



24 Tips!

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO INCREASING RESPONSE RATES

“When Survey Response Rates Are Low” - March 2012

by Compechek Market Research, home of the **ASK LISTEN RETAIN** Program

Research has shown that the two main reasons people participate in surveys are:

1) they feel it will affect something they care about, &

2) they want to share their opinion with someone who will listen.

These two points should drive the key principals to follow to ensure the highest level of participation.

INTRODUCTION:



It is difficult to predict the level of survey participation you will receive; survey response rates vary widely and depend on a variety of factors. With a better understanding of what influences response rates you may be able to estimate or even increase your response rate.

Response rates can be influenced by factors such as customer loyalty, brand recognition, incentives, invitation wording, perceived benefit from participating in survey, demographics and how actively respondents are engaged in the improvement process, among other things.

An important participation incentive to survey respondents is that their opinions will be heard and that action will be taken based on their feedback. If respondents believe that participating in a survey will result in real improvements response rates may increase, as will the quality of the feedback. Employing a back end system to the initial survey feedback that brings accountability to various levels of staff and management will ensure that feedback is listened and responded to. (More information on such a system can be found on the last page of this publication).

Response rates can soar past 85% (about 43 responses for every 50 invitations sent) when the respondent population is motivated and the survey is well-executed. Response rates can also fall below 2% (about 1 response for every 50 invitations sent) when the respondent population is less-targeted, when contact information is unreliable, or where there is less incentive or little motivation to respond.

To help improve your survey response rate keep the key factors in this publication in mind.

Today' businesses still face the time-honoured challenges of:
1) access to customers, 2) improving completion rates & 3) increasing the rate of response.
Without an accessible and responsive participant, it doesn't matter how interesting
your questions are or how clever your technology is.

Survey Response Rates

Tips On How To Increase Your Survey Response Rates

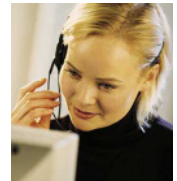
- 1. Provide value, value, value.** Online survey response rates increase dramatically when the participant gains value from responding. Identify multiple and relevant value for responding to the survey. Here are a just a few examples: offer a copy of the final results, additional savings, coupons, VIP status, or even a contest component as additional incentive.
- 2. Offer multiple methods to complete a survey.** Don't limit your survey efforts to any one method. Your customers have different lifestyles, different backgrounds and computer skills. Consider using any combination of the following survey methods: email blast with direct links to online surveys, redirect and copy/paste of URLs, mobile surveys, and telephone based surveys which typically offer the largest response rates in a short time period.



Online Surveys



Mobile Surveys



Telephone Surveys



Technology allows for mobility of survey respondents to respond at 'point of purchase' or during the 'in the moment experience'

- 3. Offer multiple access points to complete a survey.** There are three access points that you will want your survey to be available to your customers. 1) 'In the moment' in store experience, 2) at the customer's leisure (in transit, waiting in a restaurant or for an appointment, etc.) and 3) at home or work. To make your survey available at each access point, consider how you can promote your survey at your service counter, at your checkout line, on your invoices and receipts, on your web site (start survey now button), by personalized email, just to name few touch points.
- 4. Embrace change that new technology brings:** With over 70% of the world's population owning a mobile phone and the statics are growing, response rates can significantly improve by utilizing mobile surveying. Your customers usually always have their phone with them, turned on and able to respond 'in the moment' during their customer service experience. While online surveys commonly attract the 'outsiders', those either very happy or very unhappy, mobile surveys can void the gap and boost response rates. Mobile surveys that run in conjunction with standard online surveys, can combine the data received by both methods into one standardize reporting function.
- 5. Know your audience.** Clearly identify your target audience and take the time to understand how best to solicit information from them. Consider a variety of sources for possible respondents for example, consider posting your survey to newsgroups and social media sites.



Mobile survey solutions deliver unrivalled response rates compared to traditional insight channels. With mobile we are successfully igniting response rates and the enthusiasm of involved consumers, by personally and relevantly engaging them - **how, where and when they want.**



6. Survey Length. The length of the survey is seen to have a negative influence on survey response rates in that the longer the survey, the more likely it is that the response rate will be lower. Be honest about how long the survey will really take by promising in your communication that the survey will only take you 10 minutes for example. Make sure it only does take 10 minutes or shorten the survey to ensure it would take no more than what was promised it would.

7. If you ask it, use it. Be diligent and only ask questions which will drive action or that your company is prepared to act upon if the survey data dictates.

8. Never ask a question when a query will do. This is the toughest for most companies. Why ask a customer to input a convoluted receipt code, then immediately ask for information you should already know? All of this is available through POS data. Not only can you save your customers' time by avoiding these questions, you also avoid the risk of using flawed self-reported data, and its lack of reliability.

9. Short Survey expanding to more in-depth. By clipping back on questions in order to keep the survey short, you may feel that you are losing the opportunity to tap into the customers insights, especially since they are already completing the survey. On the other hand, you don't want to fail to receive the insights on the most important questions by the respondent opting out of the survey due to it's length. Here is a solution. Determine your most important questions, usually about 10 and includes 'loyalty' questions, thank the customer for their time and ASK if they would like to answer some more questions. Increasing the incentive at this time re-engages the customer to stay focused and to continue on with the survey. This added value at the critical moment, is a win for the customer and a win for your business.

Would you like to answer more questions so we can serve you better? *

Yes No



Short vs. Long Surveys

10. Design your survey from the point of view of the respondent. There is no better way to help response rate than to have a well-designed, respondent-friendly survey. Respondents can tell how much thought has gone into the survey questions and they respond accordingly.

11. Put your most important questions first. Get right to the heart of your survey in order to grab the respondent's attention. Do not start with a bunch of questions about the respondent (demographics): this is a big turn off. Show that you value your customer's time by only asking the most critical questions.

12. Make your first survey page simple - let people take the survey! Once people have decided to take your survey, they will want to get started. Studies show most people don't read extensive instructions.

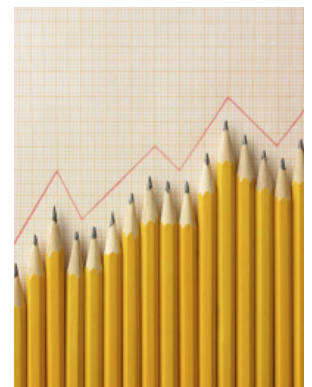
*This is the toughest for most companies. Why ask a customer to input a convoluted receipt code, then immediately ask for information you should already know?
All of this is available through POS data.*



13. Allow for some open ended questions. Allow customers the opportunity to provide some open-ended answers instead of answering just "other". It can be disappointing at the close of a survey to discover very high "other" response. This indicates that there is an insight that has not been presented in the options provided in the closed question format. To counter this from happening, we added some open-ended questions whereby the respondent could articulate what the "other" answer meant. For report writing, these open-ended responses can be used to confirm or articulate a finding.

14. Use graphics and Internet features strategically. Surveys generally don't need fancy graphics, and sometimes graphics can distract from the content of the survey, or influence answers. But there are a few ways to use graphics to improve your survey responses. These include providing an image and web link for a prize or incentive, using a multimedia embedded content survey.

15. Act on the information you receive and share the results with participants. When you are truly going to take action on the results of the survey, it shows through in the questions themselves. Communicating the survey's results and what was done to the survey audience will boost participation in future surveys.



Survey response rates increase dramatically when the participant gains value from responding. Identify multiple and relevant value for responding to the survey. Here are a just a few examples: offer a copy of the final results, additional savings, coupons, VIP status, or even a contest component as additional incentive.

Email Campaigns

Tips On How To Increase Your 'Email Survey' Response Rates



- 16. Prepare the respondent.** Communicate clearly and succinctly the purpose of the survey, how long you expect it to take them, how the information will be used, and that you plan to follow up with those from whom you don't hear.
- 17. Personalize your survey invitations.** Emails with a personal salutation result in increased response rates of at least five percent, and sometimes much higher. Send your email to "Dear Fred," rather than "Dear Valued Customer," Use personalized invitations sent **from** someone the respondent recognizes and respects.
- 18. Have a live person at the other end of your survey.** Have all replies to email invitations go to a live person who can respond promptly to any questions or concerns. For paper surveys, have a phone number for people to call if they have questions.
- 19. Write your subject lines such that they convey your message quickly** (preferably in the first 4 or 5 words). Most email clients [eg. MS Outlook] only display the first few words of a subject line, so it pays to make them count.
- 20. Keep your email invitation short.** Keep your email invitation short and simple, with just one link - the one to the survey. Be sure to explain the following: 1) Who you are and the purpose of your study 2) The survey's benefit to the individual as well as to your company 3) Length of survey - if it is short, emphasize that. But be truthful about times - people are more likely to stick with longer surveys if they know about how much time they will take.
- 21. Send the survey mid-week, during mid-afternoon.** Most e-mail users will start their Monday mornings cleansing their mailboxes of non-corporate or personal emails. The likelihood of your email being read is increased by sending out e-mail invitations mid-week, after 12pm.
- 22. Send reminder emails.** Some people will take your survey right away. You will get increased responses, however, if you send follow-up email reminders with the survey link included. This shows the respondent that their participation is important. It is best not to send more than two reminder emails. Be sure to filter out email addresses of people who do not wish to be contacted again. Reminder email generates typically 15% more responses.
- 23. Keep your email database up-to-date.** People change their email addresses frequently. To keep your list accurate, you should monitor the emails that bounce back or are undeliverable. You should also offer a way for survey participants to update their contact information in the email or survey.
- 24. Give the option for text-only email.** Since not every email server allows HTML emails or emails with images/multimedia, always include a plain text alternative.

About the ASK LISTEN RETAIN Program

The ASK LISTEN RETAIN process is a revolutionary product that helps a business to systematically gather, analyze and use information regarding their customer service issues. What makes it more effective than other programs is that the customer satisfaction data that is gathered via professional business to business telephone surveys is captured into a closed loop system. After we **ASK** your customers the important questions, our program helps management at each level **LISTEN** to the voice of your customers and deal with concerns discovered during the survey process. Your business can quickly make strategic decisions to **RETAIN** customers and further improve customer loyalty.

We **ASK** the important questions, your **LISTEN** and **RETAIN** customers for a lifetime by building quality relationships!

www.asklistenretain.com



About Compechek Market Research

Do you currently have an effective way to evaluate the quality of sales and service in your business? In today's competitive marketplace, these skills are more important than ever. The Compechek system is an affordable, easy-to-use and reliable program that accurately evaluates and monitors the quality of the sales and service that you currently offer.

As a business owner, you want to be sure that your sales and service staff are doing the most effective job possible in serving your valued clientele. Since 1994, Compechek has been successfully training employees to provide a quality of service that attracts and retains customer loyalty. Our comprehensive business analysis yields measurable results that highlight not only those areas of your business that are working well, but also the ones in need of attention.

www.compechek.com



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