

## **Survey Design Workshop Prep, Part 1 (tentative)**

Survey design refers to the process of creating surveys that get responses. This is important because it allows you to better understand your stakeholders, so you can make more data-driven decisions, and fix areas that are falling short. Done right, a good survey can be the driving force for huge positive change.

### **How to design a survey**

#### *Planning*

The first stage of survey design is all about planning. This is where you'll decide what you want to focus on, why you're running a survey at all, who you want to target, and more.

If you don't get this stage right, you'll end up with a survey that doesn't have any clear goals, or fails to achieve its objectives. To get any meaningful feedback from a survey, you need to be clear about what you're trying to achieve.

This initial stage is extremely important and is not something to skim over or rush through. In fact, the planning stage should take up a large chunk of the overall process.

#### *Figure out your goals*

The goal of the survey is what gives it structure and influences every part of the process. Here are some examples of goals for surveys:

Find out what customers think about your brand versus the competition.

Assess the main challenges faced by customers in your industry

Learn what customer like the most and least about a specific product

Goals should typically be narrow enough that there is no risk of confusing your stakeholders or your respondents. Narrow goals also avoid overwhelming your respondents with questions.

A clearly defined goal helps the team draw inspiration and stay united and focused. Once you have decided on a goal, you'll have a much better idea of what type of questions to ask, the type of respondents you want to reach, and so on.

#### *Decide who you want to target with your survey*

The next stage of the planning process involves deciding who will actually take part in your survey. This is called the target population, and it should reflect the goal. For example, if you're asking how your product impacts a person's job it's probably not a good idea to target people under 16, or people over 70 as they are unlikely to be working.

### *Choose the right sample*

The target population you choose will often be too large to effectively survey. This means you'll have to select a sample — a smaller group that represents the larger demographic. You can then take these results and extrapolate them to the wider population.

Done right, this group will be representative enough to act as a miniature version of the whole. Sampling allows you to achieve your goals with a fraction of the cost, time, and resources required to survey the entire target population, which in most cases, would simply not be possible.

*Pick the right survey method:* You can choose from what you find to be the most appropriate method. It can be one-on-one surveys, paper surveys, telephone surveys, mail-in surveys, panel sampling/panel surveys, or online surveys.

## **Forming Survey Questions**

- Create a list of everything you want to know
  - Where people live,
  - Gender
  - Class and ethnic background Immigration history
  - Family makeup
  - Jobs and work
  - Living conditions
  - Working conditions
- Arrange them thematically
  - Demographics police/community relations Education and schools Healthcare
  - Housing

An important survey design principle: As you design the types of questions you will use, imagine the potential answers you will generate and how you will analyze the data you collect.

### ***How to Form Questions***

- Designing a closed-ended question
  - Weak: How do you feel about the police?
  - Strong: Which of the following best describe your feelings about the police? a) trust b) neutral c) fear
- Use Non-leading questions
  - Leading: Do you think the police are doing a bad job?

- Non-leading: How would you rate police performance in providing safety in your neighborhood? a) good b) average c) bad
- One-Dimensionality
  - Avoid questions with more than one dimension. Consider the types of questions needed to generate substantive answers
  - Weak: Do you feel you cannot travel freely due to your immigration status?
  - Strong: Two separate, one-dimensional questions
  - Do you feel you cannot travel freely?
  - If Yes, is this due to your immigration status?
- Consider the Types of Questions you want to ask.
  - How do you want your questions to look like? How do you want to frame your questions?

### ***Open ended? Multiple Choice? Ratings?***

Example: A group wants to know the frequency of visits to its website by its constituents. How often do you visit our website? \_\_\_\_\_

The respondent may answer “a lot” or “once in a while.” These answers don't provide specific information. The next two questions set up a more specific response.

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On average, how many times a month do you visit our website? \_\_\_\_\_

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In the last month, how often did you visit our website?

A) More than once a day

B) Once a day

C) Once a week

D) 1-2 times a month

E) Rarely or never --

On a scale from 1 to 5 (one being rarely, five at least once a day), how often in the last week did you visit our website? \_\_\_\_\_

### **More TIPS on Forming Survey Questions**

1.) Keep it Neutral.

“How poorly is the president doing on job creation?” is not a neutral question. “How would you rate the president’s performance on job creation?” 1) Very Good 2) Good 3) Average 4) Bad 5) Very Bad-- gives the respondent the opening to make her or his own judgment.

## 2.) Mix it up. Survey-

takers tend to respond to serial questions habitually. If you ask five “yes/no” questions in a row, they may repeat their most common answer- even if it doesn't apply.

## 3.) Vary the types of questions.

A multiple choice can be followed by a yes/no; then a ranking question (rate 1 through 5) or a content-related question. 10 yes/no questions in a row can give you 10 “yes” answers even though the respondent meant to say “no” to several of the questions.

## 4.) Avoid questions that can be answered with "I don't know."

## 5.) Ensure that your questions are designed consistently.

Avoid broad questions such as “How often do you read the magazine?” Rather “In the last six months, how often did you read the magazine?” You would design all frequency- based questions with this type of clause.

## 6.) Do not combine two questions into one.

## 7.) Try to avoid designing questions with multiple answers.

For example a question that begins with “circle all that apply” will be more difficult to work with when you are analyzing data.

Lastly, in a Survey design, first questions are usually “warm up” questions that are non-invasive, and easily answered. This can build trust. Follow immediately with important questions; don't leave these toward the end of the survey. 30 minutes or less is appropriate time for a survey.