

Customer Surveys: The Best Way to Measure Customer Satisfaction & Improve Services

Most companies have a mission statement or a statement of purpose – as does PrecisionCraft Log & Timber Homes. Our mission statement has evolved over the course of our 18 years in business but the last sentence has always stayed the same - “Customer satisfaction is our ultimate goal.”

This might sound like a cliché as so many companies talk about “customer satisfaction.” As illustrated by our mission statement, customer satisfaction has always been important to the team at PrecisionCraft and part of the business culture. It wasn’t until we started to formally survey our customers, asking them for their feedback and measuring their responses that “customer satisfaction” became an obsession! Now, it is at the core of every major decision we make.

A few years ago, we were very fortunate to hire our current Marketing Manager, Jennifer Hetherington. Jennifer came to us with a great deal of experience and knowledge in the art of surveying and how to best gather and interpret survey data. Surveying consumers is commonplace today and response is generally low but our experience has been exceptionally different. Since our product, custom log & timber homes, is such a high ticket item and our customers are so emotionally involved, we have virtually 100% response to our customer surveys. Our customers want to talk about and reflect on their experiences with us.

PrecisionCraft’s surveying team interviews customers at three different points in the designing and building process. The survey results have provided PrecisionCraft with a great deal of quantitative information about how we, as a company, are doing in satisfying our customers and where we can improve. Given the quality of the feedback provided, I only wish we had began our surveying many years ago but at least now we are getting reliable feedback from our customers. This feedback is essential is helping us improve our services and grow as a high quality company.

Major business decisions and changes in company direction have been driven by our dedication to customer satisfaction. For example, our clients challenged us to provide the highest level of architectural skills and expertise in the industry. In response to this customer feedback, Mountain Architects – PrecisionCraft’s design division – was created. To date, Mountain Architects has earned more national design awards for log and timber architecture than any other design firm.

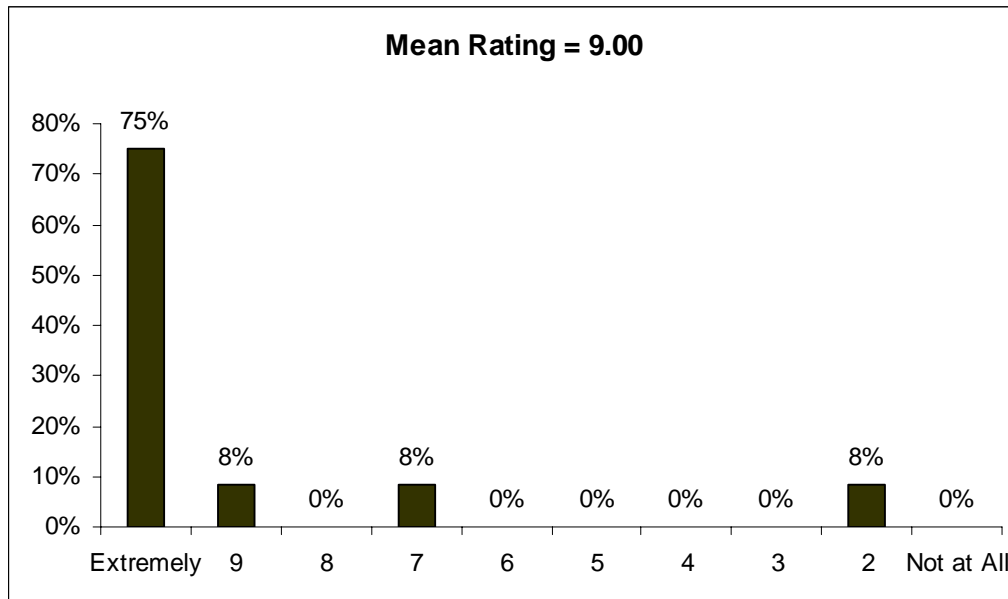
In addition to design services, the team at PrecisionCraft has also turned its attention to in-house cost estimating. Clients told us that they wanted to have quality information about building costs before making the critical decision to move forward with the design of their homes. With the goal of creating the highest levels of customer satisfaction, every PrecisionCraft client now receives a categorized turnkey cost estimate. Other customer feedback related changes include: the expansion of our product selection and the professional installation of all structural log & timber packages. As log and timber experts, our clients look to us to control the quality of our product – even at the build site. Installing all structural log & timber materials at our customers’ construction sites ensures complete quality control.

PrecisionCraft's clients also receive due diligence services in selecting their builders. Clients look to us for help in finding a qualified builder. In response, we now do the research for them. In addition, we provide all clients with an AIA contract to help them manage their builder relations. All of these changes were incorporated into our Total Home Solution with the ultimate goal of driving higher levels of customer satisfaction.

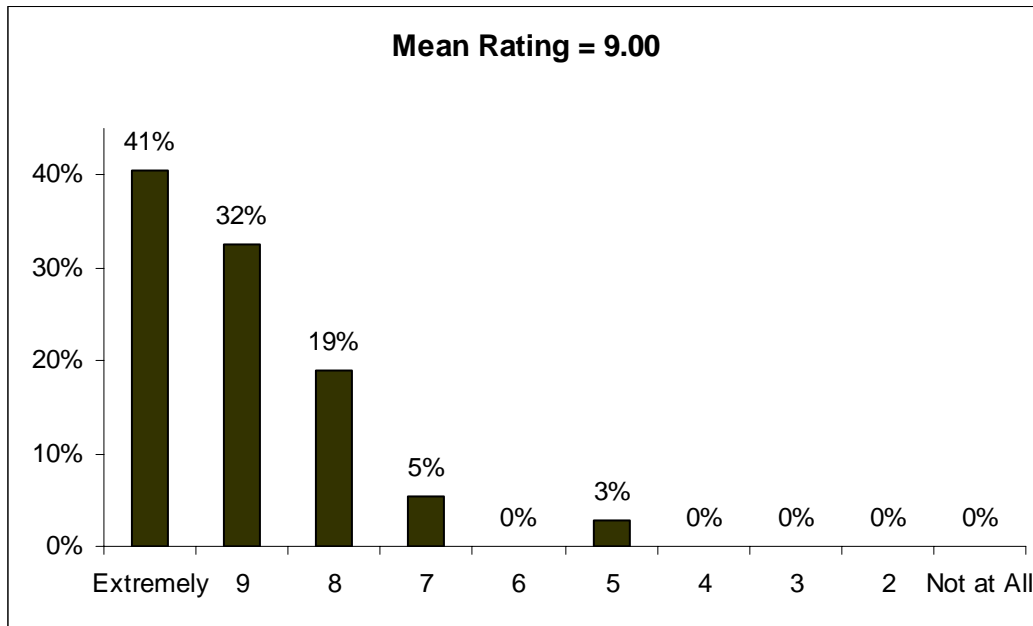
We have designed and built about 2,000 custom log & timber homes. The vast majority of our clients are satisfied with our products and our services. But, we have also made our share of mistakes and blunders over the years. In custom home construction, there are numerous moving parts and opportunities for mistakes and misunderstandings. The reality is that with each mistake, miscommunication or missed deadline, customer confidence erodes and satisfaction decreases. Understanding this relationship is key. As managers, our first obligation is to establish processes that not only minimize the opportunity for mistakes and miscommunication but also address them immediately and effectively. We have found that listening to our clients is the best way to ensure the highest level of customer satisfaction. Our customers expect the best when it comes to our products and services. We have the same expectations of ourselves.

Below is a snapshot at how we did in 2007. The overall results are positive yet we recognize that there is room for improvement. Note – clients were asked to respond using a 10-point scale when rating their satisfaction; 10 means “extremely satisfied” and 1 means “not at all satisfied.”

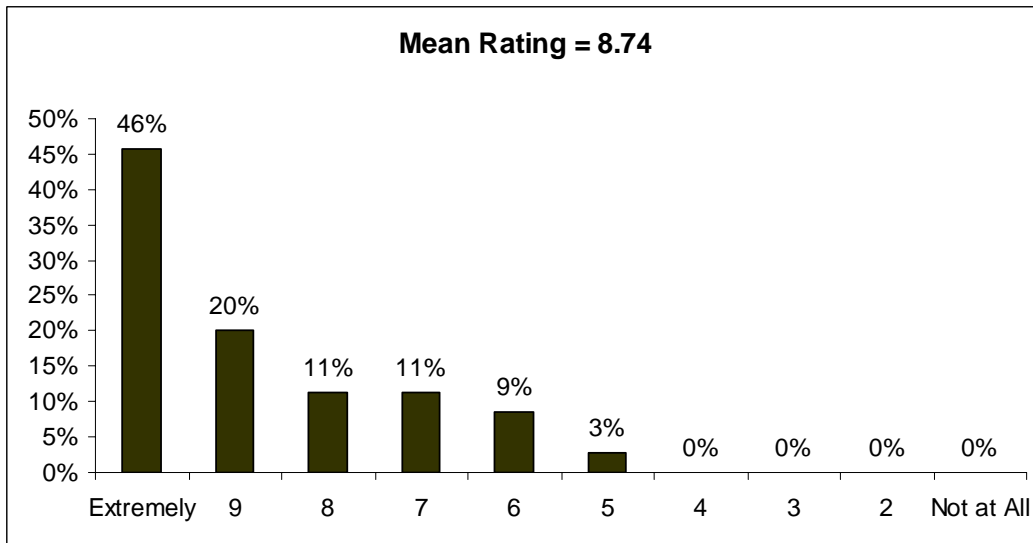
Overall Satisfaction with PrecisionCraft



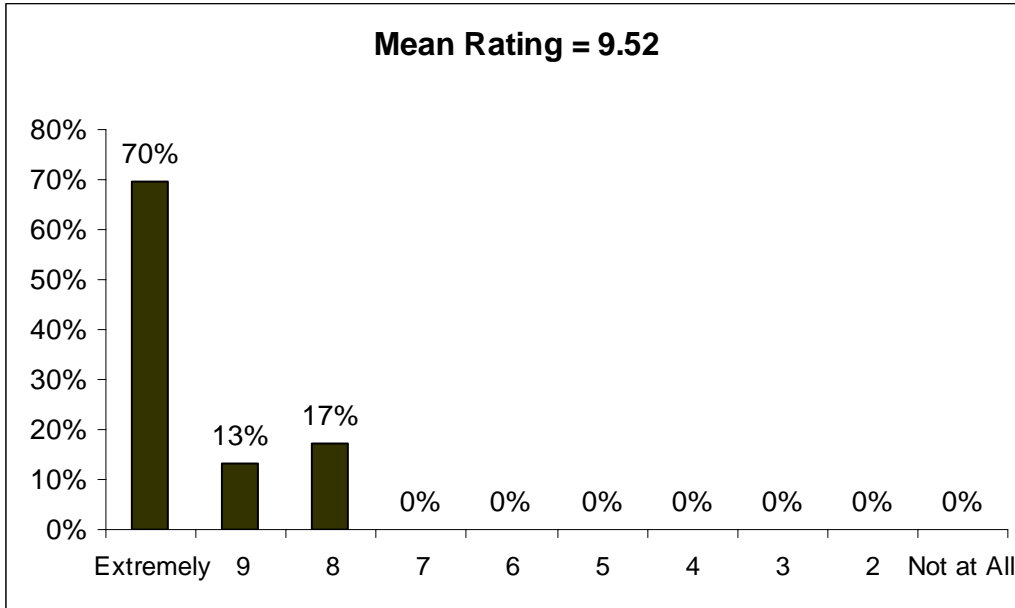
Overall Satisfaction with our Regional Sales Managers



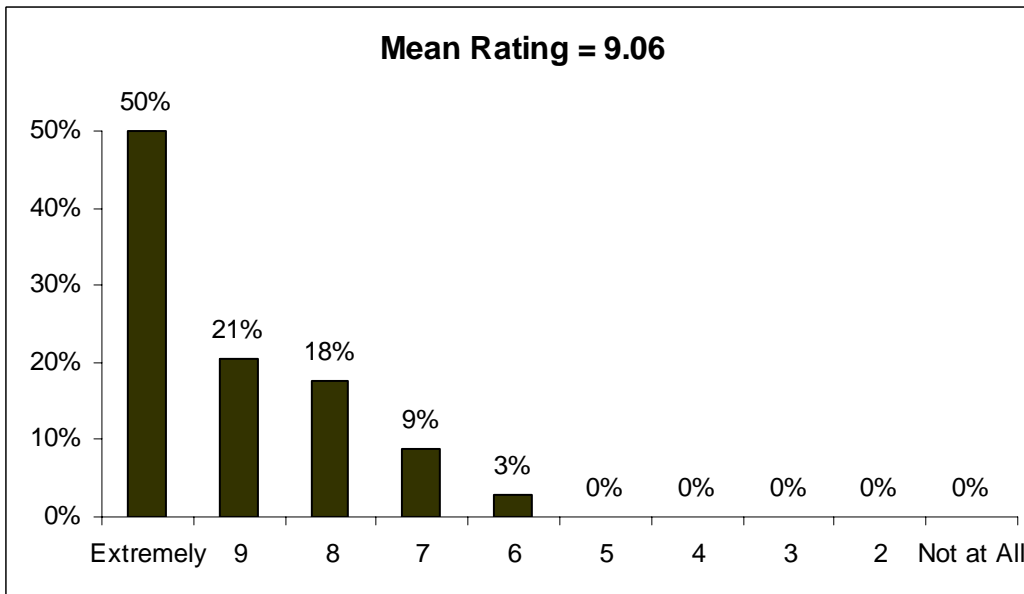
Overall Satisfaction with Mountain Architects – PrecisionCraft’s Design Division



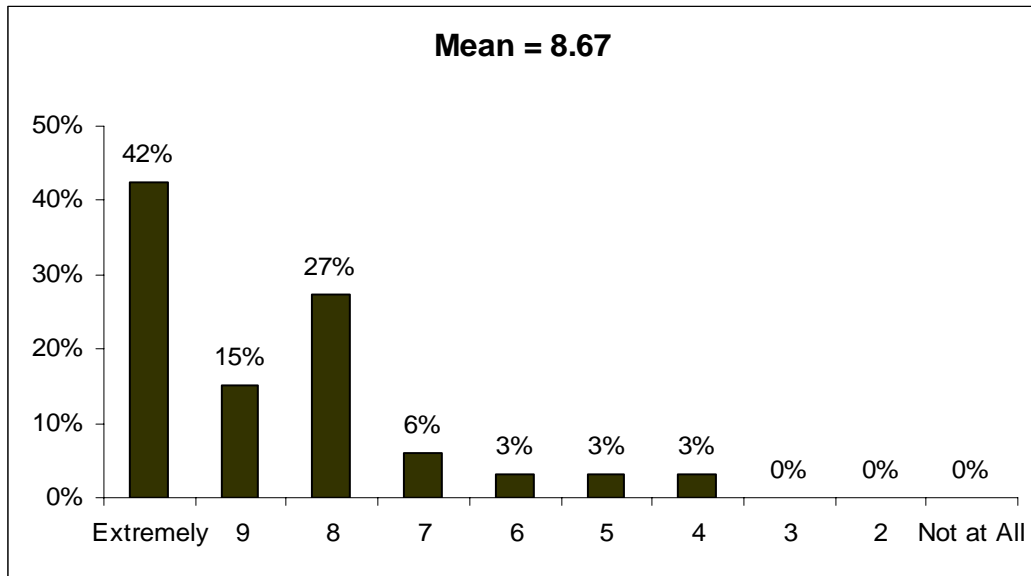
Overall Satisfaction with Initial Design Meeting with Mountain Architects



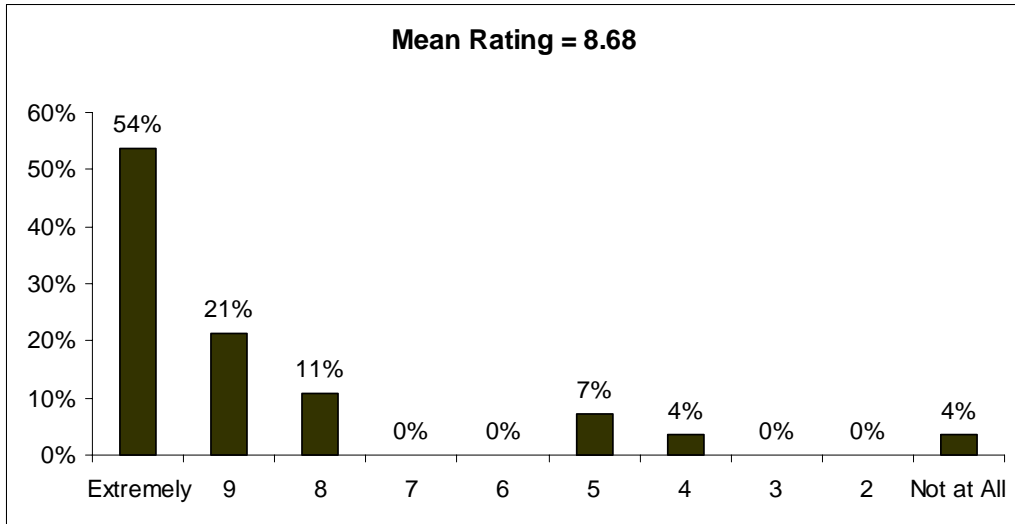
Satisfaction with Initial Conceptual Drawings



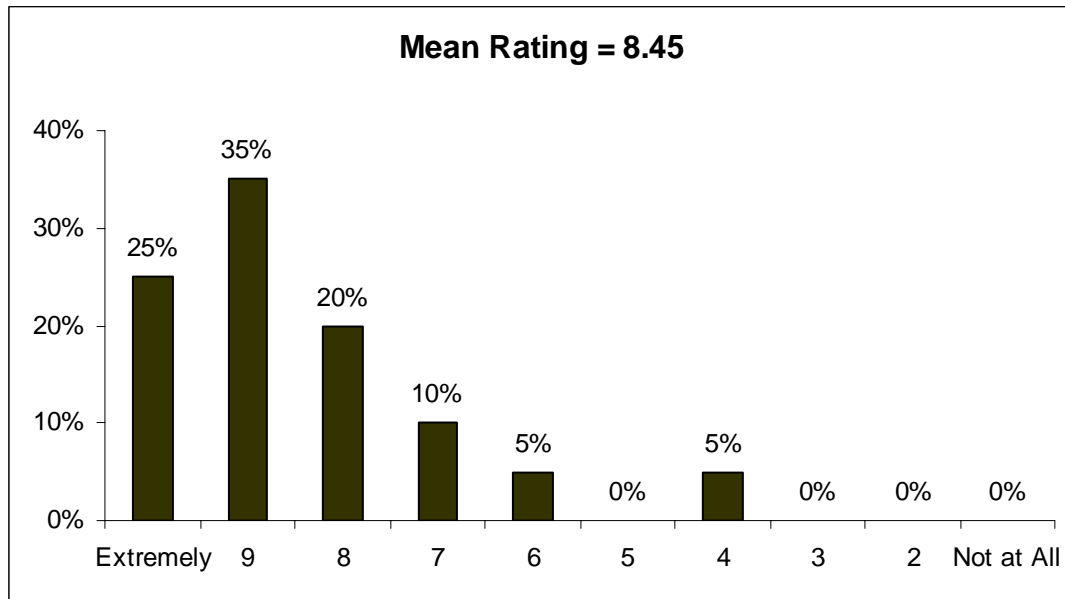
Satisfaction with Time Taken to Receive Initial Drawings for Review



Satisfaction with PrecisionCraft's Project Managers



Usefulness of Builder Due Diligence Reports Provided



At PrecisionCraft, we do more than just talk about customer satisfaction. We make it happen. Customer satisfaction is not just a cliché. We will not be satisfied until our customers are satisfied. We still have work to do and obstacles to overcome but we rely on our customers to tell us what we have to do to reach our goal.