

## Conducting Market Research on a Shoestring

Consider these tips when planning how to collect info on your target customer. Most can be done without much fuss or cost...but can produce really useful "intelligence" on the needs and expectations of your target market.

1. Use active listening to understand the expectations of your target group
2. Do follow-up phone calls to determine satisfaction level
3. Have your customers fill out comment cards. Create an incentive by including these comment cards in a raffle.
4. Conduct focus group interviews with past and potential customers.
5. For a retail business: Track your customers by using a colorful map of your city with stickpins (or track postal codes).
6. Hire mystery shoppers
7. Put together a client advisory board made up of knowledgeable clients and suppliers

Remember that your service image is defined by your customers and not by you. How they feel about your business becomes your reality. Be sensitive to your customers' needs and accept that the customer's perception is everything.