



Your Voice Happiness & Safety

Customer service is something firms often claim to care about, but a different story is revealed whenever you're on their customer care line indefinitely.

By James Comtois

Considering two big points of concern within the mortgage lending industry are customer satisfaction (which actually isn't exclusive to just the mortgage sector) and risk mitigation, it's somewhat surprising that a program like MortgageSAT hasn't been introduced sooner. Then again, customer service is something firms often claim to care about, but a different story is revealed whenever you're on their customer care line indefinitely, so maybe it's not so surprising.

Regardless, back in April, a Peachtree City, Ga.-based mortgage lending consulting firm teamed up with an Ann Arbor, Mich.-based customer feedback providing company to launch a customer survey and analytics application that captures consumer feedback and allows lenders to measure and respond to borrower satisfaction.

Now up and running, through MortgageSAT, The STRATMOR Group has put its mortgage consulting chocolate in the CFI Group's customer feedback peanut butter by allowing lenders to compare their customer satisfaction performance both internally (i.e., across their production and back office operations) and externally in comparison to other lenders. This data enables lenders to determine in advance the impact that changes will have on consumer satisfaction ratings, allowing them to spend resources where it will have the most meaningful impact.

"Customer satisfaction is a dangerous blind spot for the lender because it has become a focal point for our new regulator," said STRATMOR Group senior partner Matt Lind. "The result has been a trend in the industry toward more responsiveness and transparency regarding the consumer's experience in the mortgage process. Lenders have largely been guessing because

they didn't have the data or the analytics to know how satisfied their customers were and what they should do about it. We've changed that."

In addition, MortgageSAT offers a way for lenders to know how borrowers feel about the mortgage transaction, giving the institution an opportunity to track experience across a range of transactions and react immediately to issues.

"Yes, sure, fine," you may be thinking. "But what does any of this have to do with the risk mitigation you mentioned earlier?"

Customer satisfaction is a **dangerous blind spot** for the lender because it has become a **focal point for our new regulator**.

Well, according to STRATMOR managing director Garth Graham, in addition to giving lenders immediate reactions from its customers, MortgageSAT can also help a great deal with risk mitigation, "because if you measure satisfaction consistently and quickly react to issues, then consumers are far less likely to seek help from regulators regarding these issues. But it also helps drive more business, because MortgageSAT helps you predict how increases in satisfaction help you increase your bottom line."

Graham added: "This is critical for the mortgage industry because as the refinance business falls away, making sure customers are satisfied is how lenders will gain market share through greater referrals and customer cross sell opportunities." ♦

James Comtois has been a financial journalist for more than 14 years and has covered the real estate and mortgage industries for more than eight of those years. He has written for such publications as Crain's New York Business, MarketWatch, Private Equity Real Estate News and National Mortgage News. He lives in Brooklyn, NY.