



***THE 3-STEP COMMUNICATION
STRATEGY FOR YOUR ONLINE SURVEYS***

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Before, during and after a survey are the 3 most important times a communication strategy needs to be in place.

Online surveys are as much about “education” and “communication” as they are about “collecting data”, so it is important to keep this in mind particularly if this approach is new to you. A key benefit of online surveys is they provide respondents with a simple and efficient way to answer questions in an unobtrusive environment. And, with the right amount of communication before and after the survey is dispatched, you will contribute to making the entire respondent experience as positive as possible while ensuring higher participation rates.

1. PRE-SURVEY COMMUNICATIONS

If you have a printed or electronic monthly newsletter that is dispatched to your customers/members/staff on a monthly basis, this is a good place to start - as there is no additional expense in bringing a survey to their attention through these channels. Notifying your respondent group of a forthcoming survey, and identifying the “purpose” and “direction” of your questions will help offset respondents wondering: “what is this in my in-box?”

Pre survey communication is a positive step in imparting that your organization is proactively listening, learning, and addressing needs head-on. If you don’t have a printed or electronic monthly newsletter a common alternative is to send out a “postcard” identifying the forthcoming survey, (and other items you want to highlight). However with this approach printing and postage will be factors you’ll need to consider.

To the right is part of a message (*the company name is changed and reprinted with permission*) that should act as a good starting point in demonstrating how other companies approach pre-survey communications.

Dear valued customer:

The ABC Company is now using InSite Professional, a survey tool that gives us the ability to conduct web-based surveys on important customer service and product delivery issues. Using this streamlined approach, we plan to conduct customer surveys regularly and will provide you with timely follow-up on the areas issues we are exploring.

Your feedback will allow us to be current on customer expectations and will better inform our Customer Service Team about future directions and programs so that we can continue to meet our goals in delivering an “outstanding customer experience”.

Our first survey explores several topics and should take no longer than a few minutes of your time to complete. Some of the topics include: on-line ordering, order tracking and deliver, our loyalty program and some demographic information.

Your survey will be eMailed to you no later than May 30 with the following subject line: ABC Customer Service Survey. For your time, ABC will make available to all respondents wishing to receive a token of our appreciation a \$10.00 gift certificate for merchandise on amazon.com.

We look forward to hearing from you!
ABC Customer Services Team

2. SURVEY COMMUNICATIONS

When you dispatch a survey via e-mail, you have the ability to communicate to respondents in the e-mail subject line, e-mail body, on the survey itself or on a “landing page” (if you need to outline extended instruction, present specific terms and conditions or highlight detailed privacy policies etc. before they access the survey.)

Much of the information you will want to communicate should be in the e-mail body so that you can keep your survey as clean and visually light as possible. If you have sent out pre-survey communications, it is advisable that you make reference to this in the e-mail body for continuity.

After a survey has been submitted by a respondent, you may want to put some thought into a “thank-you” page message to reflect the survey feedback has been captured or convey other information like a link back to your home page. (By default, this feature is customizable using InSite.)

Second and 3rd-round distributions of your survey to non respondents should also have a different message in the subject line and e-mail body. You may want to simply include something like: *“This is a friendly reminder that we would still like to hear from you . . .”* Each message should build or stand on the shoulders of the previous message.

3. POST SURVEY COMMUNICATIONS

OK, your survey is complete you’ve got your data and analyzed your results. An important and often overlooked component to conducting surveys is validating to respondents that their time was indeed worthwhile. Sharing results (even at a very high level) with your respondents after the survey is complete sends a clear and positive message that you are proactively listening and learning - while re-enforcing “buy-in” for future surveys by highlighting outcomes and action items resulting from this process.

A good goal to keep in mind is to build a strong online “community” with your customers/members/staff so that you can start to leverage the internet for gathering timely feedback in the future, and in other areas extending beyond surveys - that have no doubt been identified through your surveys.

Keeping this strategy in mind will contribute to making the entire respondent experience as positive as possible and ensure higher participation rates for all your surveys.

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