

Local firm offers ways for customers to talk back: ResponseTek packages record customer feedback -- and follow-up

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Technology developed by Vancouver's **ResponseTek** Networks Corp. is helping spark two-way conversations between companies and their customers.

And that dialogue is now key to long-term business success.

Sue Aldrich, senior vice-president with the Boston-based Patricia Seybold Group, said prevailing wisdom has held that efficient production and effective marketing are the sole keys to a company's success.

But that, she said, has changed over the past five years: "People have begun to be persuaded that focusing on your customers and their value and profitability might be an alternative path to success."

In Canada, companies like WestJet Airlines have long been on that path.

Last year the airline launched its Interactive Feedback Corner. It opens a Web-based channel for customer input on virtually every aspect of the airline's operation. It's more than a one-way conversation.

WestJet's Rosanna Imbrogno said the feedback provides the company insight into what it's doing right and what it's doing wrong.

But the system, which uses **ResponseTek's** customer-experience management technology, also allows WestJet to deliver comments to the appropriate decision-makers and front-line staff and to track their response.

Imbrogno said the technology has improved company-customer communication "because it engages you with your customer and your people."

ResponseTek CEO Syed Hasan said conversations with senior executives of major corporations like American Express during eight years as a corporate strategy consultant sowed the seeds for his company. "[It was] the realization of how much their decision-making was devoid of the customer experience and the customer perspective of what they were offering," he said.

Hasan added that customer surveys are traditionally built on questions a company wants answers to. They don't allow customers to give input they believe is valuable to improving services they receive, he said. And the surveys are usually invasive and far removed from a customer's buying experience.

Hasan said a core **ResponseTek** principle is "that customer insight should be driven by the customer and be driven at the point of pain, at the point of delight. Things that we call the moments of truth."

Those moments can be captured in various ways, including via in-store kiosks or during Interac transactions.

T-Mobile, a Washington state-based wireless service provider with over 10 million customers in the U.S., is a recent **ResponseTek** convert.

On-line feedback has become part of the purchase process, but Hasan said that by next year T-Mobile and its **ResponseTek** system will be able to capture those fleeting customer moments of truth directly through mobile phone menus.

Illustration:

- Photo: An absence of 'the customer perspective' in the executive suite inspired Syed Hasan of **ResponseTek**.