

READEX REVIEW

Online

Winter 2009

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With so much online activity, is the mail survey still effective?

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With so much online activity, is the mail survey still effective?

The answer to this question is a resounding "yes." The mail survey, depending on your objectives, can be an excellent methodology; however, the appeal of low budget online surveys is often too much for some to refuse. The reasons why a mail survey is effective continue to mount, so there are a number of factors to consider before deciding on a methodology.

Results don't represent people you cannot survey

When results are meant to reflect a population as a whole, sample representation is one of the key indicators of the quality of results.

Surveys can only tell you about the group of people that has been sampled. Often, you're more likely to have street addresses for the population being surveyed, enabling each and every one of them to have the chance to be chosen for the survey sample.

On the other hand, if you only have accurate email addresses for a fraction of the population, an emailed survey sampled from this group would only represent the characteristics and opinions of that specific member segment.

Higher response leads to more stable data

Another indicator of data quality is response rate. The higher your response rate, the better job the data will do of describing your population as a whole. As response rate dwindles, the chances that the those who responded to your survey are different from



those that didn't respond increases and dilutes the strength of your results.

In general, mailed surveys continue to yield respectable response rates. Also, mailed surveys can benefit from a wide variety of techniques designed to boost compliance when working with a rather non-responsive sample.

Motivating circumstances

A survey incentive works best when it invokes a feeling of reciprocity—you gave me this token gift and I feel obligated to return the favor by completing the survey.

Furthermore, when the incentive is given to each respondent as part of the appeal, as is done with mailed surveys, it becomes more effective at boosting response rate and the projectability of the results.

The ease and immediacy of incentive delivery with mailed surveys provides an advantage. A dollar bill has been tested time and again and remains tops for return on incentive investment. This effective incentive is flat, so

Continued →

Thinking of cutting your marketing budget?

Consider this...

Over time it has become apparent that companies that maintain marketing exposure during recessions will have an easier recovery once the economy improves. On the other hand, it is more difficult for companies that withdraw during troubled times to overcome the lost opportunities.

American Business Media has updated their report, "The Importance and Value of B2B Advertising During Times of Economic Uncertainty" for 2009.

Simply visit their website (www.americanbusinessmedia.com) to download this popular offering that touches this relevant topic.

Mail Surveys Continued

it easily slips into the mailed survey kit; is lightweight, so it doesn't impact postage costs; has universal value; and has proven to be successful in eliciting the desired effect—a completed survey.

Deliverability

Mailed surveys are delivered where the respondent receives mail, providing the best opportunity for receipt. Physical addresses tend to change less frequently than electronic addresses, and when street addresses do change, the post office provides forwarding for a period of time.

Cutting through the clutter

This factor is a big one. When online surveys began to pop up, one thing that made them attractive was that there was less electronic clutter than that delivered by the postal carrier. Today, many would argue that the opposite is true. A printed letter may now be

more noticeable since emails that make it into the inbox of a potential respondent have to fight with many others for attention.

Personal attention reaps personal response

A mailed letter shows more effort on the survey sponsor's part and is likely to gain the attention of the recipient. In addition, if the survey kit is designed to look like personal correspondence, it is even more likely to get response. Another benefit is that if a respondent is unable to complete a mailed survey immediately, it is apt to sit on a desk as a reminder to be filled out.

When taking the above advantages into consideration, mailed surveys shouldn't be discounted as an effective way to collect the data necessary to represent a circulation, or another group, as a whole. ♦



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