

WHAT SHOULD LEASING SURVEYS REALLY PROVIDE?

We are all used to seeing banner headlines telling us what we want, but how often do we feel that what we are being told we want actually does reflect our personal needs and desires. Many of these “marketing” headlines of course originate from surveys and opinion polls; many of which are of a very general nature and therefore only provide a superficial view.

I often wonder how true this may be about reports we hear about the leasing industry. I am even more sceptical when the surveys are about the sector where I have spent most of my career, that of Vendor Leasing. This continues to remain one of the major growth sectors for the leasing industry with many lessors claiming to provide excellent support to vendor clients. Perhaps we should ask the question about which of those lessors really provide what their particular vendors want.

Many surveys are conducted each year and most purport to give the answers, but it is difficult to see how much reliance can be put on them when deciding vendor account management strategy since most are general and not specific and the sample base may be small and potentially not relevant to any given reader’s business. The demands and expectations of vendors and indeed their clients vary considerably and when deciding on fundamental strategic direction lessors need as accurate information as can be made available – specific and focused on their business model.

As an advisor to lessors one has to have a detailed understanding of both sides of the equation.

One side is obviously what the vendors want from lessors and this does vary considerably depending on different equipment types, different target customer segments, different geographic locations, etc. For example, we find that the deliverables lessors in the USA put at the top of their lists are the more “hard” items, such as low rates and high levels of acceptance, whereas Europeans generally see relationships and empathy as more important. But again that is very much a generalisation.

Equally important if you are to advise vendors you need to have a detailed understanding of what the vendors think of the service provided by the various lessors who lay claim to providing a vendor leasing service. There is no better comfort factor for a vendor who is considering using a new lessor, than knowing that other vendors endorse the credibility and service levels provided. This information is of course also valuable to lessors as it enables them to measure their performance against their competitors and understand where they may be missing out on some aspect of service that the vendor values.

So what are the important issues to consider when wanting to use surveys for helping you maximise your businesses competitiveness and success. There is of course a time and place for general surveys which can indicate broad trends, or views on specific issues if very focused. However, to get real value, probably the most important aspect is to be prepared to invest in a survey that will produce answers and information that are meaningful to your specific business and which will help you better serve your

specific client base. The Alta Group undertakes numerous “individual” targeted market surveys for lessors concentrating them on the specific demands of the sectors they operate in, or are seeking to operate in. Relying on superficial overviews is both expensive and time wasting in the long term. Overwhelmingly the work we undertake is for the exclusive use of the client commissioning the survey and therefore these tend not to be publicised; but it does give Alta a deep insight into what vendors see as important. Take this together with Alta’s extensive international vendor client base who we regularly advise and it enables us to provide meaningful information.

When we perform a survey it covers not just a smattering of vendors, but a wide range of international pan-European and US vendors. Our vendor interviews will be extensive and cover a wide range of questions which allows us to build in many other forms of feedback. For example a recent survey which we conducted, analysed over 100 opinions from international vendors on the individual performance of 11 international lessors. Not only did it measure their performance against 10 criteria which the vendors themselves saw as the most important, but it also analysed what the vendors saw as the reasons why in respect of any particular areas of deliverables the lessor either outperformed or underperformed the norm. In addition all other criteria that vendors saw as important were recorded and analysed. The survey covered 5 different equipment segments and compared vendor demands and needs and the lessors’ performance in Europe and North America. The report ran to 76 pages along with 46 PowerPoint charts.

Much of the value for the lessor who commissioned the survey came from the narrative reflecting vendors views of issues outside the main criteria and equally important what they saw as the changes to their future needs and service expectations from lessors. It is probable that Alta could only obtain such intimate and detailed views because of its unique and close relationship to so many international equipment vendors, many of whom are long term clients of the firm.

If you wish to learn more about Alta’s “bespoke” market surveys. Please contact the author, [Alan Leesmith](#) or call +44 1444 417688.