

Customer intelligence revolutionising business at the Base of the Pyramid

For businesses selling products and services at the base of the pyramid, understanding low-income consumers and the choices they make is critical to meeting customer needs, boosting sales, and delivering real value.

This month, in partnership with Acumen's Lean Data Initiative, we explore how new technology and Lean Data methods are efficiently capturing new insights and creating more customer-centric businesses.



Acumen's Lean Data team using tech to improve consumer insights

This stuff is working, concludes Hub editor Caroline Ashley in her [overview blog](#). In whatever sector or size of social enterprise, customer intelligence is improving business processes and increasing impact.

Investing in consumer feedback to improve core business

- A customer-centric journey is underway, that will go far beyond social enterprises. The prospect of a cell-phone in every pocket revolutionises the opportunity for companies to have a conversation with every customer and listen better. The [Lean Data Initiative](#) helps Acumen investees to harness this low-cost technology, gathering feedback at touchpoints along the customer journey and improving their service every step of the way.
- [Dr Consulta](#) is a Brazilian business rapidly expanding its chain of clinics, busy keeping costs low so that their prices are 20% of typical private competitors. So why are they investing time and effort in customer feedback, from daily SMS, to annual surveys, to 'customer safaris' service testing? Product manager Jorge Tung generously tells us why they invest in customer feedback, how they do it efficiently, and how valuable it is to them, enabling them to improve doctor performance, the customer journey and trust in their medics.
- Can customer feedback reduce client default rates? Yes, actually. Karl Skare explains many ways that [d.light](#) seeks and uses customer feedback, the surprises they found, and how they used the results to improve business processes, including their approach to delinquent payments.
- [Understanding what consumers want](#) in nutritious products is essential to providing them with what experts think they need, and building sustainable businesses, explained Marti van Liere and Lucie Klarsfeld, sharing lessons that all inclusive businesses will find useful from our webinar series on marketing nutritious products to the BoP.
- For Kenya-based Access Afya, investing in consumer information before launching new clinics ensured they chose the best locations. Mahindra Rural Housing Finance in India collected data that showed customer needs varied depending on the length of the customer relationship, and changed their marketing strategy accordingly. Tomo Nagasaki from [Business Call to Action tells us more](#).
- This month's [Editor's Choice](#) draws out analysis from financial diaries of 1,000 women and men in India, Kenya and Mexico. 'A Buck Short,' from Bankable Frontier associates and Omidyar Network, turns detailed insight into recommendations to financial service providers to enable more women to access their services.

Consumer insight is now affordable for even the smallest business

- How can enterprises run [cost effective customer feedback surveys](#) with high response rates, quality data and not burdensome to the customer? The Lean Data team is constantly experimenting with combinations of tools and techniques- they talk us through some experiences so far.
- Emerging markets require a new approach to customer feedback. [TTC have developed a mobile survey sampling tool](#), easy to use in low bandwidth areas, which comes with immediate rewards for the respondent.



Access Afya in Kenya partnered with BCTA to collect consumer data (Photo courtesy of Access Afya)

Using data to help businesses dig deep into understanding their social impact

- You may think you're reaching poor customers, but do you know you are? Vision Spring found they were effectively reaching poor clients, and disproportionately so, compared to the national incidence of poverty. Julie Peachey explains how they, and other enterprises, are integrating the [Progress out of Poverty Index](#) to understand their customers, suppliers, and overall impact, to far greater effect.
- Conventional approaches to assessing impact don't serve the social enterprise sector well, nor the impact investors that back them. So, Acumen instead focuses on [helping enterprises understand the value they create for customers](#), as the heart of understanding social performance and how to manage it.
- 'Did we meet our objective?' is the wrong question. [Looking for patterns within customer feedback](#) can help improve service and increase social impact explains Ben Carpenter from Social Value International.

In other news

- In the run up to Sankalp Africa, Sheena Raikundalia explains the good (disruptive innovation), the bad (lack of capital and tech support) and the evolving (the ecosystem) for [social entrepreneurship in East Africa](#). Sankalp Africa will take place from 23rd to 24th February in Nairobi, [get 20% discount here](#).
- Our theme last month on donor-company collaboration was very popular. If you missed it, [catch up here](#). If you enjoyed it, the conversation carries on with this addition from [DCED on how donor agencies can make the transition to strategic private sector engagement](#).



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