



SmithBucklin is the world's largest association management and professional services company. Founded in 1949, the company provides full-service management and outsourcing services to trade associations, professional societies, technology user groups, corporations, government institutes/agencies and other nonprofit organizations. SmithBucklin's mission is to drive growth for its client organizations and provide uncompromised stewardship for their long-term prosperity. SmithBucklin is 100 percent employee owned.

Client Satisfaction Surveys. An Action-Oriented Survey Process.

Transition to Sirota

SmithBucklin began conducting regular client satisfaction surveys in 2000. The process involved annual international surveys of a single representative at a selection of SmithBucklin's client organizations. The representative responded on behalf of the board of each client organization. Results were provided to account executives and a senior team of client management executives. Although a good questionnaire had been developed, the survey process itself limited SmithBucklin's ability to focus actions around client sub-groups and key drivers of attitudinal and business outcomes.

In 2008 SmithBucklin ran its first client satisfaction survey in partnership with Sirota. Having established a consistent surveying and reporting routine around a good questionnaire over the previous 8 years, SmithBucklin was looking to deepen and expand their understanding of client experiences.

A Quickly Growing Partnership

SmithBucklin and Sirota share a set of fundamental values around partnership and client service excellence, so it was no surprise that our survey partnership grew quickly in 2008. We took on a lot in the first year, including expanding the audience, revising the questionnaire, employing a new surveying methodology, reporting results differently, and conducting new analyses. Julie Silverstein, SmithBucklin President and COO, noted: "We partnered with Sirota to make our client satisfaction assessment program best-in-class. The Sirota team listened to our specific needs and challenges and designed a new process that allowed us new insights into our clients' experiences. Those insights helped us deliver in new and meaningful ways on our commitment to excellence in client service. Thank you!"

Expanding the Audience and Employing New Surveying Methodology. In the past, surveys were mailed to a single representative from each client organization, who would respond on the behalf of that client organization's Board. In 2008 Sirota directly sent individualized emails to multiple clients from each association. We pre-coded survey links to allow us to link the respondents back to other databases for predictive analyses. The number of total respondents increased over 1000% from 2007 to 2008, and the median response per client organization increased from one (1) to eight (8).

Revising the Questionnaire. The questionnaire had been refined regularly over the years and required only minor adjustments. Sirota interviewed several clients and account executives before revising the questions. Ultimately, we changed the wording of some questions to improve our ability to interpret the responses to them, and also added questions in order to expand the range of covered topics.

Reporting Results Differently, with Enhanced Analysis. Results were previously reported as means on survey items across all client organizations. With the vastly increased sample of respondents, Sirota was able to present results in terms of the percent of respondents who were very favorable, favorable, neutral, and unfavorable. The analyses in 2008 provided new insights into where to focus improvement efforts. Analyses measured the impact of local and global issues on client satisfaction and business outcomes. We also segmented these percentages by key client and client organization attributes, as well as by each client organization itself, allowing SmithBucklin to focus improvement efforts on the right clients.

In Summary

Justin Black, Sirota's project lead, commented: "SmithBucklin was a true partner with Sirota in the survey program evolution. SmithBucklin already had exceptionally strong relationships with clients and a clear sense of purpose. With the new survey process and vastly improved data utilization, they were able to deepen their understanding of client perceptions and behavior. SmithBucklin's leaders were highly engaged in the process and successfully took action on key issues."