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SECRETS TO RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT: 7 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SURVEY DESIGN

As the adage goes, 'You get out what you put in,' and that's never been truer than in survey design. And it is never more important than today as our industry struggles with respondent engagement (and overall quality).

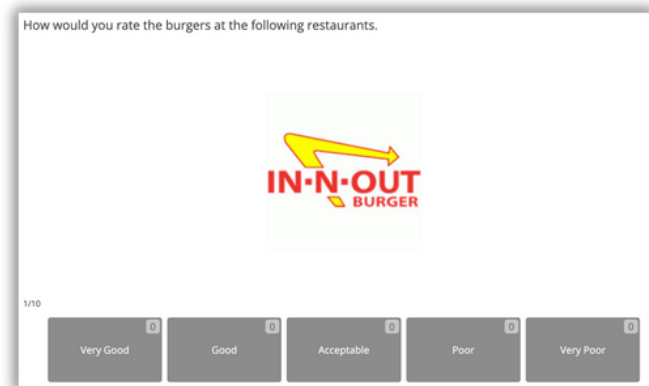
As we all know all too well that as consumers are constantly bombarded with surveys, advertisements, and other types of communication. As such, it's not only difficult to capture their attention but also to keep them engaged throughout the survey process.

When a lack of respondent engagement can threaten the validity of your research, whether it's low-quality data, non-completion of surveys, or any number of other factors, it's imperative you take the time to get the survey design right.

WHAT'S THE SECRET TO EFFECTIVE SURVEY DESIGN? THESE SEVEN SIMPLE TIPS CAN HELP:

TIP #1:

Change Up the Question Type. No one wants to answer 10 grid questions, or open ends in a row, right? But even if you need to ask that many grid questions, you still have the option to change the types. We recommend trying an auto-scrolling grid that jumps down or doing a card sort. They do the same thing, but presenting the question in different ways helps to keep respondents engaged.



TIP #2:

Don't ask redundant questions. This one may seem really obvious, but so often, we see surveys asking the same question three different ways. Respondents will disengage, and you'll get bad responses. In general, put yourself in the respondent's shoes. Would you want to continue answering questions that you've already answered when you have 20 other things to do? Think about what you really want to ask and do it once.

TIP #3:

Keep surveys short. Similarly, respondents also don't want to continue long surveys. They will check out and not finish, or give you poor quality responses. If it's essential to design a long survey, consider creating blocks that rotate in and out so different people see different questions while having respondents see the same core questions.



TIP #4: **Be mindful of where you put your screener questions.** If you have quotas, these questions need to be up near the screener so that respondents won't have to go all the way through the survey unnecessarily. For example, we recently saw a political survey with quotas on Democrats and Republicans, which were put at the end of the survey. As a result, respondents were termed at the end because they had enough Republicans and only needed Democrats. Imagine how frustrated respondents would be to have wasted that time!

TIP #5: **Optimize surveys for mobile.** In a world where over half of people are taking surveys on their mobile devices, it's essential that your surveys are mobile-optimized. This is especially true if you're targeting Hispanics and young men (where the percentages get even higher). Also, low-income populations are unlikely to complete surveys on a desktop, as many do not have internet access or a computer at home. What's more, simply requesting respondents turn their screen from portrait to landscape does not qualify as mobile optimized. This leads to frustration for many, and often results in respondents simply leaving the survey altogether.

TIP #6: **Don't ask long questions.** Again, this goes along with the general theme of designing your surveys to be simple and concise. If you write a paragraph to ask a question, people are going to skim it. You would, too, right? We get enough poor-quality responses without setting ourselves up for it, as well. So, if you've got a long question, go back and revise it so it gets the point across without any unnecessary words or explanations. Get to the point straight away.

TIP #7: **Don't forget quality assurance checks.** When you're designing a survey, we recommend having at least one open end so you can see if the response is legitimate or gibberish. But at the same time, don't have 10 open ends because people don't want to write that much. Here are our recommendations:

- If there's no need for an open end through the whole body of the survey, you can ask at the end what the topic of the survey was or what could we improve?
- Do a mismatch question where you say, "I've eaten meat in the past two days, and I'm a vegetarian." Or, ask one time, "What's your age?" And then, "What year were you born?" They don't have to be in the same question. Just have them a "little ways" apart, and then if there's an inconsistency, term them there.

Also, keep in mind that the red herring questions often used for checking if respondents are legitimate and/or paying attention, where you ask "Select green" or "Select the third from the left" don't work anymore. Bots are smart enough to do that.

Need help with research design for your market research project? , contact **Ellen Pieper, Chief Client Officer** at Ellen_Pieper@researchresults.com or 919-368-5819