

Using real time customer feedback to gain a competitive advantage

Budget Car Rental uses real time customer feedback to decrease customer response time and build a national average performance benchmark

As part of the global Budget organization, Budget Rent-a-Car in South Africa operates a fleet of over 6,500 cars and a large network of 66 branches strategically located throughout South Africa, Namibia and Botswana.

In the highly competitive car rental business, Budget strives to consistently deliver world-class customer service and continuously find ways to further improve the customers' experience. With the relative ease of moving to a competitor, the need to retain existing customers and build brand loyalty is critical for success.

It is especially important to immediately identify customers who are dissatisfied with one or other aspect of their experience with Budget, and rapidly attempt to address their concerns if at all possible. As Budget caters primarily to the business traveler, the lifetime value of each customer is substantial and every effort is made to retain customers.

Overhaul needed

In an attempt to get customer feedback, Budget in the past has used pre-paid reply cards. The effectiveness of this method to capture and immediately respond to customer issues was very poor and the overall response rate very low.

After being introduced to the Touchwork Customer Experience Measurement Solution, the forward looking Budget corporate customer service management team realized the potential of the system to instantly capture and provide real time customer feedback using its cell phone based SMS text messaging features. It also provided the ability to immediately act on negative feedback and address customers concerns. Budget realized that this would resolve many of the shortcomings of the reply card process and enable it to further differentiate itself from competitors.

A customer satisfaction campaign was launched in February 2004 and has been in operation since then. The campaign is ongoing and forms a core part of Budget's customer satisfaction initiatives.

Six survey questions were decided on as representing the most critical issues related to a customer's experience. A simple YES/NO response to each question was deemed as adequate to identify service delivery issues and initiate follow up action.

Campaign Response

As an incentive to submit a response, customers are offered 50 miles with the Voyager frequent flyer program provided by South African Airways (SAA). As Budget caters primarily for business travellers and has a partnership with SAA, the majority of its customers are SAA Voyager members and the fifty miles was deemed to be a meaningful incentive representing the equivalent of a US\$100 credit card purchase.

Initial response rates have been obtained at a rate of over 200 per month. This represents a substantial increase over the number of responses (70 to 80) that were previously obtained using the reply cards.

Budget

GIVE US YOUR COMMENTS AND STAND A CHANCE TO WIN 1000 VOYAGER MILES - EVERY MONTH

PLUS Guaranteed 50 free Voyager Miles if you reply via SMS

Standard rate cost for SMS - NOT premium rate!
(depending on the type of contract, the SMS cost will range from free to a maximum of 75c).

Thank you for renting from Budget. It is our goal to provide you with complete satisfaction with each rental experience. To achieve this, your feedback is important to us. Would you therefore please take a moment to tell us about your rental experience, and in so doing, put yourself in line to win **1000 Voyager Miles in our monthly draw**. To send us your feedback, you may post your entry or hand it in at your nearest Budget office. **But**, if you send your reply via SMS, you will automatically earn 50 free Voyager Miles, as well as be entered into the monthly draw.

How to send your SMS and automatically earn 50 Voyager Miles.
Submit your comments via SMS to **083 406 6969** as follows:
1. Reply to questions One to Six. 2. Enter the branch code. 3. Enter the Budget car registration number. 4. Enter your SAA Voyager number. 5. (Optional) Enter your text message.

EXAMPLE: If you were happy with the service and would choose Budget again, your message would be as follows (in one message):

Questions 1 to 6	Branch code	Registration No.	SAA Voyager No.	Text message
999 999	JS	ABC123GP	12345	Great Service

Note: The above branch code is an example only. Please see below for the branch code of this branch. Spaces may be added between numbers. Only one SMS per rental.

	No	Yes
1 Did you receive fast and courteous service when you rented your car?	0	9
2 Did you receive fast and courteous service when you returned your car?	0	9
3 Were our people neat in appearance and pleasing in attitude?	0	9
4 Was your car clean inside and out?	0	9
5 Was your car in good mechanical condition?	0	9
6 Would you rent from Budget again?	0	9

Please insert this branch code if sending via SMS! JS

Please complete the following if posting your entry.

Any other comments _____

Name _____ e-mail _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Company _____

Rental Agreement number or your rental vehicle registration number _____

Figure 1: Car hanger used to get customer feedback

Over 90% of responses have indicated that customers are completely satisfied with their experience.

Responses with negative ratings have enabled Budget to obtain quantitative information regarding areas requiring attention. This includes both overall issues that must be addressed at a corporate level such as improving certain processes, procedures, etc., as well as issues at specific branches.

The most significant benefit has been the total surprise and positive reaction of customers when, after submitting a negative response, were immediately contacted by a manager to address their issues. In almost every case, customers who had indicated that they would not again rent from Budget were converted into repeat customers.

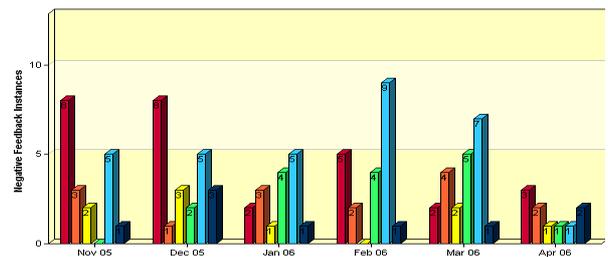


Figure 2: Graph showing negative responses by question over time

An extensive range of management reports were produced on the fly and could be viewed on the secure website, including:

- Response counts by branch, region and total
- Negative feedback weekly, monthly and total
- Negative feedback by branch, region and total
- Negative response spread by question

“Touchwork has enabled us to instantly react to dissatisfied customers and address their issues. This has greatly assisted our customer retention and satisfaction initiatives.”

*Bev Vorster
Business Support Manager*

Results

All the campaign objectives are being met and the overall performance of the Txtandtell system is very positive.

- The system is providing an additional channel to communicate with customers and help build relationships.
- The system has proven to be very effective and cost efficient for obtaining instant customer feedback.
- Budget able to respond immediately to dissatisfied customers to address their concerns thereby supporting customer retention initiatives.
- Immediate notification of branch, regional and head office management ensures full visibility of customer issues.
- Quantitative results are obtained for customer satisfaction measurements.
- Underperforming branches can be identified and enables Budget corporate to take corrective action.
- Store managers are immediately notified of dissatisfied customers and can take appropriate steps to address the issues and prevent recurrences.
- Branch managers can compare their performance with that of the national

average in an objective manner and identify areas for improvement.

- Budget is being seen to be an innovator in a very competitive market.

About Budget

Budget car rental South Africa has established a comprehensive presence throughout Southern Africa with over 92 branches located in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. Their network covers all major airports in South Africa ensuring convenient access to pick-up and drop-off locations.

Budget car hire South Africa is committed to service excellence and customer relationships, placing a great emphasis on maintaining high global standards across all the Budget car rental branches in South Africa.

About Touchwork

Touchwork is a global leader in mobile actionable intelligence solutions that help organisations worldwide capture, analyse, and act on information in real-time – anytime, anywhere. Touchwork’s enterprise solution puts the right information in the right hands at the right time. In doing so, organisations can achieve first class customer experience and field service performance; reduce costs and liability; and generate revenue and gain a competitive advantage.

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