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PERSONAL PLANNING

Guidebook #70:

Conducting Surveys to Improve Your Marketing Efforts..... 3

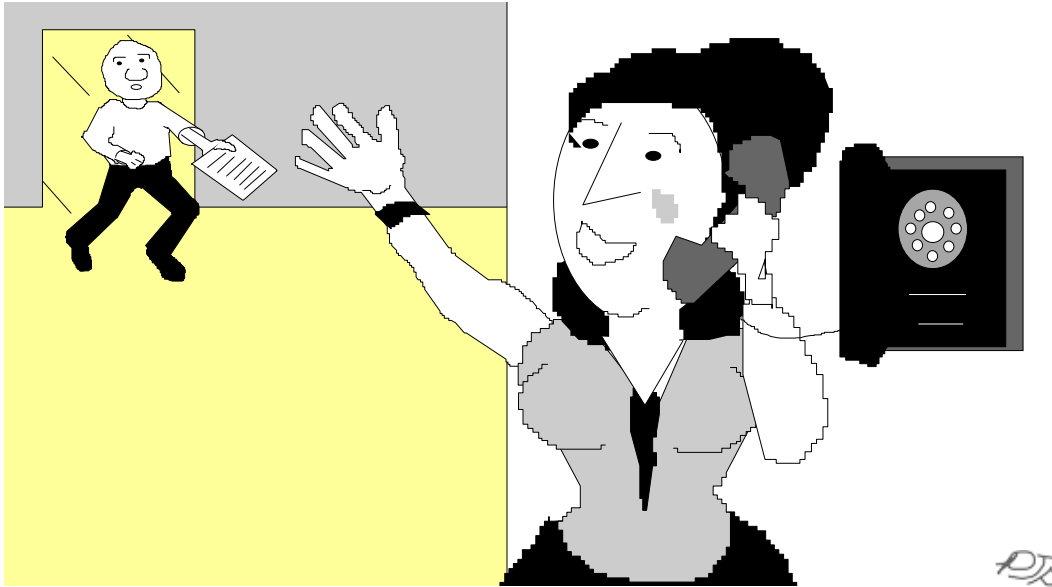
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*“I’m afraid you have the wrong number . . .
but wait just a moment . . . would you mind if
we asked you a few survey questions?”*

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CONDUCTING SURVEYS TO IMPROVE YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS

TO improve your marketing efforts, good information about the market is necessary. Because surveys are relatively inexpensive and adaptable to a wide range of problems, they seem to be by far the most popular device for gathering this research information.

In fact, frequently, a small market research program, based on a questionnaire given to present customers and prospective customers, is all you really need to discover key problems and areas of dissatisfaction. From this information, you can develop remedies, as well as, new products or services to complement your existing ones.

In the least, conducting a survey shows your customers that you care about their satisfaction and are always looking for new ways to improve your service.

TYPES OF SURVEYS

THE SURVEY method seeks to answer to specific questions through personal interviews, telephone interviews or mail questionnaires. Mail and telephone surveys are generally less expensive than personal interviews. Of the three types, the telephone survey will produce the most immediate results.

Types of Survey Objectives –

Surveys can be further classified according to your objective or purpose i.e., what information and knowledge do you want to acquire and what kinds of decisions do you want to make once you have that information.

Examples:

- Estimate the size of your market.

The important thing is not to stop questioning.

**ALBERT
EINSTEIN**

- Find out if you are offering the kinds of goods or services your customers want.
- Find out if your prices are consistent with your buyer's expectation of value.
- Find out if your promotions are working.
- Find out where customers live.
 - Find out why sales are down.
 - Identify competitors' weaknesses.
 - Identify how your business is perceived by your customers.
 - Identify or verify customer needs. Find out what they are really like
- Learn who your competitors are and what they are doing.



TYPES OF SURVEY QUESTIONS

THE PREPARATION of a useful survey or questionnaire requires clear thinking and planning. In particular, consideration should be given to the wording and sequencing of questions, how easily results can be tabulated, the validity of the questions themselves, and so forth (see sidebar for an example of a short survey for a pasta shop). Two common type of survey questioning formats are described below.

General Survey Questions

The following survey questions have been chosen to help you generate a quick basic structure for your own survey. Check those you think will provide you with the information you are looking for.

Sample Questionnaire

THE FOLLOWING IS a simple questionnaire used to survey the customers of a fresh pasta making shop:

- 1) What do you like about our pasta?
- 2) Why did you start buying our pasta?
- 3) How did you find out about our pasta?

How many times a week do you use:

- Fresh pasta
- Rice
- Potatoes
- OTHER carbohydrates

- Are we doing anything that bothers you?
- Are we providing brands and lines you want and expect? If not, please list what is needed.
- Did our advertising get your attention? Did it make you want to buy our product? Did you buy our product?
- Do you feel our business gives you good value for the money?
- Do you feel our business is truly a part of the community?
- How accessible are we when you need to contact us?
- How hard do you think we work at keeping you a satisfied customer?

Why Businesses Need to Regularly Conduct Surveys?

IT MAKES GOOD business sense for small businesses to conduct regular surveys for the following two reasons:

- 1) *Surveys keep small businesses closer to their customers than the big companies* – This gives them a competitive edge. They can respond much more quickly to their customers' likes, dislikes and changing buying habits.
- 2) *Surveys help put experience into perspective* – Experience can be a two-edged sword as it is made up of a tremendous mass of information acquired at random over a number of years. Surveys help determine what kinds of information have become dated and are no longer timely or relevant to making selling decisions.

- How helpful and polite are we?
- How much confidence do you have in our products or services?
- How often do we do things right *on time*?
- How often do we do things right the first time?
- How quickly do we respond to your requests for service?
- How well do we deliver what we promise?
- How well do we listen to you?
- How well do we speak your language?
- How well do we understand and try to meet your special needs and requests?
- How willing would you be to buy from

How willing would you be to buy from us again? (this question should come at the end of a survey)

us again? (this question should come at the end of a survey)

- Is our business a friendly place?
- Is our business clean and pleasant to be in at all times? How can we improve it?
- Is the service we provide meeting your highest expectations? If not, what areas can we improve?
- Overall, how would you rate the quality or our competitor's service?
- Overall, how would you rate the appearance or our facilities, products, communications and people?
- Overall, how would you rate the quality or our service?

- What do you like least about our company?
- What part of our service is most important to you?
- Would you recommend us to your friends?

NOTE In addition to the questions above, your survey might ask more specific questions directed towards the demographics of your market, such as: what age category your customers are in; whether they are students, employed or unemployed; what is their gender; and what range of income do they earn.

In addition to the questions above, your survey might ask more specific questions directed towards the demographics of your market, such as range of income, gender, etc.

Semantic Differential Survey Questions

Semantic differential surveys consist of a number of pairs of adjectives and/or short phrases printed on a sheet of paper designed to tap people's impressions, opinions or attitude towards objects, concepts or things. These pairs, called polar words or phrases, are opposites of each other in meaning. Examples include:

bad -----good

high priced -----low priced

The two opposites that form a pair are usually set off from each other by dashes. The entire line thus formed is referred to as a semantic differential scale. To ascertain a person's opinion about a

particular subject (or object), you then ask the individual to check off the one position on each of the several scales that most nearly coincides with the way they feel about the subject. Scales are typically written:

1 2 3 4 5
(circle one)

On the following two pages are examples of semantic survey questions, which can be used for on surveys for a manufacturing company, wholesaling enterprise, retailing firm or a service business. It should be noted that a

Harvey Mackay, author of "Swim With the Sharks" says, "the key to serving customers better and be one up on the competition is to learn as much as possible about them." To achieve this, he offers his own 66-point questionnaire which covers such details as a customer's personal and family background, education, business background, special interests and lifestyle. It ends with a section called "The Customer and You," designed to profile the customer's loyalties and ethical positions.

FUNFACT

well-chosen semantic survey question is a question that can be answered very quickly. The average respondent should need no more than two or three minutes to complete a sheet that contains up to fifteen questions.



Manufacturing Company

Company Atmosphere – cold & business like ● warm & friendly

Corporate Vision – backward ● progressive

Credit Policies – stringent ● liberal

Customer Service – poor ● good

Deliveries – slow ● fast

Guarantee – barely adequate ● superior

Product Quality – poor ● excellent

Product Reliability – bad ● good

Product Styles – unpopular ● popular

Wholesaling Enterprise

Adjustment Policies – poor ● good

Advertising Help – provides no help ● provides excellent help

Ease of Dealing With – difficult to deal with ● easy to deal with

Salespeople – unfamiliar with product lines ● knowledgeable

Merchandise – too many “out of stocks” ● readily available

Variety of Products – little variety ● wide variety

Retailing Firm

Ambiance – uncomfortable place to shop

● comfortable

Displays – unattractive ● attractive

Store Hours – inconvenient ● convenient

Parking – difficult to find ● easy

Return Privileges – strict ● easy

Store Layout – can't find anything ●
excellent (intuitive)

Interior – quite a shabby place ●
spotlessly clean

Salespeople – aggressive & pushy ●
helpful & low key

Check-out – slow ● speedy

Service Business

Company Reliability – unreliable ●
dependable

Office Personnel – competent ●
incompetent

Prices – expensive ● inexpensive

Sensitivity to Needs – sensitive ●
insensitive

Service – poor quality ● top quality

Services – poorly advertised ● well ad-
vertised

GETTING PEOPLE TO FILL OUT YOUR SURVEY

THERE is no point developing a survey if no one will fill it out. To encourage people to respond, personally present your survey to your customers along with a self-addressed stamped envelope (avoid stacking them by your cash register for casual distribution).

Also, have pencils and pens handy for them to borrow or take, offer gifts like key chains or even good quality T-shirts with your name on it, or consider giving customers one free spin on a slot machine with prizes. Have a sign

To encourage people to respond, personally present them to your customers along with a self-addressed stamped envelope (avoid stacking them by your cash register for casual distribution).

that says, “Before you leave we would like you to fill out this survey. In appreciation for your efforts, have a free spin on the house!”

NOTE If you decide to mail your survey to your customers, include the survey itself, a letter of explanation if needed, and a stamped (or metered) return envelope. Indicate clearly in the letter that the customer is not required to write their name and that they should return the sheet anonymously. This ensures that they will indicate their true feelings towards your company.

