

LaForest  
COACHING & CONSULTING



*A Remarkable Company  
is Customer Led*

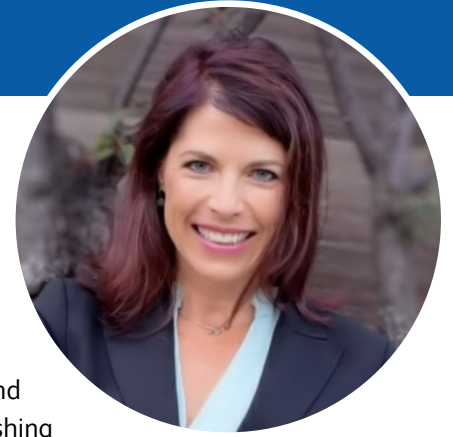
*And Customer Satisfaction is a Two-sided Coin!*

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*Helping  
executives and  
entrepreneurs  
achieve results  
through a  
people-centered  
approach*

### Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at [Sara@LaForestConsulting.com](mailto:Sara@LaForestConsulting.com) or via [LinkedIn](#).

## *Improving Performance*

## *Navigating Transitions*

## *Accelerating Results*

No business leader wakes up every morning and dreams of building an average company. No one hopes that their customer service is under-whelming and that their employees will be uninspired to do their best. Yet, often a chasm exists between wanting and doing.

How do you become a remarkable company? It starts and ends with your customers.

Some of the work that we enjoy most is conducting customer satisfaction surveys. Yet, it can be difficult for businesses to receive feedback from their customers, as it may be feedback they may not want to hear. We help business owners and leaders who are courageous enough to test their thinking and assumptions regarding what their customers truly believe, experience and value.

The objectives are simple and straightforward:

- To find out how the business is perceived in the market
- To learn what else the business can do to better serve customers
- To develop approaches to fill the gaps in customer needs, interests and expectations

For the businesses we work with, this leads to reinvention of their businesses products, services or delivery, which leads to growth and sustainability.

Because knowing more about the customer is not always easy to hear and can cause change, we often see companies failing to engage their customers. When companies don't seriously explore customer feedback and perceptions, they miss an important opportunity to grow. Too often leaders only focus growth strategies on their internal beliefs and assumptions about customer satisfaction and needs. While internal assessments are helpful to anticipate customer satisfaction, the only person who can honestly tell you what the customer believes is the customer. As long as you are willing to listen and to act on what you hear, hearing the voice of the customer represents a growth strategy. And responding to what the customer is asking for can make you remarkable.

So, do you really know your customer's perception and level of satisfaction with your business?

Now before you answer, think about this metaphor: the word "customer" represents a coin and coins have two sides. It's easy to think of your customers as representing a coin-right? (Cha Ching). But the customer we are talking about here represents only one of your two customers- the external customer. The other side, represents your internal customers-your employees. To become a remarkable company, you must know, understand and respond to both sides of the coin.

This involves:

1. Client satisfaction-how your clients and customers experience satisfaction with your company, products and services, as delivered by your employees.
2. Employee satisfaction-that is, how your employees perceive the company and experience working for the company, and what their resulting satisfaction is.

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What customer satisfaction means to you, personally, or to your management team, doesn't trump "what is" in the eyes of the customers-your external and internal customers.

So if your journey is to become remarkable, then start by understanding your customers and prioritize what actions to take based on what you've learned. In business terms, asking your external customer provides you information on your brand perception in the market, and asking your internal customers (employees) provides you with information on your company's culture. Brand is the promise you make to the market; culture is how you deliver on that promise. If you miss one, you miss remarkable.

To do this, requires "backbone", it requires courage, as you will test your thinking, assumptions and hopes regarding what your customers truly believe and value about you.

Do you know, specifically, what your clients believe and say about you? Effective client survey instruments include questions about your company's:

- Communication
- Responsiveness
- Quality of work and people
- Timeliness in delivery
- Resource management
- Perceived value

And, at the end of the day, what you really need to know about your clients and external customers and respond to is four things:

1. Point of Entry - How did they get to you?
2. Overall satisfaction with your products and services.
3. Your Net Promoter Score (NPS)-that is, a clients' likelihood to recommend or refer your company to colleagues, friends and family,
4. And what your customer would like you to do differently or additionally to better meet their needs.

Effective Climate Survey instruments (Employee Surveys) include questions on:

- Mission, Vision and Values
- Company Direction
- Communication
- Culture
- Retention (Loyalty)
- Opportunities for Growth and Development
- Leadership Perception
- Rewards and Recognition

Conducting a Customer Satisfaction Program is a differentiator. Its overarching purpose is to help you stay close to your clients, which will help you build upon your clients' satisfaction and loyalty. And there is a long list of benefits inherent to the process. It helps you:

- Ensure regular touch points with your clients
- Drive industry measurements
- Build and strengthen your client relationships
- Better manage project methodology and delivery efficiency
- Foster quicker course correction
- Better monitor the performance, talent and leadership of your people (important for leadership and succession development and talent management)
- Continually build your client outcomes portfolio (work examples and endorsements)

Employee satisfaction surveys, the flip side of the coin, are similar. These are focused on building a remarkable company to attract, keep and grow great talent. Questions we use, as outlined above, have parallel survey elements to the external customer survey. However, these questions instead focus on the internal perception of the company, based on its management and the environment that creates and drives the company's outcomes.

So, how close are you to your customers? What have you done to know their answers to the above questions (as opposed to what you think they are)? Next, what are you doing about that knowledge to make you remarkable?

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