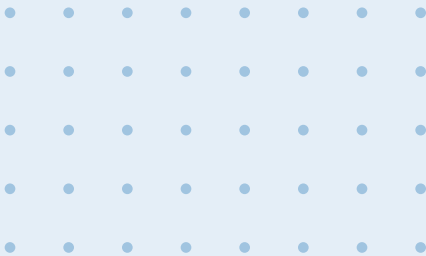


NPS: THE TRUST SIGNAL

NPS isn't just a number—it's your clearest trust indicator. Here's how to lead with it.



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SMALL CHOICES BIG CHANGE
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Introduction

Numbers Don't Build Trust—But They Reveal It

Numbers don't build customer relationships. People do. But the right number, read honestly, reveals the health of those relationships with a clarity that gut instinct can't always provide.

Net Promoter Score has become one of the most widely used customer loyalty metrics in business—and one of the most misused. Leaders track it as a report card when it's actually a conversation. They measure it as a KPI when its real value is as a listening instrument.

An NPS score shows where trust stands right now. What happens next tells customers who this organization really is.

Through The Exceptional Way framework, NPS isn't just a satisfaction tool—it's a trust indicator. Approach it with the intention of a mindful leader rather than the anxiety of an analyst, and it becomes one of the most powerful instruments in the toolkit.

What NPS Is Really Asking

Net Promoter Score measures how likely a customer is to recommend a brand, product, or service to someone they care about. Fred Reichheld introduced it in 2003 in a Harvard Business Review study titled 'The One Number You Need to Grow.'

Its staying power comes from simplicity: one question, a 0–10 scale, real-time data on the single indicator that most reliably predicts brand health. But the number is really asking something deeper than the question on the screen.

'How likely are you to recommend us?' isn't really about logistics or features. It's asking: do you trust this brand enough to put your own name behind it?

That's a high bar. It's also the right one.

Satisfaction Measures a Moment. NPS Measures Trust.

Traditional satisfaction surveys capture how someone felt about a specific interaction. NPS captures something broader: the cumulative weight of every interaction a customer has had with the brand.

That's why NPS maps so naturally onto the Trust Framework. Trust isn't built in a single moment—it's the accumulated result of hundreds of small choices, delivered consistently over time. An NPS score is the market's running report on how well those choices are landing.

TRUST FRAMEWORK · THE EXCEPTIONAL WAY

Why Measure: The Business Case for Listening

Before designing a single survey, answer a foundational question: what's the actual reason for measuring this? The answer shapes everything—survey design, response protocols, and whether the exercise produces any real change.

Organizations that measure NPS to hit a target miss the point entirely. Organizations that measure NPS to understand customers—and make better decisions based on what they hear—get something far more valuable than a favorable quarterly number.

What Regular NPS Measurement Produces

Stronger Customer Retention

For any business where recurring revenue matters, NPS is an early warning system. A declining score signals eroding trust before it shows up in the churn report—and catching it early costs far less than rebuilding it later.

Organic Growth Through Referrals

Promoters are the most cost-efficient marketing channel available. They bring new customers through genuine recommendation—which arrives pre-loaded with trust. No paid campaign manufactures that.

Real-Time Leadership Intelligence

NPS surveys are fast and simple enough to run continuously. That means decisions get made based on how customers feel now—not how they felt six months ago.

MINDFUL LEADERSHIP · THE EXCEPTIONAL WAY

Mindful Leadership means acting with awareness of downstream impact. Measuring NPS is an act of that awareness—a deliberate choice to stay connected to what customers are actually experiencing.

Designing Surveys That Tell the Truth

A poorly designed survey is worse than no survey at all. It generates data that feels meaningful but isn't—and it uses up the attention of the customer who responded.

The classic NPS survey asks one question: 'On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend us to a friend or colleague?' That simplicity isn't a limitation—it's the feature.

'On a scale of 0–10, how likely are you to recommend our company / product / service to a friend or colleague?'

One Follow-Up Changes Everything

Add one follow-up question: 'What's the primary reason for your score?' Now there's a quantitative signal and the qualitative story behind it. The number shows where things stand. The reason shows why—and what moves next.

Resist the pull toward ten more questions. Every additional question drops response rate and dilutes the signal. Keep it honest and keep it short. A customer's attention is a form of trust—don't spend it carelessly.

Timing Shapes What Gets Measured

NPS sent right after purchase captures purchase sentiment. Sent six weeks later, it captures product sentiment. After a support interaction, it captures service sentiment. Each tells a different part of the story—and stage-specific NPS, tied to a Customer Journey Map, reveals exactly where trust is strong and where it's fragile.

How to Calculate—and What the Score Means

The calculation is simple. The interpretation takes judgment.

The Three Segments That Drive the Score

Promoters | Score 9–10

These customers are active advocates. They buy repeatedly, refer others, and stay when things get bumpy. They've got high lifetime value and low price sensitivity. They're who the brand promise was built for.

Passives | Score 7–8

Satisfied but uncommitted. One better offer away from leaving—not because of a failure, but because there's no compelling reason to stay. This is the highest-opportunity segment in the whole customer base.

Detractors | Score 0–6

Unhappy and vocal. They're not just lost revenue—they're active risk. Responding quickly and personally is one of the highest-return moves any CX strategy can make.

The Formula

$$NPS = \% \text{ of Promoters} - \% \text{ of Detractors}$$

Passives sit out the calculation—their neutrality shows in their absence from either side. The result ranges from –100 to +100.

-100 to 0

Trust is eroding faster than it's being built

0 to +50

Solid foundation—real room to grow

+50 to +70

Strong advocacy and genuine loyalty

+70 to +100

Trust that transfers at scale

Reading Results Through a Leadership Lens

The score opens the conversation—it doesn't close it.

An NPS of 52 can be exceptional in one industry and below average in another. Industry benchmarks matter, but the internal trend line matters more. The real question isn't just 'What's the score?' It's 'Is trust in this brand growing or declining—and what's driving it?'

OLIVUS PRINCIPLE · THE EXCEPTIONAL WAY

The OLIVUS Principle reminds leaders that results reflect collective commitments. When NPS data comes in, the instinct to find a department to fix misses the point. The more useful question: what's this score telling us about how customers are experiencing our shared values in action?

What to Do With What You Find

Detractors deserve a personal response—fast. Not a form letter. A real acknowledgment that the experience mattered and that something's changing because of it. That's not just service recovery—that's trust restoration.

Promoters deserve recognition. A thank-you. An invitation to share their story. A signal that their loyalty isn't invisible.

Passives are a signal that something good is happening but hasn't crossed into exceptional yet. Find out what's missing—it's usually smaller than expected.

Small Choices Big Change applies here directly. The gap between a Passive and a Promoter rarely requires one big move. It takes a series of small, consistent choices that finally tip the scale.

NPS as a Living KPI: From Score to Strategy

NPS becomes most powerful when it's woven through the entire CX and leadership strategy—not treated as a standalone metric that lives in one dashboard.

Customer Service KPI

NPS after a support interaction—paired with a resolution timeliness question—gives a direct read on whether the team is building or eroding trust in moments of friction. These are the highest-stakes touchpoints in the journey.

Sales Process KPI

Measuring how new customers feel about the sales experience reveals whether the trust built in the conversation survived the transition to customer. If it didn't, something broke in the handoff—and that's fixable.

Product Development KPI

Post-launch NPS from recent buyers gives development teams a fast, honest signal: does this deliver on the promise made? It closes the loop between what got built and what customers actually experienced.

Leadership and Culture KPI

Connecting NPS results to team recognition—not as punishment, but as celebration—makes the link between internal leadership choices and external customer experience visible, tangible, and worth celebrating.

Summary

When the Number Becomes a North Star

NPS is a tool. Like every tool, its value lives in the hands holding it. In the hands of a leader treating it as a checkbox, it produces data with no direction. In the hands of a mindful leader who sees it as a live conversation about trust, it becomes a north star—a way of staying connected to what customers are actually experiencing.

The score reflects the trust that's been built. What happens next determines the trust that gets built from here.

Use it with intention. Respond with humanity. Let it guide the next small choice toward something exceptional.