

➤ The importance of excellent customer service

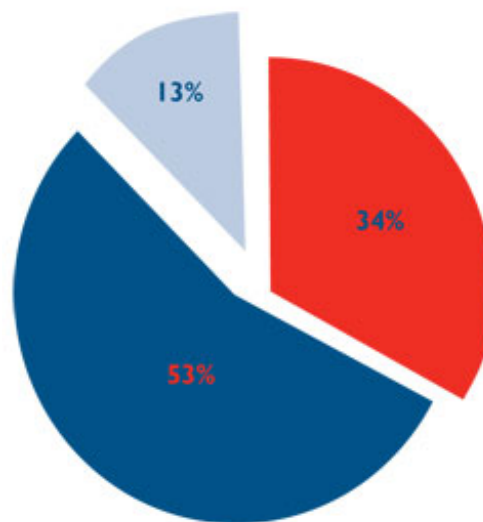
Market research: how to find out if customers are happy

It is important for Portakabin to find out what inspires loyalty in its customers so it can encourage them to remain so. One way is to see how many are willing to come back for repeat purchases, but it is also vital to know why they return. This is the reason Portakabin carries out thorough market research.

Market research is the collection of data that can be used to see how well a business is doing in its chosen market. This can be collected through primary research or secondary research and can be either qualitative or quantitative.

Quantitative data was supplied when Portakabin surveyed its loyal customers to find out what factors distinguished the company. Most clients (53%) said the top factor was the experience.

This related to how the customer felt they were treated during the process of hiring or buying a Portakabin building. Value was the most important aspect to 34% of clients, while just 13% thought that product was vital - this is because they had come to expect top quality buildings from Portakabin as a given. They were therefore most impressed by the level of personal interaction with staff and with the overall level of support they received.



Over the past four years, Portakabin has carried out a customer satisfaction interview with the vast majority of its clients. This asks questions on all aspects of customer service and records scores on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is very poor and 10 is excellent).

Questions are asked in four categories:

- * Customer experience with sales and administration - the company's response to an enquiry, the level of service received, the speed of a response and how clearly information was presented.
- * Delivery and installation - the service provided by the installation team and the haulier.
- * The building itself - whether it was clean and fault-free on delivery and if not, what steps were taken to put things right.
- * The client's overall impression of the service - the courtesy and technical knowledge of Portakabin staff, value for money and whether they received 'peace of mind'.

The scale of responses provides quantitative data, showing how well the company is doing in each area. Across all questions, it has improved in four years from an average score of 8.2 to 9. Portakabin uses the individual responses to spot extremely good service so staff can be appropriately praised. It also uses the results to quickly tackle problems should they arise.