

# Improving Documentation Through Customer Feedback

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Cisco Systems Technical Documentation  
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# Presentation Overview

- **Topic 1: Benefits from Customer Contact**
- **Topic 2: Overview of Program Methods**  
**Questions and Answers**
- **Topic 3: General Program Findings**
- **Topic 4: Launching Your Own Feedback Program**  
**Questions and Answers**

# Topic 1

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## Benefits from Customer Contact



# Quotable Quotes

***“Technical communicators may fail because they lack understanding of the products or processes for which they are to provide information or of the audiences for whom they write and how those audiences will use the product or process.”***

**–Foundations for Teaching Technical Communications**

***Excellent customer service makes the difference between the Hyundais and the Mercedes of the world.***

# Benefits to Writers

- Enhances understanding of **worldwide** readership.
- Expands knowledge of products or technologies.
- Validates documentation in multiple ways.
- Develops team and leadership skills.



Customer Quote: The XXX document was *“user-friendly, provided scenarios and examples for installation and configuration that gave me insights into the basics through job completion.”* (MQA; 12/14/03)

# Benefits to Customers and Company

- Customer contact reinforces a company's commitment to **ALL** customers.

*"The customer contact program not only helps us better understand our customers, but it demonstrates to them that Cisco is committed to customer success."* (Cisco Doc Mgmt)

- Follow-up and dialog increases customer satisfaction.

*"That's what I like about complaining to Cisco - someone actually answers!"* (Customer SB 1/19/04)

- Regular dialog improves document quality and features.
- Improved documentation decreases customer calls to technical assistance which equals money saved for the company.

# Customer Contact Benefits

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Company saves money and increases customer satisfaction.



# Topic 2

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## Two-Stage Program Overview



# Ongoing Customer Contact

**Two years ago management asked a team of writers to research customer service. This is what they found:**

- Conventions or on-site visits are very beneficial, but they do not allow for a regular stream of dialog throughout the year.**
- Online feedback forms generate opportunities for prompt customer contact.**
- Follow-up to feedback is flexible and sustainable.**

# What is Two-Stage Customer Feedback?

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- **Stage 1: Customers submit initial comments and a “score” using the online feedback form.**
- **Stage 2: Writers solicit additional information from customers (through email and phone interviews).**



# Stage 1: Online Feedback Forms

- **Feedback is distributed to the team automatically (email alias).**
- **The form is detailed and found at all levels of books.**
- **The form asks questions on accuracy, completeness, usability, and relevance.**
- **The questions on the form took over two years to finalize.**

# Feedback Form



## ☐ Cisco 1800 Series Hardware Installation

- ☐ Introduction to Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular) Hardware Documentation
- ☐ Overview of Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular)
- ☐ Preinstallation Requirements and Planning for Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular)
- ☐ Cable Information and Specifications for Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular)
- ☐ Chassis Installation Procedures for Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular)
- ☐ Cable Connection Procedures for Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular)
- ☐ Power-Up Procedures for Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular)
- ☐ Troubleshooting Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular)
- ☐ Installing Interface Cards in Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular)
- ☐ Installing and Replacing CompactFlash Memory Cards on Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular)
- ☐ Installing and Upgrading Internal Modules in Cisco 1800 Series Routers (Modular)

## Cisco 1800 Series Hardware Installation

Is this Cisco documentation helpful? Click [here](#) to give us your feedback.

*Click the links on the left to view the individual chapters in HTML format.*

# Feedback Form



## PROVIDE FEEDBACK

**We in the Cisco Documentation Group are very interested in your opinion of our documentation. The information in the survey below will help us create documentation that will better serve your needs**

Main Corporate HQ  
Cisco Systems, Inc.  
170 Tasman Dr.  
San Jose, CA 95134  
USA  
(408)526-7208  
(800)553-NETS or  
(800)553-6387

1. How would you rate the overall quality of Cisco Technical Documentation on a scale of 1 (poorest) to 5 (best)?

Accuracy

- 1  2  3  4  5

Completeness

- 1  2  3  4  5

Usability

- 1  2  3  4  5

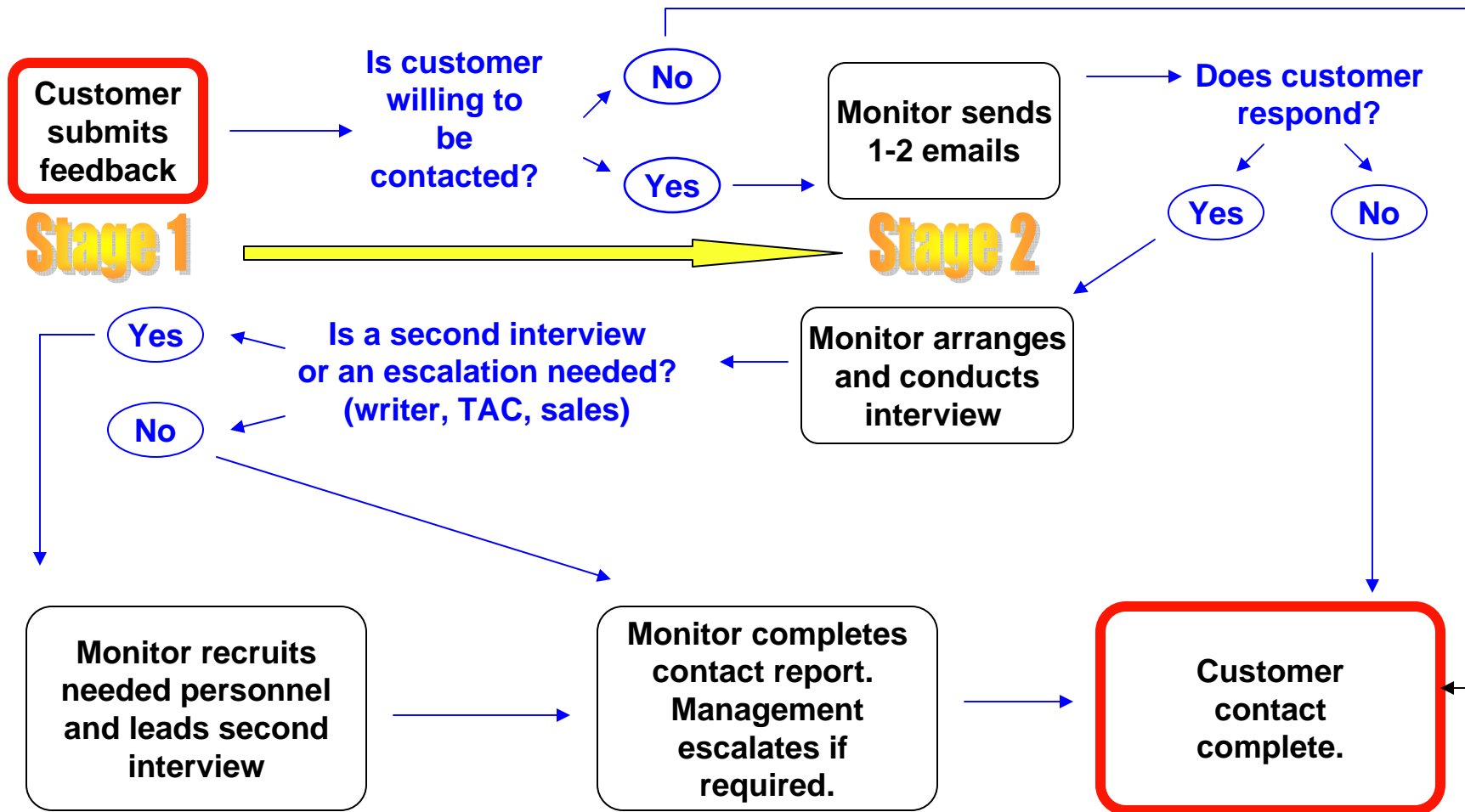
Relevance

- 1  2  3  4  5

2. Do you believe that the overall quality of Cisco Technical Documentation is getting better or worse? Please use the comment box to indicate the reason or include examples of better documentation.

- Better  
 No Opinion  
 Worse

# Customer Contact Process Flowchart



# Managing Time Factors

**The time required for monitoring varies:**

- **Frequency of response rates**
- **How many respondents are open to contact**
- **Complexity of cases and interviews**
- **What we learned:**
  - **Heavy feedback caseloads can be distributed across the team.**
  - **Average of two hours per case (presuming interview).**

# Phone or Email Interview?

- **Attempt to get a phone interview if:**
  - **Customer expresses an issue or frustration.**
  - **Customer rates documentation poorly.**
  - **Customer is satisfied and open to contact.**
- **Email-only interviews are beneficial when:**
  - **Customer does not want a phone interview.**
  - **Language or time-zone is an issue.**

# Escalating Cases

- **Escalation (at monitor's discretion)**
  - When to involve the writer of the document.
  - When to involve Cisco technical support, sales, marketing, or other teams
- **How long is the monitor accountable to customer**
  - Until the case is closed or escalated.
  - Cases escalated through the program manager.

# Relationship with Technical Support

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- **Program efforts complement technical support.**
- **We respond to customers more quickly (in comparison to documentation bug alias).**
- **Company gets cost savings when writers resolve documentation problems.**

# Case Studies

- **The Red Headed Man**
- **The Eternal Search & Find Problem**
- **Revision History Table Request**
- **No Service Contract Sneak Ins**

# Questions and Discussion

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# Topic 3

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## General Program Findings



# Deriving Actionable Improvement

- **This program creates actionable improvement in the customer's experience.**
  - Opportunities for improvement frequently arise from the customer's desk.
  - Improvement is often specific and measurable.
- **Input of offshore customers is solicited and valued.**
- **But what about cost?**
  - This approach is cost-effective and sustainable.
  - Writers volunteer time and are rewarded for their extra efforts.

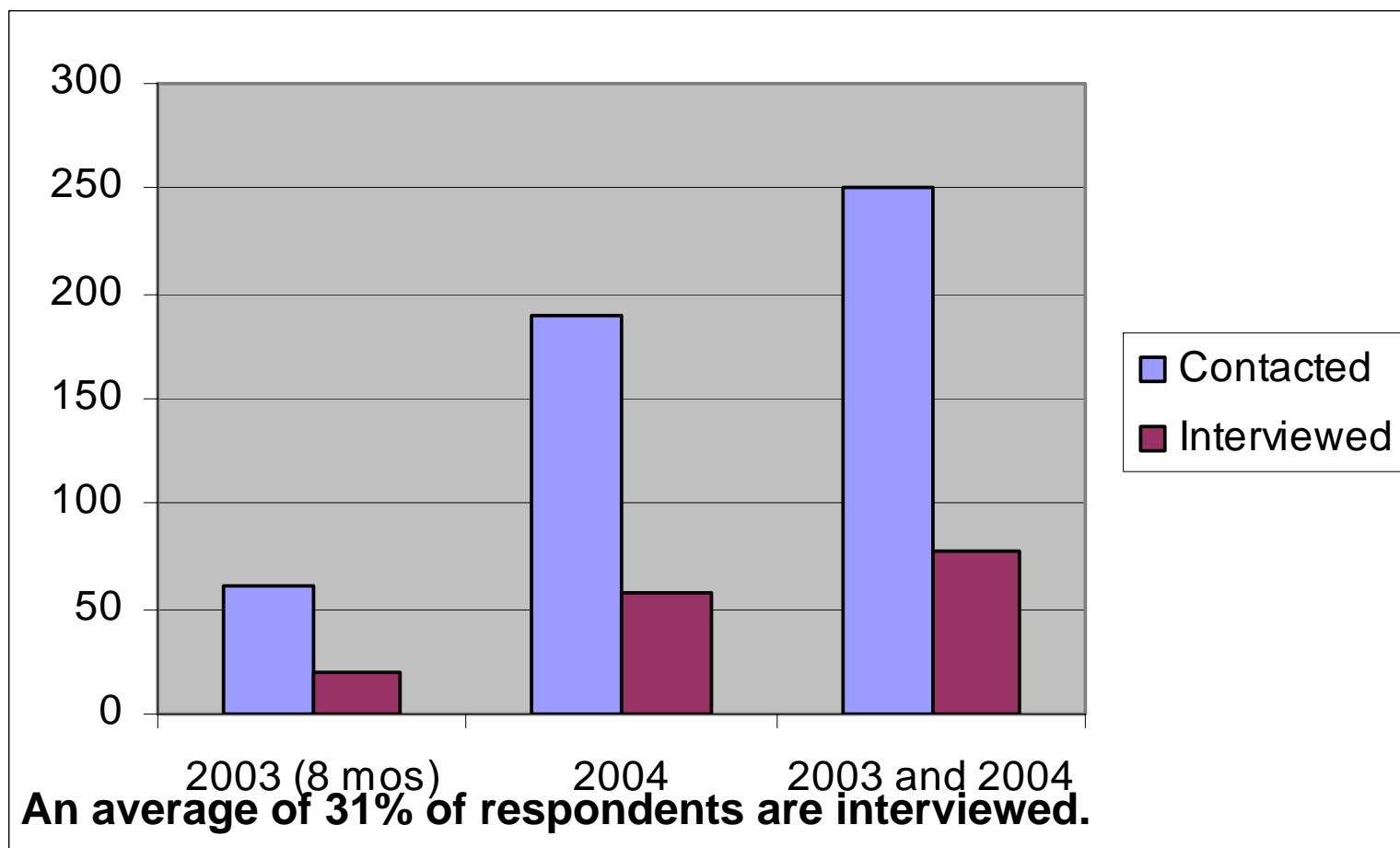
# Actionable Customer Requests

- **Customers have requested:**
  - **Book-level PDF documents**
  - **Release Notes enhancements**
  - **Document revision history tables**
  - **More configuration and troubleshooting examples for a given context**
  - **Broken or incomplete links; corrections to errors in documentation**
  - **More robust search tools on the web site**

# Resulting Cisco Initiatives

- **Many bugs have been fixed and documents have been enhanced from customer feedback.**
- **Implemented online book-level PDF files for additional product lines.**
- **Enhancement to Release Notes.**
- **Reinforced commitment to more examples and expanded troubleshooting initiatives.**
- **Revision history tables under implementation.**

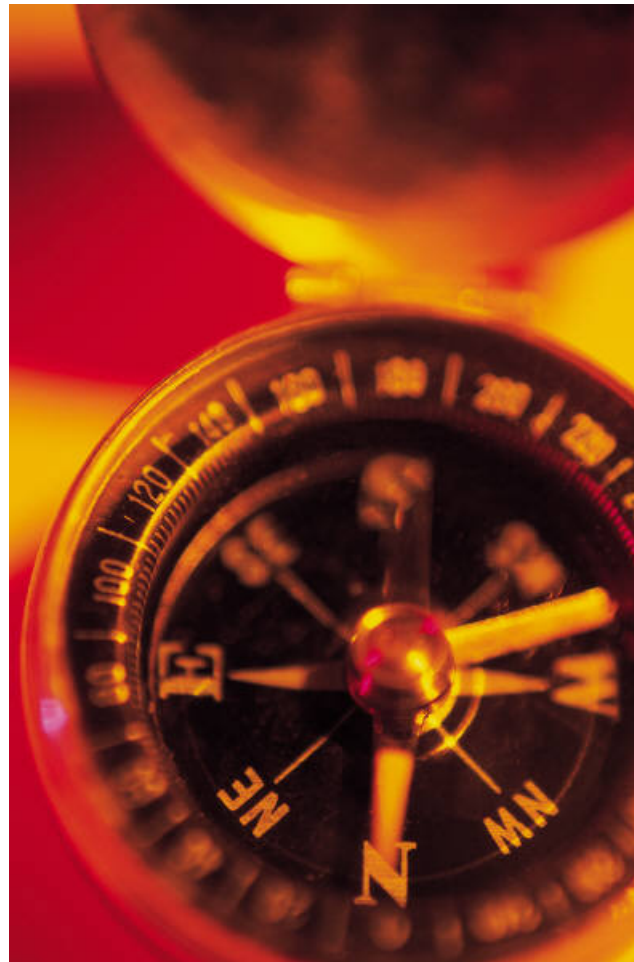
# Contact Metrics Within Our Team



# Topic 4

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## Launching a Feedback Program



# Staffing the Program



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- **One program manager or lead.**
- **One “monitor” per week (5 hours per week).**
  - Responds within 24 hours of initial feedback.
- **What we learned:**
  - Managerial support is critical to all processes.
  - Have a sufficient pool of trained monitors to share the workload.

# Managerial Support

- **Managerial support is critical to success.**
- **Management looks to writers for front-line information about the customer experience.**
- **Management enables further document improvement in response to what we find.**
- **Additional perspectives from Cisco management about customer contact:**
- **Additional perspectives from Cisco management about customer contact:**
  - *“When we talk with customers, we represent Cisco directly to the day-to-day users.”*
  - *“Most importantly, it enhances the 1:1 personal contact that is essential for Cisco's success.”*
  - *“Most often, just realizing that Cisco cares enough to talk directly with customers is disarming, encourages open communications, and increases their satisfaction.”*

# Designing Web-Based Forms

- **Online feedback forms can vary in complexity.**
- **What we recommend:**
  - Identify the source document.
  - Identify the customer's task and status.
  - Ask if the customer saved a call to tech support.
  - Measure customer satisfaction with categories (scaled 1–5): Accuracy, Completeness, and so forth.
  - Request permission to contact them and obtain their contact information.
  - Ensure and convey that privacy is protected.

# Encouraging Readership to Respond

- Response rates can vary greatly.
- **What we recommend:**
  - Offer rewards (such as a monthly drawing). \$\$\$
  - Implement wide visibility for feedback forms.
  - Remind respondents that their privacy is protected.
  - During initial follow-up email, make a first good impression to convey that you are really listening.

# Maintaining Records

## What we recommend:

- Interview reports
  - Include initial feedback and customer quotes.
  - Use customer name for file naming convention.
  - Use a consistent format; summarize contact and identify potential action items.
- Sign-up roster for tracking monitor “shifts.”
- Monthly tracking spreadsheets
  - Track statistical improvements in customer satisfaction.

# Scalability or Customization

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- **Easy to modify our recommendations.**
- **Scalable for smaller documentation groups.**

# More Customer Quotes

- ***“The documentation needs several basic configurations so the user can quickly determine what to do.”*** MYR 1/11/05 in response to what he would like in a particular document.
- ***Would like to see “Instructions of command of the equipment and their application, as well as theoretical explanation practices to the moment to configure”*** JAL 2/16/05 in response to what he would like in the document.
- ***“That's what I like about Cisco ... someone actually answers!”*** SB, 1/21/2004
- ***“Thank you very much! This is far better than the previous revision. It is simple to read and extremely useful.”*** RS, 10/14/04, in response to getting additional information
- ***“It would be great if we can get a 3D picture (in flash or any other software) of the router /switch we are searching for in the Cisco site.”*** MR, 10/21/04, in response to what to improve in document.
- ***“I appreciate you getting back (to me) so quickly... Keep up the great work. Feel free to e-mail me more surveys.”*** BT, 12/3/2003

# Presentation Summary

- **Customer contact provides customers, writers, and management with sustainable benefits.**
- **Dialog with Cisco customers using online forms and interviews is efficient and cost-effective.**
- **Customer contact improves documentation and generates new initiatives.**
- **Similar programs can be launched with easy variations, but there are at least a few components that most efforts will have in common.**

# Questions and Discussion

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