? What about your relationship with your clients? Do your clients trust you to solve their problems?

Remember, you want your survey to be valuable to you, but at the same time, not bog your client down with complicated questions. Plan to have a mix of multiple choice, ranking scales, and open-ended questions.

Step 3. Compose your questions thoughtfully

It’s challenging to write a good question that’s fair and doesn’t bias your client’s answer. The first thing is to use simple, direct language, but to be as specific as possible. Here’s an example of what I mean:

*“Do you have a strategic plan?”*

Versus

*“How often do you reflect on your business strategy?”*

The former is simple, yes, (or no) but gives you no additional helpful information, whereas the latter is more objective and is actually insightful. Avoid cluttering your questions with multiple ideas; focus on one thing per question.

Also, avoid “leading questions”, which subtly corners someone to thinking only about the options you provided. An example is something like, “*Do you think it’s better to measure your business progress once month or once a quarter?*”

Overall, you’re better off asking more open-ended questions like “*What do you find most helpful about working with me?*”, “*What do you wish I could help you solve?*”, or “*What’s one thing you’ve always wanted to tell me about my approach but haven’t yet?*”

These are more revealing questions, and since the survey can be digital, your clients are less likely to have guarded responses.

Step 4. Introduce the survey to your clients

Make sure that you introduce the survey by letting your clients know why surveying them is both important to you and them. A lot of people tend to disregard these types of things because they’re busy or feel like it’s not that important. Let your clients know that you want to improve their experience and results and that their feedback can help you do that. Additionally, give them a heads up about your survey by saying something at the end of your session, for example. You can say:

***“We’ve been working together for some time now and I really want to make sure that I’m doing my very best to help you. Will you help me help you by filling out a quick online survey? I’ll send it to you this afternoon.”***

They’ll usually say yes, and this simple “commitment” helps them remember to fill out your survey and give constructive feedback. If you’re mentoring or working with clients online, you can send an email with a subject line, like “Help me help your business…” Remember to include a soft deadline, too.

Step 5. Collect responses and organise them into information you can act on

Two weeks should be sufficient time to allow for a response. Don’t worry if you don’t hear from them immediately. If people get a text with a link to a survey while they’re at work, for example, you can most likely count on them disregarding and forgetting about it by the end of their day. So gently send a reminder after a few days. Sunday afternoon or even Saturday mornings are a good time to send texts or emails out.

If after the first couple of times your client doesn’t respond, don’t keep asking them. Not everyone will fill it out, and that’s okay. The ones who do truly have something to say and care about your service will.

Review the responses with an open mind and read what your clients have to say about you. You may be shocked by how many nice things you read, but for the negative remarks that do show up, write them down. Chances are, you might find some similarities or patterns, so be sure to take a note of them to the very detail of how they talk about their problems or issues–whether they’re related to you or not.

Now you have crucial information at your fingertips on how to improve both your business and yourself. And that’s important. Remember, you are after growth, so any feedback from the people that use your services and interact with you is good feedback. And…

***Be the best that you can be for your clients.***

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