Kano Model

Introduction

Many “experts” insist that customers don’t really know what they want; they have to be told. They’re wrong, dead wrong!

Customers do know what they want but may not be proficient at describing their needs. By understanding the three types of customer needs and how to reveal them, you’ll be well on your way to knowing customers’ needs as well as, or perhaps better than, they do.

**The Kano model is useful in gaining a thorough understanding of a customer’s needs.** The model involves two dimensions:

* Achievement (the horizontal axis) which runs from *the supplier didn’t do it at all*to *the supplier did it very well*.
* Satisfaction (the vertical axis) that goes from *total dissatisfaction*with the product or service to *total satisfaction*with the product or service.

Dr. Noriaki Kano isolated and identified three levels of customer expectations: that is, what it takes to positively impact customer satisfaction. The figure below portrays the three levels of need: expected, normal, and exciting.

**Expected Needs:**Fully satisfying the customer at this level simply gets a supplier into the market. The entry level expectations are the *must*level qualities, properties, or attributes.

These expectations are also known as the *dissatisfiers*because by themselves they cannot fully satisfy a customer. However, failure to provide these basic expectations will cause dissatisfaction.

Examples include attributes relative to safety, latest generation automotive components such as a self-starter, and the use of all new parts if a product is offered for sale as previously unused or new. The *musts*include customer assumptions, expected qualities, expected functions, and other *unspoken*expectations.

**Normal Needs:**These are the qualities, attributes, and characteristics that keep a supplier in the market. These next higher-level expectations are known as the *wants*or the *satisfiers*because they are the ones that customers will specify as though from a list. They can either satisfy or dissatisfy the customer depending on their presence or absence.

The *wants*include *voice of the customer*requirements and other *spoken*expectations (see table below).

**Exciting Needs:**These are features and properties that make a supplier a leader in the market. The highest level of customer expectations, as described by Kano, is termed the *wow*level qualities, properties, or attributes.

These expectations are also known as the *delighters*or *exciters*because they go well beyond anything the customer might imagine and ask for. Their absence does nothing to hurt a possible sale, but their presence improves the likelihood of purchase.

*Wows*not only excite customers to make on-the-spot purchases but make them return for future purchases. These are *unspoken*ways of knocking the customer’s socks off.

Examples include heads-up display in a front windshield, forward- and rear-facing radars, and a 100,000-mile warranty.

Over time, as demonstrated by the arrow going from top left to bottom right in the Kano model, *wows*become *wants*become *musts*, as in, for example, automobile self-starters and automatic transmissions.

The organization that gets ahead and stays ahead constantly pulses its customers to identify the next *wows.*The best *wows,*plenty of *wants,*and all the *musts*are what it takes to become and remain an industry leader.

The table below further clarifies the various types of customer requirements with respect to home buyers:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Level of Customer Need** | **Example Related to Home Buyers** |
| Expected Quality | I assume it meets all federal, state and local codes |
| Normal Quality - Spokens | Three -car garage, three bedrooms, two baths... |
| Normal Quality - Unspokens | I'll know it when I see it |
| Exciting Quality | Wow! A lifetime warranty on the roof |

Excerpted from Jack B. ReVelle’s [*Quality Essentials: A Reference Guide from A to Z* (Links to an external site.)](http://asq.org/quality-press/display-item/index.html?item=E1216), ASQ Quality Press, 2004, pages 90–93.