

It's all IN THE CARDS

Atlas Copco identifies the specific needs of each customer through the Voice of the Customer methodology.

TEXT CARI SIMMONS PHOTO JOHAN KNOBE

ATLAS COPCO IS VERY focused on delivering on its brand promise to give added value to customers through sustainable productivity. An excellent example of this is to be found in the Industrial Technique business area. In 2013 the business unit bumped up these efforts by implementing a Voice of the Customer process. “This is a structured way to build knowledge about our customers’ needs,” says Voice of the Customer Manager Hanna Lindh. “Maximizing customer value is the focus.”

Through the Voice of the Customer methodology, companies are better able to capture customers’ stated and unstated requirements and priorities. These can be obtained through deep interviews,

field observations, surveys and more. Atlas Copco, working together with the company **Value Model**, has refined this methodology to include a face-to-face customer interview involving a deck of cards.

Lindh spreads out a stack of 23 cards on the table before her. Each card contains a statement related to customer needs, such as “high robustness of the tool and tightening system” or “few unplanned stops,” and the customer ranks the cards in order of importance. This leads to a discussion about priorities and needs in a process that normally takes between 30 and 45 minutes to complete, depending on the customer’s feedback.

IGOR SOKOLOV, Product Manager Cordless Assembly Tools, has participated in the Voice of the Customer process on numerous occasions. He describes it as an opportunity for customers to highlight their specific requirements and be listened to without receiving a sales pitch. It is also an excellent way for him to gain greater customer knowledge. “We don’t normally get a chance to listen to a customer in this general way, and the out-

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Hanna Lindh

Hanna Lindh, Voice of the Customer Manager.



PHOTO: ATLAS COPCO



Atlas Copco regularly meets with customers, such as this one in Spain, to increase the knowledge of their specific needs by using the Voice of the Customer methodology.

PHOTO: ROBERT HAGSTRÖM



► **About Voice of the Customer**

Atlas Copco’s Voice of the Customer methodology offers a structured way to build knowledge about customers. Representatives from Atlas Copco meet the customer over cards which each contain a statement related to customer needs. The customer is asked to rank the cards in order of importance. This leads to questions and a discussion about priorities and specific needs. That information is gathered and entered into a database where the results are analyzed and interpreted and used in product development.

come is quite often surprising,” Sokolov says. “A lot of needs arise, many times unknown, and it’s important to focus on these needs when developing new products.”

The cards and interviews are just a part of the Voice of the Customer process. The information gathered by Sokolov and his colleagues is then entered into a database, and the results are carefully analyzed and interpreted to create the

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basis for innovation, product design and business development.

Joakim Edberg, Project Leader R&D, has conducted around 30 interviews, mainly with customers in the aviation industry. “When we start analyzing the Voice of the Customer data we sometimes see different information than we expected or realize that we need further

information,” he says. Such observations have led, for example, to findings about tool usage in cramped areas, leading to a minor change in the design of a tool. This, says Edberg, resulted in a big improvement in terms of customer value.

Edberg says he was initially skeptical about the card process, but due to the overwhelmingly positive reactions from

customers and the valuable knowledge and data he can collect, he now welcomes opportunities to meet with customers through Voice of the Customer.

Atlas Copco has conducted more than 300 of these card surveys so far, and is gaining momentum to include customers in all Atlas Copco Industrial Technique’s market segments around the world.

“This process is the basis for innovation, product development and our communication toward customers,” Lindh says.

“Customers appreciate that we spend the time and effort to understand what is important for them. Customers have also said that when conducting this process, insights and knowledge about their own needs and challenges increase too.” ■



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Customer insights

AMAZON ROBOTICS, a subsidiary of Amazon.com, automates fulfillment center operations through various methods of robotic technology, including computer vision, depth sensing and object recognition. The company was founded in 2003 and is headquartered in the U.S. state of Massachusetts.

This Atlas Copco customer uses products including bat-

tery nutrunners, air tools and software tools. Amazon Robotics was the first client to install the software tool ToolsNET 8 in the U.S. general industry market, and the company recently started using Atlas Copco’s new Power Focus 6000 fastening solution.

Amazon Robotics participated in Atlas Copco’s Voice of the Customer process in October 2016. ■