



Canaveral National Seashore, Florida

Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Highlights

By working with Market Decisions Research to design a new approach to the customer experience research, the Council and the Division now benefit from:

- Data collection and reporting customized to meet the needs of both the Council and Division
- Telephone interviews that provide in-depth comments and capture the requisite feedback metrics with high degree of statistical confidence
- More surveys and more specificity, which translates into more data, stratified by region
- An actualized collaborative approach that produced superior results
- An end to misconceptions between perceived and actual problems
- An ongoing monthly survey
- More immediate, useful, and timely feedback
- In-depth information on changing topics of interest

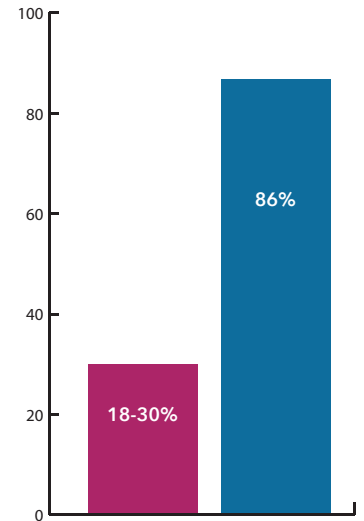
Advancing Customer Experience through Collaboration:

How Combined Efforts in Florida Resulted in Greater Overall Satisfaction in Vocational Rehabilitation

With a population of more than 20 million, Florida is the fourth most populous state in the nation and has a proportionally large population of people with disabilities spread across the state. Given the size of the population with disabilities, there's a substantial need for vocational rehabilitation services. In 2015-2016, 42,098 cases were managed and 5,194 job placements were either made or retained.

In the past, the Florida Rehabilitation Council and the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation measured customer satisfaction with mailed surveys. Short surveys were used to not overburden customers, but this resulted in information that was too brief and too general to be useful. Only 18% to 30% of customers returned surveys, leading to doubts about how representative the data was. The previous research had a number of other issues:

- Very general questions elicited responses that were not very informative
- Insufficient data to break down results by regional office or field location
- Impossible to determine the factors that impacted satisfaction
- Limited information on the reasons behind responses
- Inadequately captured respondents' feelings
- Report was general with limited analysis



Before the new survey instrument was developed, only 18% to 30% of customers returned surveys. Afterward, more than 86% of contacted customers completed surveys.

Customer Experience Research that Meets Disparate Needs

Because of the desire to gain more information and more qualitative feedback from customers, the Council and the Division decided to identify a partner to measure the consumer experience in depth. While the Council and the Division are strategically aligned, they each have distinct information needs. The Council offers guidance and advocacy to improve vocational rehabilitation services and makes recommendations about important or emerging issues.



Counselors can be more responsive and improvements can be made more quickly, because information is captured in a far timelier manner.

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Roy Cosgrove,
Florida Rehabilitation Council
Program Administrator

"The Council's role is to 'review, analyze, and advise,'" according to Roy Cosgrove, Florida Rehabilitation Council Program Administrator, who facilitates the work of the Council. "The Council is charged with understanding customer needs." The Council sought information to inform this work, while the Division looked for data and analysis related to business practices and performance for planning and for programmatic purposes.

In 2014, Market Decisions Research was contracted to implement new customer experience research with the following design requirements:

- Metrics with high degree of confidence
- Data useful on the regional level
- An ongoing survey
- More immediate feedback
- In-depth research on changing topics of interest

In collaboration with the Division and the Council, they developed a new survey instrument that tracks customer experience and provides information to guide continuous improvement, indicating issues of concern and what can be done to address them.

"From developing to realizing the survey, Market Decisions Research provided the expertise and recommendations to fulfill our requirements," added Cosgrove. "They made the process very smooth and much easier to create the instrument we wanted."

Efficient and Effective Data Collection

Market Decisions Research tailored the data collection instrument to meet the requirements of the Council and the Division. They then employed a different method of data collection than the previous mailed surveys. Data is now collected primarily by telephone, because of the increased number of questions and the use of open-ended questions to capture specific information for continuous improvement.

Unlike other surveyed groups, vocational rehabilitation customers are very cooperative when surveyed by telephone. In fact, an astounding 86.8% of customers reached by telephone complete a survey (2017). In their research, Market Decisions Research has found that vocational rehabilitation customers often appreciate having someone express interest and listen to their experiences.

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Florida Rehabilitation
Council Chair

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For this new approach, 250 telephone surveys (125 closed and 125 open cases, randomly selected) are completed each month. Three thousand are conducted over the course of a year, and reliable data is provided for the seven geographic regions served by the Division.

The number of questions went from one general question to several specific questions on topics. In addition, the number of questions changed from 12 closed-ended questions to 30 (repeated monthly), with up to 19 open-ended questions to drill down into topics to obtain more specific information. Also, 10 changing questions address new topics of interest as they emerge. The survey allows for follow-up comments, so that customers can express their experience in their own words.

The Council and Division now have better information—thanks to the use of open-ended questions—and more representative data than before. In addition, focus groups are conducted to determine the reasons for issues identified in the surveys and gather additional information about areas of interest identified from review and analysis of the survey data and reports.

Timelier Information Leads to Greater Responsiveness and Faster Improvements

"The depth and quality of the data we're now getting has helped the Council offer guidance about many aspects of vocational rehabilitation services, from the orientation process to customer relations and responsiveness," said Cosgrove. "We have greater analysis of the data and are able to use it in better ways."

The survey also captures the most commonly mentioned problems, which helps to end misconceptions between real and perceived problems. The information is captured in a far timelier manner, which means that counselors can be more responsive and changes can be made to improve the services to customers more quickly.

Detailed and Insightful Reporting

Market Decisions Research designed customized reports to meet the specific needs of both the Council and the Division, including simple monthly tracking reports, more robust quarterly reports with consumer experience core metrics and a dashboard, and a comprehensive year-end report. The reports, along with findings and recommendations, are presented quarterly at meetings of the Council.

"The data collection and reporting are so thorough that when the topic of entrepreneurship came up at a Council meeting, we had the data available to discuss it," said Patrick Cannon, Florida Rehabilitation Council Chair and former vocational rehabilitation services customer.

The Council's membership must include a majority of individuals with disabilities and reflects a variety of representative stakeholder groups, as well. Therefore, Market Decisions Research's presentations must be easily understood by a broad audience.

"The presentations are very well done in lay terms," said Cannon. "This is helpful to our diverse Council membership."

"The reporting exceeded our expectations in terms of the level of detail, the types of information, and how the analysis was put forward," added Cosgrove.



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The Council and the Division receive the same reports, so they're on the same page and can see which measures are excelling. In addition, the Council can see how the Division is performing. The new reports have been well received and have become a great tool for prompting discussion between the Council and the Division.

The Council and the Division are always looking to make further progress. Today, they have a much better understanding of how their customers feel and how to improve services.

"We're excited about having more and more data available," stated Cannon. "We'll have more predictive and projective information and be able to see trends over time."

About Market Decisions Research

Since 1977, Market Decisions Research has provided survey research and program evaluation for government agencies, nonprofits, and businesses in more than twenty-eight states.

We collect data in-house using a comprehensive set of tools—high-speed scanning of paper and mail surveys, a telephone interviewing center, and sophisticated software for online surveys. Adept at qualitative research, we offer a team of trained focus-group moderators and interviewers for executive and key informant interviews.

Our research team gets the most out of data with skillful question development, advanced analytics, and clear reporting. Our evaluation team works collaboratively with clients and stakeholders to assess needs and ensure that all are prepared to act on the information developed.

Market Decisions Research is a national leader in research and evaluation services for vocational rehabilitation agencies. We have conducted research with vocational rehabilitation customers, stakeholders, employers, and vocational rehabilitation staff for clients throughout the country. Our work improves vocational rehabilitation programs and outcomes.

Market Decisions Research: Better Data • Better Insights • Better Outcomes

For more information, contact Market Decisions Research at 800-293-1538 or research@marketdecisions.com.

