

Customer satisfaction report

Adrian Young – technical author

The results

Adrian Young earned four 'A' ratings¹ and two 'B+' ratings² in interviews with six customers who had commissioned publications in 2003. The interviewer, Valerie Cowley, recorded all responses and the interviewees signed off her summaries as a correct record.

Interviews

This is a sample of the comments from the interviews and includes the few negative points mentioned.

Criteria	Comments
Understanding your business	His understanding was obvious from the outset. I wouldn't have guessed his full experience at the sharp end of construction, but it has been significant.
Creativity in presenting information	Yes he is creative, and in interviews he knew what to focus on, how to pull out information, and how to steer things. He has a good eye for design.
Standards of information gathering	He brought his own systems and information set up to bear on our work, very much outlining what we were up to and where the problem areas lay. Far better than other writers.
Readability	His style is concise and slightly engineering orientated. It never includes flannel or padding, which for us is essential.
Accuracy	For an Aussie he didn't do a bad job. He is very thorough and I have not found more than a few small typo errors. ---> ACTION
Helpfulness	I would give 15 out of 10. He helps the rest of the team, and not just the person he is working with at the time.
Inspirational content	Ultimately this is what we want the case studies to do (be inspirational), and this is what he can offer.
Professionalism	He cares about reputation and I am particularly impressed by his dress code. I have found some authors very laid back and casual.
Value for money	There are many who try to get more money and do less of a job.
Keeping to budget	If there were difficulties he would flag them early enough to make judgements about budget and was always confident and reliable.
Keeping to time	We were late for a few interviews because Adrian had underestimated the time to get there. It would have been useful to set a frame of reference at meetings for everyone, being very explicit as to what the deadlines would be for each party and what each of us had to achieve. ---> ACTION
Reporting	These reports are good – how the cases are going, what the costs are so far, and what is still to come. We never need to chase him for information.
Promoting your business	He was one of the cornerstones and I don't think nearly as much would have been achieved without him. The quality and quantity of case studies would have suffered and costs would have escalated without his contribution.

¹ A = excellent all round
(B = satisfactory in all key areas, C = satisfactory in most key areas, D = satisfactory in a few key areas, E = unsatisfactory)

² The two B+ scores were awarded reluctantly, both erring towards an A. One interviewee said his instinct was to never give the top mark and the other said giving an A does not encourage improvement.

Interviews

continued

Criteria	Comments
Scope of services	I see him as an all-rounder. Whatever we wanted, he has been able to supply. We haven't had to go elsewhere.
Strengths	Knowledge of the industry, an enquiring mind, persistence in seeing things through, and an ability to write.
Weaknesses	He doesn't market himself, or indeed the materials he has produced, as well as he could. There's potential to build up a very good client list. ---> ACTION
Recommendation	Yes, he is a good author and delivers what you want. Yes I would definitely recommend him. Yes I would be very keen – even if I moved to another organisation, he is the writer I would want.

Actions

Weaknesses	Improvements
Typo errors	This appears to be a process problem. The technical writing service already includes sub-editing and proof reading by an independent writer at 'text for approval' stage. <i>ACTION: Remind customers more explicitly about the need to approve the text at this stage, because later amendments are disruptive and increase the risk of errors.</i> <i>ACTION: Introduce a further proof reading process before the finished work is issued for approval in PDF format.</i>
Keeping to time	<i>ACTION: Double check the best available travel information and increase the margin for delay.</i> <i>ACTION: Label every project with an expected completion date and negotiate clear milestones with everyone involved.</i>
Marketing	There has been an over-reliance on a small number of clients. This has also led to the misleading impression that case study writing is the main service offered. Many customers have commented on the strength of the alliance with Stables Studio and Citrus Print Management, but I have not allowed sufficient time for marketing. <i>ACTION: Select exhibitions, conferences and meetings where potential customers will be and be proactive in marketing The Stables Team.</i>
Training and development	These actions arise from my own observations, not customers' criticisms. <i>ACTION: Focus on writing in 'Plain English'; take training offered by the Plain English Campaign.</i> <i>ACTION: Keep abreast of technology and tools, and follow the trend towards publishing more on the Internet and less in print.</i>