



A POINT OF VIEW

# What Are You Losing From the Customers You Never Hear From?

*Alison Pifer, The Pifer Group*

The customers who complain are doing you a favor. They are telling you what broke while there is still time to fix it.

The ones that cost you say nothing. No review, no angry email, no exit interview. They just don't renew, or they quietly move half their business somewhere else, and nobody inside the company connects it to anything.

Plenty of growing companies work hard at customer feedback. They send surveys, ask for Google reviews, and track a score every month. Very little of it changes how the business actually runs.

## Reviews tell you who is happy

Here is the trap. The customers you ask for a five-star review are the ones you already know are happy. That is why you asked them. The reviews go up, the score looks good, and the business learns nothing it didn't already know.

The customers you most need to hear from are the ones you never ask.

## What customers say, and what companies hear

Even when customers do speak up, what they say and what the company hears are often two different things.

### THE CUSTOMER SAYS

### THE COMPANY HEARS

"You're too hard to do business with."

*"Let's make the contract a page shorter."*

"I never get the same person on the phone when I call you."

*"We need to hire more people for the phones."*

Nothing. No review, no complaint. They just don't come back.

*"Everything's fine."*

The customer is describing an experience: too many handoffs, nobody who owns the problem, a different answer every time they call. The company hears something it can fix by Friday, like a shorter contract or another hire. And silence gets read as satisfaction.

## **This is an operations problem, not a survey problem**

Better surveys won't close that gap. The feedback usually exists. Nobody owns it. It lands in a report, the report goes to a meeting, and the meeting moves on to the next item.

Qualtrics XM Institute's 2025 research across 20 industries found that the most common causes of bad customer experiences are service delivery issues and communication problems. Those aren't marketing problems. They are operations problems, and customers feel them first.

## **How it shows up**

When nobody is listening, the cost doesn't arrive as one bad month. It builds slowly:

- More cancellations, and fewer customers who come back
- Renewals that stall or shrink
- Margins that fade as the cost to serve creeps up
- Losing on price at renewal time, because the relationship isn't worth more than the invoice

Each one gets explained on its own terms: a tough market, a price-sensitive buyer, a slow quarter. They are rarely traced back to the same cause.

## **Put your own number on it**

Keeping a customer costs less than winning a new one. You don't need an industry statistic to believe that. You need your own numbers:

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**Customers lost × what each is worth a year = what the silence costs you**

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*An illustration: a company with 200 customers worth \$50,000 a year each loses 20 of them. Keep five more, and that is \$250,000 a year, every year.*

That revenue is already yours. You did the hard part when you won those customers. The question is how many are walking out without a word.

## **Three things to fix, not thirteen**

### **01 Hear from the quiet customers**

Talk to the customers who didn't renew, who cut back, who stopped calling. Not just the ones you would ask for a review.

## 02 Give feedback an owner

Every piece of feedback needs someone whose job is to act on it, with the authority to change how the work gets done. Feedback without an owner is just data.

## 03 Close the loop

Change something, then tell the customer what changed. Customers keep talking to companies that prove they are listening.

None of this requires new headcount or new software. It requires deciding who owns the customer, and building that into how the operation already runs.

## What it looks like when it's fixed

*I have been on the inside of this. We had plenty of data and no visibility. I built the dashboards, set consistent touchpoints with every internal team, and made the connection to business impact explicit — so feedback started changing decisions instead of filling a report.*

## Where to start

I work with growing companies where things are starting to feel harder instead of easier. I find where the friction actually lives, clarify who owns what, and build the systems to fix it — without adding headcount.

If this sounded familiar, I would like to hear what you are seeing.

[apifer@thepifergroup.com](mailto:apifer@thepifergroup.com) · [thepifergroup.com](https://thepifergroup.com)

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alison Pifer is the founder of The Pifer Group. She spent 22 years at one company in a heavily regulated, operationally complex B2B2C business, where she went from recruiter to executive and equity partner and helped scale it past \$1.5 billion in enterprise value.

Source: Qualtrics XM Institute, "Bad experiences across 20 industries, 2025," [qualtrics.com/research/bad-experiences-2025](https://qualtrics.com/research/bad-experiences-2025).