How We Got a 75.4% Response Rate on an Internet Survey

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What is SurveyMonkey?

SurveyMonkey is an online survey site that simplifies the survey process considerably. In the survey design phase, SurveyMonkey offers 17 formats for asking questions (multiple choice, true false, open-ended, etc). SurveyMonkey also has a diverse color palette for changing the appearance of the survey. As for implementation, SurveyMonkey has the ability to track respondents so you can recontact non-respondents and avoid pestering those who have already participated. SurveyMonkey can generate frequencies for each question and allows you to export data into programs like SAS or SPSS for more complex analysis. The SurveyMonkey site will send out the survey and subsequent reminders for you if you furnish a list of e-mail addresses and will also provide you with a link to the survey which can then be posted on your website or included in an e-mail for you to send to participants.

Limitations of SurveyMonkey

SurveyMonkey does have its limitations. Even with many question formats, it can be restrictive with regard to how you can ask a question or set up your answer sets. Although most e-mail servers allow messages from SurveyMonkey, institutions that maintain high security and intense spam blockers may block email from SurveyMonkey. An additional limitation is that only email sent by SurveyMonkey can track respondents. Participants who take the survey from any link other than the direct link to the SurveyMonkey site can not be traced.

Our final contact is a link created by SurveyMonkey but sent out through our own e-mail server. It is therefore untraceable, but being our final contact was not important to our study.

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The Dillman Method*

5 Necessary Elements for Achieving High Response Rate
1) Respondent-friendly survey
2) Inclusion of stamped return envelopes
3) Five varied contacts with survey recipients
4) Personalized correspondence
5) Inclusion of token financial incentive in the same mailing


Contact Steps

Step 1 – Initial contact letter alerting recipients that they will be receiving an e-mail to participate in an internet survey

Step 2 – E-mail sent by SurveyMonkey with a link to take the survey

Step 3 – Thank you/Reminder postcard

Step 4 – SurveyMonkey resends e-mail with survey link to all non-respondents

Step 5 – Personal phone call to all non-respondents

Step 6 – E-mail sent from our own e-mail address with a link to take the survey

*These are the elements we followed when mailing our initial contact letter. We did not send stamped return envelopes and made no attempt to contact non-respondents after step two.