NPS Best Practices: Setting-Up the NPS Question
NPS, or Net Promoter Score, is a means of measuring loyalty based on one survey item: a customer’s “likelihood to recommend”. The rating scale associated with NPS is based on an 11-point scale that stretches from 0-10. Customers who rate their “likelihood to recommend” (LTR) 0-6 are named “detractors; customers who rate 7 or 8 are named “passives” and those who rate 9 or 10 are “promoters”. A Net Promoter Score is derived by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoter. Consistent implementation between organizations leveraging NPS as a metric is critical for comparison and benchmarking purposes.

**APPROPRIATE SURVEY TYPES**

The Net Promoter Score is best derived from relationship surveys, as NPS is a “loyalty” metric. Loyalty should be based on the overall relationship the respondent has with the organization, not based on a single transaction or event. However, the NPS question can also be administered in transactional studies so long as the NPS question context is positioned as evaluating the entire organization/brand, not a single transaction or event. Companies should avoid the pitfall of thinking of NPS as a measure of a single transaction or event itself or that, employees involved in that touchpoint should be held accountable for that metric. Keep in mind – NPS is a company/brand loyalty metric – not a metric designed to measure the performance of a single transaction or event.

**SETTING-UP THE SCALE**

In order for you to remain consistent with globally-recognized NPS best practices, it is strongly recommended you use the widely used NPS scale ranging from 0-10, where “0” is “Not At All Likely” and “10” is “Extremely Likely”. The scale is to be anchored and labeled on each end; no mid-point labels should exist. Do not use any variation of color-coding on the scale to aid the respondent in their rating decision. The latter two practices mentioned can inspire the respondent to potentially form an opinion that didn’t otherwise exist, ultimately creating bias. Try to keep the NPS scale a neutral color or a color that is consistent with the overall color scheme of your survey. Additionally, is it recommended you avoid anything other than text labels, such as, smiley faces, frowning faces, thumbs up/down, etc. – as some respondents may perceive the meaning of these symbols differently than others and again, creating potential bias.

**Where In Your Survey You Should Ask the NPS Question**

Like other outcome metrics, the “likelihood to recommend” question is best asked as one of the first questions in the survey. The reason behind this is, it is important to collect from the customer their most unbiased opinions/perceptions about the overall relationship prior to asking them specific questions about specific things that may potentially put the respondent in a different frame of mind, where they may form a different opinion, simply based on what you made them think about by asking them those specific questions. Ask the NPS question as one of the first questions in the surveys or immediately after pre-qualifying questions, if applicable.

**How to ask the NPS Question**

There are a number of different ways to write almost every question. However, to remain consistent with nearly every other organization leveraging NPS as a metric, keep it simple and straight-forward: “On a 0-10 scale, how likely is it that you would recommend [company/brand] to a friend of colleague?” Writing the question like this will help you compare “apples to apples” when benchmarking against your competition. Later we will talk about follow-up questions.

**Use of Open-Ends**

Follow-up open-end questions is where the rubber hits the road. To get the most value out of open-ends, it is critical they are asked the right way. Remember, these are “open-ended” questions so, a question where the answer can be “yes” or “no” is not an acceptable practice. Here is an excellent example of the first open-end question you should ask: “What is the primary reason for your rating?”. This question is simple, fast for the respondent to read and it encourages the respondent to explain their thought process at the time they selected the rating. If you really want to engage the
Once you start collecting verbatim responses by asking open-ends, you can then analyze comments that will lead you to ways you may be able to improve in many different areas throughout your organization.

respondent, consider piping-in their actual rating into the question. Then, for those respondents who selected a rating of 6 or below (detractors), ask another follow-up question: “What can we do to improve?”. Again, this is a simple question that prompts the respondent to further explain what process in your organization may have failed. To maximize the values of the NPS question, you must ask at least the first question stated above. Open-end questions give you the qualitative viewpoint that the rating alone cannot provide. Once you start collecting verbatim responses by asking open-ends, you can then analyze comments that will lead you to ways you may be able to improve in many different areas throughout your organization. Furthermore, verbatim responses will also provide you the data you need to close the loop on critical customer feedback.

Close the Loop

Do not implement NPS measurement without implementing a robust closed-loop program. Your closed-loop program should have the capabilities to trigger alerts to the right people at the right time, based on customer feedback. We recommend contacting as many detractors possible to resolve their problem the best you can, but don’t spend all your time on customers who rated you low. Often times, it is not likely that you will convert a Detractor to become a Promoter. It is much more likely that you will convert a Passive to a Promoter – so spend most of your time wowing your Passives by following up with them and demonstrating you value their business. Then, do whatever it takes to continue wowing your existing Promoter and learn what you are doing right for your Promoter so you can replicate that behavior to convert even more Passives to Promoter.

Not a Stand-Alone Metric

Although NPS is a metric many organizations like to track due to its simplicity and the fact it is fairly easy to use when benchmarking against your competitors, it is recommended that you do not use NPS as a stand-alone metric. NPS has certain limitations and if NPS is the only metric you track, there are potential risks of losing sight of your primary objectives and insightful respondent feedback. In order to maintain a holistically successful CX program, it is a best practice to measure additional specific metrics and attributes that lend greater visibility into certain aspects of the respondent relationship. Specific metrics will be unique to every organization, but consider also tracking Overall Satisfaction, for example, which you can then tie performance attributes into a Key Driver Analysis. OSAT, as an accompanying metric can provide greater visibility and granularity into satisfaction/dissatisfaction with an organization, brand or a particular experience – so consider including another metric like OSAT in your surveys to dig deeper into specifics along with tracking NPS as your higher-level metric. Among other metrics, you may also consider including questions that lead to predictability, such as, intent to purchase/re-purchase. Ultimately, it is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each metric, including NPS, so you don’t miss out on insights from all aspects of the respondent relationship.
In order to maintain a holistically successful CX program, it is a best practice to measure additional specific metrics and attributes that lend greater visibility into certain aspects of the respondent relationship. Specific metrics will be unique to every organization.

CONCLUSION

The Net Promoter Score is a valuable metric for tracking customer loyalty. Yet, it requires tact in order to harness its full potential. It should be used in relationship surveys, at the beginning, worded in an unbiased manner, and leave room for open ended questions. Based on the feedback received from the survey, action should always be taken to close the loop with customers. Although NPS is a robust benchmarking tool to gauge customer sentiment, it shouldn’t be used alone. Consider coupling it with other metrics such as Overall Satisfaction. Doing these things along with monitoring, measuring, and managing other CX channels will result in a more holistic view of your customer’s loyalty and provide further direction on how you can improve your customer experience (CX) program.