

CUSTOMER³² RESEARCH

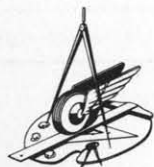
★ - the third link in General Motors fact finding.

We thank you for your interest in our questionnaire and we hope that this little booklet may also prove interesting to you.

It deals (quite informally) with the general subject of customer research and was prepared for limited distribution among those expressing an interest in the broad philosophy underlying General Motors fact-finding activity as applied to the tastes and desires of the motoring public.



Issued by CUSTOMER RESEARCH STAFF
General Motors - Detroit, Michigan



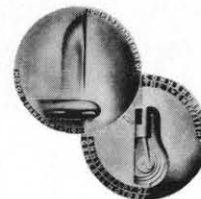
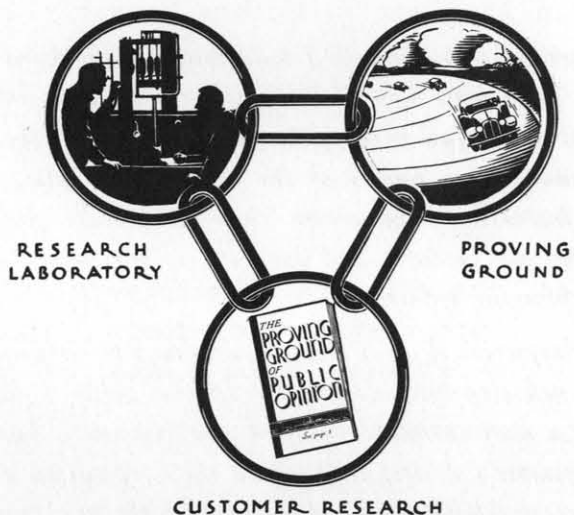
*There is only one
person qualified to
say just what the
motorist prefers
and that person is*
**THE
MOTORIST HIMSELF**



“—we are passing through a kaleidoscopic era characterized by swift movements—social as well as economic—and such conditions cannot fail to bring more rapid changes in the tastes, desires and buying habits of the consuming public. So it becomes increasingly important that we provide the means for keeping our products and our policies sensitively attuned to these changing conditions.

“And, irrespective of what these changes may be—regardless of what the new economic and social order may hold—I am confident that a more intimate, detailed and systematic knowledge of the consumer’s desires will afford the Corporation a sound and progressive basis upon which to meet the new conditions as they unfold.”

ALFRED P. SLOAN, JR.
PRESIDENT, GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION
(From message to stockholders, Sept. 11, 1933)



Many motorists are familiar with the basic scientific work that has been carried on for years in the General Motors Research Laboratories which serve the division engineers (and indirectly the car owner) through the development of basic facts in the mysterious realms of physics, mechanics, metallurgy, electricity and the allied sciences.

Then too, there is the General Motors Proving Ground, that vast out-of-doors laboratory where advanced developments may be put to practical tests and where finished cars of practically all makes and designs, European as well as American, are tested under practical conditions of usage comparable to those experienced by the car owner himself.

But there is another fact-finding activity within General Motors regarding which little has been said. This activity, in common with the Research Laboratories, the Proving Ground and the Fisher Art and Color Section, also concerns itself with forecasting trends in design by studying the public reactions to such trends to the end that General Motors Products may more fully meet the increasingly discriminating demands of the motoring public.



"The large size of modern business emphasizes rather than lessens the necessity for reckoning with the tastes of the individual customer."

THE PROVING GROUND *OF* PUBLIC OPINION

*M*odern industry with its large scale production facilities and high degree of specialization brings with it many problems that did not exist in the earlier days of the small shop making simple products for local consumption. By the very nature of things, the bigger an institution grows, the wider becomes the gap between the customer and those responsible for guiding the destiny of the institution.

Let us take for example, the old-fashioned shoemaker of 100 years ago who performed more or less single-handedly, most of the functions found in the large industrial institution of today.

He had no "Sales Department" in the modern sense of the word, dividing his time between designing his product, selecting the materials, producing the goods and then selling them. His advertising, we might say, took the form of telling his friends and acquaintances how he was building his products and

they in turn telling their friends, and whenever any service was needed he rendered it personally.

- and as against the lesser efficiency and higher costs of such a setup he enjoyed a distinct natural advantage in being able to OBSERVE FIRST HAND the relations between his various duties and the major objective of his business, in fact the major objective of all business, namely,

"SERVING THE CUSTOMER IN THE WAY
THAT THE CUSTOMER WANTS TO BE SERVED."

Business back in those early days was quite simple.

Our pioneer shoemaker knew his customers - knew them intimately - and knew their tastes and desires as consumers. He knew that Mr. Smith always preferred black leather, whereas Mr. Jones leaned toward the lighter shades of tan. Mr. Brown was concerned only with comfort, he always chose the softest leather and an oversized square-toed last, whereas Brown, Jr., insisted on "toothpick" toes with filigree decorations.

Thus, through this intimate personal contact

with his customers, the local shoemaker was able to arrange his purchasing, plan his "production", meet changes in the style trend and direct his sales with a finesse that is not easily excelled by the modern manufacturer with all his highly specialized organization facilities.

Of course, we of this more modern age can find ample grounds for criticism if we go back and apply the measuring sticks of mass production and modern merchandising to these pioneer enterprises, but the foregoing DOES illustrate the point that back in those earlier days the tastes and desires of a customer did not have to be sought, because by the very nature of things they were apparent right on the surface.

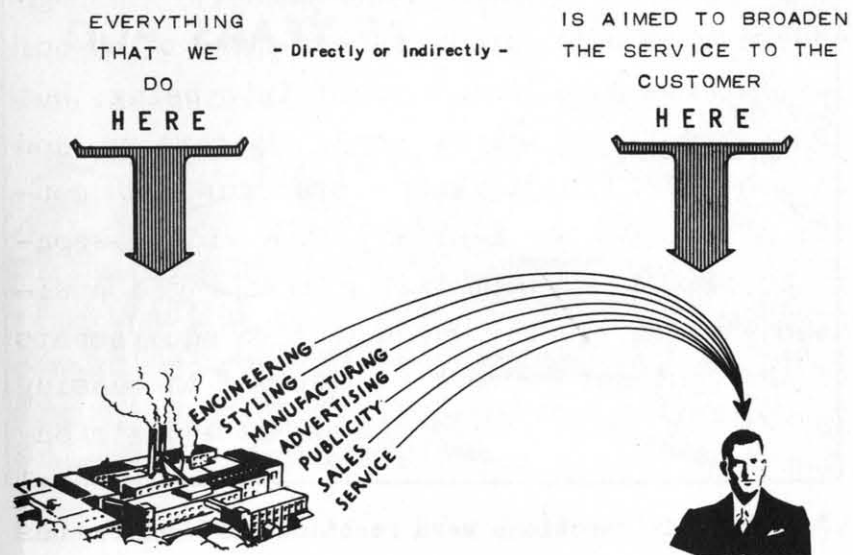
Of course the market of the shoemaker was restricted to his immediate locality and his piecemeal system of production added to cost which in turn limited the widespread use of high quality articles. Furthermore, it seems needless to add, a vast range of products which contribute so much to the fullness of modern living could hardly have been produced at any price under the old handicraft system.

Modern manufacturing methods have brought about

tremendous savings to the consumer. Through modern technique, products undreamed of by our forefathers have been brought into being, but as a result of large scale operations and nation-wide distribution, producer and consumer have become more and more widely separated, so that the matter of keeping a business sensitively in tune with the requirements of the customer becomes a matter of increasing importance. Mass production and mass distribution have tended to obscure the fundamental necessity of reckoning with the detailed tastes of the individual buyer, and yet the principle is just as true today as it was back when our forefathers first began laying the foundations upon which rest our great industrial structures of today.

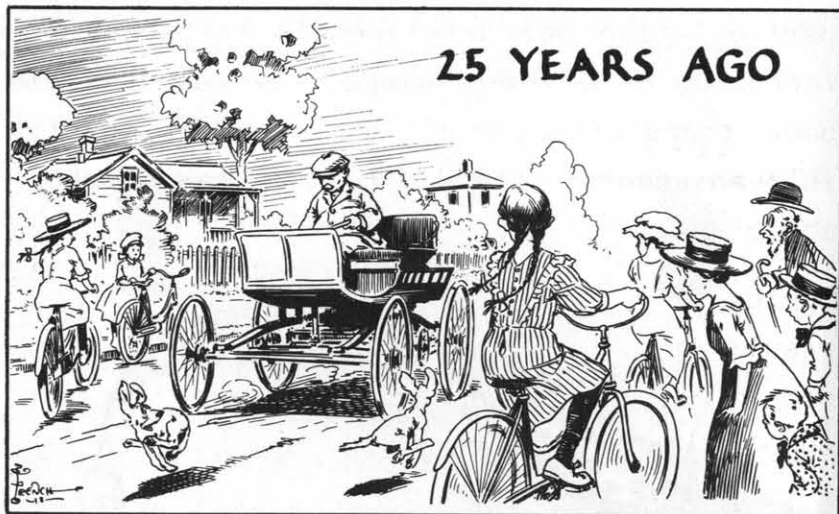
Customer Research is not merely a matter of sending out questionnaires - calling on car owners - compiling a lot of dull statistics - These are ONLY INCIDENTS. It's really a matter of recognizing the retail buyer as the HUB about which all our activities revolve.

From this broad viewpoint Customer Research cannot be looked upon as an isolated departmental activity. To be truly effective, it must be in the nature of a SPIRIT OR ATTITUDE



OF MIND permeating every phase of a business. Or putting it still a different way, we might say that Customer Research is simply a tool for developing a greater degree of HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

In the early days of the industry the automobile was nothing more than a piece of machinery and all too frequently it was not a particularly satisfactory machine at that. The manufacturer had his hands full in improving the mechanical structure of the device. There were so many things, and such obvious things that needed to be done, that there would have been no point in going out of one's way hunting opportunities for improvement.



" - the only reactions were reactions of wonderment."

Back in those days the motor car was little more than a novelty and the public knew little about such things as carburetors, spark plugs and differential gears.

Many of us can recall our attitude of open-mouthed amazement when, at the turn of the century, we saw our first "horseless carriage." Back in those days, a certain aura of mysticism surrounded the self-propelled vehicle and the only public reactions were reactions of wonderment.

During the 30 years following, as a result of scientific research, inventive genius, ex-

perimentation and developments in production technique, the self-propelled vehicle has been transformed from an expensive novelty into an economic utility of widespread public acceptance.

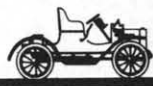
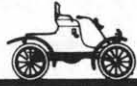
During this same period (and primarily as a result of the motor car itself), we have become a nation of mechanically-minded people, a people who have been around and seen things, a people who travel more in a year than our forefathers travelled in a lifetime.

So we might say that the discriminating demands and fastidious tastes of the motorist



"Aw Gee! - it's only a twelve!"

- by Courtesy of The New Yorker.



have kept well abreast of the industry's offerings and the approach to mechanical perfection as reflected in the motor car of today has served to bring into focus the fact that the automobile is far more than just a piece of machinery.

In contrast to most mechanical products (or at least to a greater degree than other mechanical products), the modern motor car is what we might call a social instrument as well as a mechanical utility transportation machine. Thus, the instinctive human desire to move about more rapidly and more conveniently is complicated by the social desire for style, appearance, comfort, appointments and other factors which, beyond a certain point, do not lend themselves to laboratory analysis.

* * * *

And so it is with these thoughts in mind that General Motors invites motorists to give it the benefit of their ideas, to pool their practical driving experiences with the engi-



neering and manufacturing skill of its factory organizations.

Perhaps the following illustration will further serve to make the point clear:

You have your home designed by an architect but you don't hesitate to tell him the various points that you want taken care of in the plans. It may be (and usually is) impossible for him to meet ALL of your desires because of the technical aspects, but the pooling of your ideas with his highly specialized training and experience enables you to get substantially what you want with the assurance that his skill as an architectural designer will protect you against anything that might be unsound from a standpoint of construction, out of keeping with the artistic ensemble or else beyond bounds from a standpoint of cost.

Of course, if the motor car WERE to be considered purely as a piece of machinery and without relation to the "human machine" that is going to run it, then there would be little need for consulting the buyer.



"The designing of a car is not merely a matter of coordinating the mechanical components. Of even greater importance is the coordination of the machine to the tastes, desires, temperaments, nerves and physique of the driver and his passengers."

But the motor car is NOT just a piece of machinery - and it can never be because it plays such an intimate role in our lives. It bears too close a relation to the human factor for it to be considered in an impersonal way.

Progress in future design will come, not alone out of the research laboratories and engineering textbooks, but through a better understanding of the human factor.

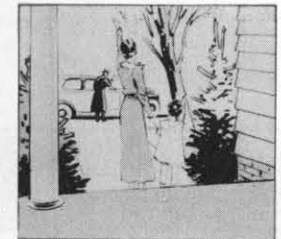
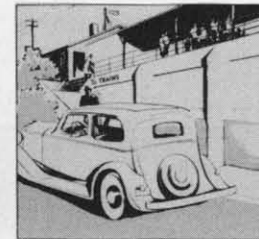
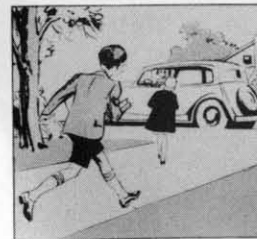
The automobile engineer must take into account, more than ever before, the coordination between the mechanical problems and the human aspects. As one of our engineers recently expressed it:

"The motor car does not become a complete mechanism until the driver is back of the steering wheel. The steering apparatus doesn't end at the steering wheel - any more than does a good braking system end with the foot pedal or the hand lever -

bones, muscle, sinews, nerves, human temperaments, instincts, and habits must all be taken into account by the true engineer."

The design of a restful seat must reckon with anatomy and posture. The operation of the controls must conform to the most natural movements of the feet, legs, and arms. The design of a little thing like a foot throttle must not only take into account the strength of materials and the laws governing mechanical links and levers. The physiology of the leg muscles and the possibility of nerve strain in long distance travel must also be considered.

Thus it is necessary for the designer to look beyond the engineering handbooks and interest himself in such things as physiology, psychology and neurology.



So then these are some of the reasons back of Customer Research, and will, we believe, answer most of the questions that have come to us regarding this activity.

The whole philosophy might be summarized as follows:

If a company can ascertain concretely and in detail just what its buyers would like to have, if it can build its products in conformity with those desires and design its sales and advertising messages so that they will definitely answer the questions that are uppermost in the mind of the motorist, obviously there will be a continued improvement in the merchandising processes and a broadening of the service rendered.

Merchandising has been aptly defined as a problem of getting the RIGHT PRODUCT, at the RIGHT PLACE, at the RIGHT TIME, and at the RIGHT PRICE.

CUSTOMER RESEARCH CONTRIBUTES TO THIS END.



Oh yes, there is just one other point that should be made clear:

Occasionally someone asks if our Customer Research activity isn't just a sales idea or an advertising "stunt".

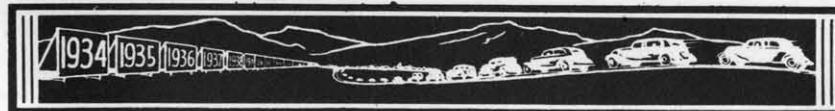
The answer is most emphatically "YES" - that is providing you leave off the word "Stunt".

There is nothing altruistic about General Motors Customer Research. We expect it to broaden our goodwill. We expect it to help us sell more automobiles. And we expect these benefits to be permanently assured instead of short lived because having the facilities, the talent and the desire to serve, coupled with the knowledge of how you want to be served, there seems no reason why we cannot serve you in line with your desires - SERVE YOU IN A MANNER THAT WILL MERIT YOUR CONTINUED AND INCREASING PATRONAGE.

Perhaps you'd like a free copy of our new 80-page, non-advertising book "The Automobile Buyer's Guide" which reflects the views of 211,000 motorists who responded to our recent consumer surveys and which contains interesting data on advances in automotive design. Write



CUSTOMER RESEARCH STAFF, General Motors, Detroit



100 YEARS AGO

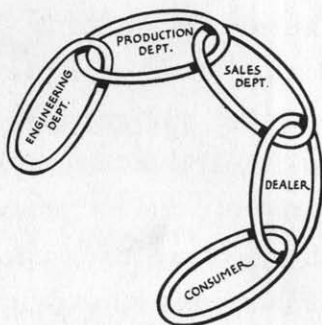
Under the conditions of the one man shop, with the head of the business serving as designer, manufacturer, purchasing agent, salesman, and service expert, - an intimate understanding of customer tastes and desires was automatically assured.



MODERN INDUSTRY

By the very nature of things, the bigger an institution grows, the wider becomes the gap between the customer and those responsible for directing the destiny of the institution.

With producer and consumer so widely separated it becomes increasingly difficult to keep the business sensitively attuned to the requirements of the customer.



GENERAL MOTORS

There is a need for some kind of liaison which would serve as a substitute for the close personal contact which existed automatically back in the days of the small shop.

CUSTOMER RESEARCH

- fills this need by providing an auxiliary and more direct line of communication between producer and consumer.

