Symbioss
Transforming relationships, unlocking growth

Why one number can't always work

Eight findings on measurement, and four conclusions worth acting on.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

01 NPS did not predict growth any better

Tested against real revenue growth in 21 consumer organisations, NPS showed none of the clear superiority claimed for it over ten other feedback measures.

02 Two versions of NPS and only one works

In US sportswear, NPS asked across all potential buyers predicted later sales growth. NPS asked after a transaction, of recent buyers only, did not.

03 NPS works, satisfaction works better

NPS tracked reported word of mouth in most consumer product categories. Satisfaction, though, explained slightly more of the variation in financial performance.

04 Its inventor says the score is misused

Reichheld says NPS has been gamed and misused in ways that hurt its credibility, and now pairs it with earned growth, loyalty read from the accounts.

05 Satisfaction is linked to results

Across 245 studies and a combined sample of more than 1.1 million, satisfaction is linked to commercial results, but how strongly depends on the setting, the market and how it's measured.

06 Same score, different relationship

Among a US theatre's occasional buyers, satisfaction explained future intentions. Among its regular subscribers, trust and commitment did instead.

07 No single measure beats the whole picture

Across 94 studies and 38,000 relationships, hard results tracked the combined measure of relationship strength best, and commitment on its own least.

08 Engagement levels predict results

Across 120 organisations over two periods, client engagement and employee engagement both tracked performance, and client engagement more strongly.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

01 Don't expect one measure to serve every purpose

NPS is a reasonable check on how the last piece of work went and a poor guide to growth, and many organisations ask it to do both. Keep it for the job it does. Then go through your dashboard and write down, against each measure, the question it's there to answer. Drawn from findings 1, 2 and 4.

02 Read and treat these three measures separately

A single score won't tell you what is wrong. Trust, satisfaction and commitment move together often enough to look like one thing, and apart often enough to matter. Read them separately, and remember that two clients giving the same score can be in very different relationships. Drawn from findings 6 and 7.

03 Read the survey alongside the accounts

The survey records what clients say. Your revenue, retention and referrals show what they do. Reichheld's own remedy is to read loyalty out of the accounts, and client engagement is the measure that tracks performance. Put the two side by side before believing either. Drawn from findings 4 and 8.

04 Published benchmarks won't tell you much

A benchmark from another industry tells you little about yours, and you can score well against it while your own client base shrinks. Judge yourself on direction. Drawn from findings 3 and 5.

Sources by finding 01 Keiningham et al., Journal of Marketing (2007) · 02 Baehre et al. (2022); Baehre (2024) · 03 Jaramillo et al. (2023) · 04 Reichheld et al., Net Promoter 3.0, Harvard Business Review (2021) · 05 Mittal et al., Marketing Letters (2023) · 06 Garbarino & Johnson (1999) · 07 Palmatier et al., Journal of Marketing (2006) · 08 Kumar & Pansari (2016). July 2026

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