

The Art and Science of Surveying 5 Quick Tips



bChannels regularly surveys and interviews technology resellers to help OEMs (the manufacturers) understand how their partners prefer to interact with their programs, technology, training, and enablement tools. With the introduction of surveys as a service (names you've come to recognize like Survey Monkey, Survey Gizmo, Google Surveys, etc.), surveys are now available to just about any person or company interested in launching one.

Problem is, just because you can execute on a survey doesn't mean that you can trust the results. Surveys are both an art and a science, and getting good information from a survey isn't as simple as it may seem.

1. Just because you can play one fingered "Mary Had a Little Lamb" on a piano doesn't mean you can play Mozart's Requiem. Writing surveys is like that. Just because you can ask a question, doesn't mean you can write a survey with accuracy.
2. Just because you dissected a frog one time in school, doesn't mean you're prepared to operate in surgery. Knowing that surveys exist doesn't mean you know the science behind surveys.

If you're going to write a survey that'll provide an answer to your BIG question, you need to do it right. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when you try to execute your next survey:

1. Understand your target audience and how to reach them. In our world, bChannels' frequently surveys partners of technology vendors; the channel. If we don't understand that, we get answers that seemingly look ok, from people that are ill-qualified to answer those questions but know a little about technology.

2. Understand what you are trying to accomplish. Surveys generally have a few parts, screening questions so you know you have the right target, the base of the survey, and a firmographics or demographics section that's aimed at segmenting those that have answered the questions. If all three elements aren't in place, you're going to wish you had more information than you end up with. The base of the survey should have a thought through flow and process to properly engage participants and still answer your business questions.
3. Focus the content of the questions on only the information that you need. The ideal survey should not exceed 15 minutes. If you assume that a participant can answer about 3-4 questions a minute, that gives you 45-60 total questions. You lose a lot of people after that. Some methodologists would tell you the survey should be less than 10 minutes. Keep the length of the survey in mind.
4. Write the survey at a 'high school' level. If your participant can't understand what you're asking them, they aren't going to tell you. They'll give an answer to your question and move on. You'll never know you confused them, and the accuracy of the question will be suspect.
5. Finally, avoid double-barrelled questions. Don't ask questions with AND/OR questions embedded in them. Please rate our Art and Technology on a 5-point scale. What does a 5 mean? Are they happy about your Art OR your Technology? You'll never know.

That's a little bit of the art and the science around surveys. There are full courses in Universities that teach how to write and execute them, but this gives you a start. The next time you execute a survey, think through the art and the science, and if you have a complex target audience, like the channel, seriously consider engaging a company that has some experience in your industry.

About bChannels

bChannels is the leading global specialist in partner networks. We provide Market Intelligence, we manage Channel Marketing, and we drive Sales Acceleration. We work with eighteen of the top twenty global technology vendors, and with many of the leading industry disruptors.

bChannels is identified as one of London Stock Exchange Group's 1000 Companies to inspire Britain internationally.

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