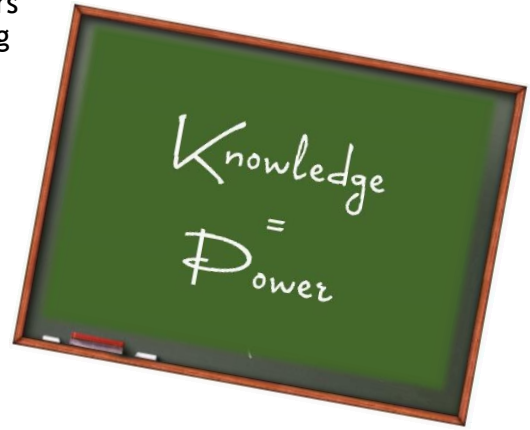


KNOW WHAT THEY WANT. KNOW WHAT THEY DON'T WANT.

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Astute leaders of organizations know the importance of member / customer / client opinion. Leaders also know what their members know and also what they don't know about their organization. In 1597, Sir Francis Bacon said, "ipsa scientia potestas est" (knowledge itself is power). Understanding the power of knowledge, leaders gather information in many ways. Conversations (talking to people around the water cooler, in the grocery store line, at lunch, in meetings) are informal ways to gather information. Reading, watching television, listening to the radio, and surfing the web are others.

Gathering information informally can be challenging; it takes a while, often isn't very accurate, and often includes a mere handful of people (usually acquaintances / co-workers). Although the results may give some indication of public opinion, it's hardly an accurate barometer.



The advertising / marketing business and the political consultants perfected the art of formal public opinion research years ago. Although recently polling and surveying members is gaining in popularity and use. From some of the world's largest and best-known organizations to some of the most obscure, customers / members / constituents are now being asked what's important to them. And they're responding.

Smart leaders realize that the process of soliciting input and the subsequent results of that input are equally important -- but for different reasons (retaining existing customers versus generating new ones). Members that are frequently asked "What do you think?" and "What is important to you?" demonstrates that they (and their opinions) are significant. Organizations are wise to seek out member input.

Knowledge is a powerful factor that empowers people to achieve great results. The more knowledge people gain, the more powerful they become.