

How to write a market research survey

'HOW TO' GUIDE

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Meeting the needs of your customers is the key to a successful business. What better way to find out those needs than to ask them directly?

Conducting market research surveys can be an effective way to pinpoint what is lacking in your business and discover what your customers need you to provide. Furthermore, you can discover a wealth of information about their demographics you will not have previously. The introduction of online survey websites means that it's now even easier to set up a questionnaire and encourage your customers to partake in it.

However, this may be easier said than done. There are many things to think about before questioning your customers. Questions may include:

- How am I going to collect the data?
- What do I want to gain from this survey?
- What do I already know about my customers?

This helps decide how to move forward in survey planning.

There are five key stages to producing an effective survey that will provide accurate information from your customers.

1) Set an objective

Before thinking about questions that are suitable for the survey, ask yourself what you want from this survey. Do you want to know the demographics of your customer base? Do you want to see if you need to improve a specific product? Are there other things you may be able to sell to current customers?

The options are almost endless, but it's critical that you decide on an objective and stick to it.

It's easy to be side-tracked by other things you may want to learn but it's important to remain focused on your goal.

2) Decide on how to deliver your survey

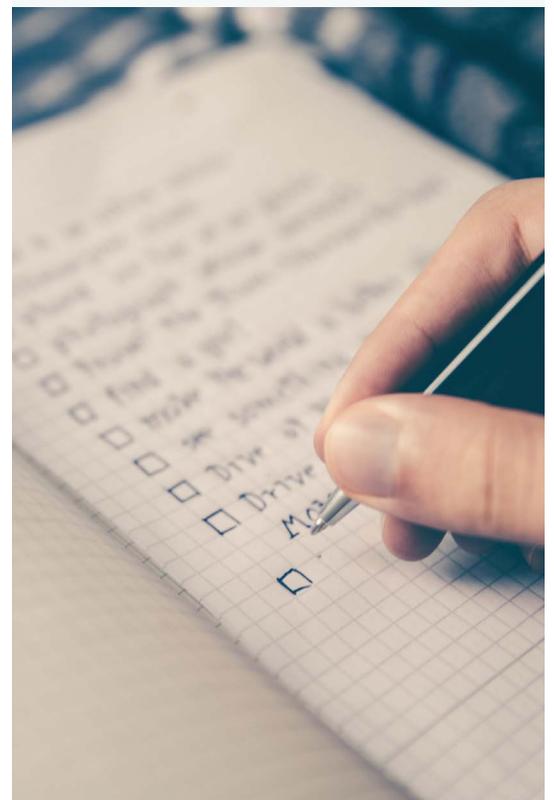
As previously mentioned, there are multiple ways to conduct a survey. Decide if you want the survey to be delivered in person, over the telephone with an interviewer, or if an online survey is more appropriate.

Online questionnaires must be logical and easy to understand. Surveys using an interviewer allow the person asking the questions to be more flexible with the person.

Time and budget constraints are also points to consider. An online survey is going to be more cost-effective than employing people to find customers.

Online survey tools:

- [Survey Monkey](#)
- [Get Feedback](#)
- [Checkbox](#)
- [Survey Gizmo](#)



Key steps to writing a market research survey:

1. Set an objective
2. Decide on how to deliver your survey
3. Decide on the questions you want to ask
4. Craft your questions carefully
5. Order your questions

3) Decide on the questions you want to ask

This may seem obvious when the objective of the questionnaire has been set. Still, take the time to write down all the information you will ideally get from the survey.

Additionally, write down the ways in which you could ask the question; this may alter your answers.

4) Craft your questions carefully

Now you know what answers you want, the way the questions are worded is important.

Some questions may be better asked as closed questions (a yes/no answer) while others are better asked as open questions (where a range of answers will be acceptable).

Sometimes closed questions are ideal, such as when you want to see if a customer has purchased or is interested in a certain product. Their pitfalls come when they may be used to guess what the user will say.

This does not mean open questions are without their faults. It is easy to ask a biased question in a survey. For example, if you run a business selling log cabins, you may want to ask your customers 'What do you like about the log cabins?' This assumes that the customer liked something about your log cabins and leads them to write what they liked. Amending the question to 'What, if anything, did you like about the log cabins?' or 'What did you like and dislike about the log cabins?' removes this bias.

Multiple thought questions may also be used. In this example, you could ask 'On a scale of one to ten, how much did you like the log cabins?'

The quality of your questions will ultimately determine the quality of the answers you receive.

5) Order your questions

Question order is important. It must seem logical to follow through or customers may not get to the end.

Start by asking simple questions and move to the more detailed ones as you move through. Questions that are difficult to follow mean that again, the reader may not reach the end of the survey.

If you are using an online service to create your survey, once it has been uploaded, maximise your reach by emailing it to your customers and sharing it on social media.

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Common problems with market research surveys:

1. Questions can be too long – respondents are more likely to give up on a survey when questions are wordy and don't get to the point quickly.
2. Questions that allow wordy responses can make it more difficult to analyse the data. They do, however, provide a more personal insight into some issues.
3. As stated previously, biased questions can easily creep in.
4. Some clients may be difficult to reach i.e. they may not have or know how to access the internet and they may be missed with an online survey.

Each problem can be minimised by working to produce an effective survey. With a strong survey, you should get a good grasp of their wants and needs, and you will be well placed to meet them.