

The Pros and Cons of Survey Methods

Personal Surveys	
PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High response rates Can choose target customers Can ask supplementary questions Can clarify misunderstandings Can use visuals and samples Can observe body language Can develop rapport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour intensive and time consuming Requires self-confidence Respondents have little time to think Will get the replies they think you want Door can be closed in your face Potential for abusive responses
Telephone Surveys	
PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good response rate Fast and convenient Can reach target customers Can cover a large geographical area Can ask supplementary questions Can clarify misunderstandings Make appointments for in depth survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews must be short Respondents have little time to think May receive inaccurate responses Costly in phone bills Only reach people with telephones Cannot observe body language Cannot use visuals
Postal Survey	
PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can target specific areas Convenient and easy to control Can be made visually interesting Can ask more personal questions Respondents have time to think They may express true feelings Respondent completes questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very low response No personal contact Unable to clarify answers Response may not be representative Postal charges Risk of someone stealing your idea

You will need to consider several factors when deciding on which type of survey method to use.

- How many questionnaires you want to get completed
- Your type of business
- Where your customers are located
- What information you want to gain
- What resources will you need
- How much time you can invest
- How much money you are prepared to spend
- How important you consider it to be
- Whether it is appropriate to your circumstances



Exercise 10. Which type of survey method will you use?

A Personal Survey

A Telephone Survey

A Postal Survey



Exercise 11. Why have you chosen that method?

Questionnaires

The most valuable type of customer research is that which you do yourself - your Primary Research.

Your primary research will give you valuable information about the state of the market in your particular area. By using open questions you may well generate ideas that you hadn't thought of or come up with ways of operating that could generate sources of income that you were unaware of.

You will also start the important process of establishing contacts and generating an awareness of your presence in your particular market.

The first step is to decide which type of survey method you are going to use and the type of information you require.


Whatever type of survey method you choose you will have to ask every respondent exactly the same questions to give the survey any validity. The only effective way to do this is using a questionnaire.

A questionnaire will also give your interview a structure and will enable you to analyse the results.

The Purpose of Questionnaires

1. To obtain accurate information
2. To provide a structure to interviews
3. To facilitate data processing

If you are conducting a personal, or telephone, survey you will need an introductory paragraph at the beginning of the questionnaire. If you are conducting a postal survey you will have to use a covering letter.



Exercise 12. Write an introductory paragraph for a personal, or telephone, survey.

The Three Types of Questionnaire

1. Structured:

Contains few, if any, open questions. Relies on multi-choice and scale questions. Used in large surveys and where it is possible to anticipate the answers. Suitable for personal, telephone or postal surveys.

2. Semi- structured:

Contains some open questions and allows for a small amount of discussion and variation in answers. Used when a range of responses are expected. Often used in business to business research. Suitable for personal and telephone surveys.

3. Unstructured:

Allows for probing and in depth questions. Used for technical or specialist markets. Suitable for personal, telephone and group surveys but only in limited numbers.

Content and Layout

The content of your questionnaire will depend on the nature of your business and what specific information you are trying to acquire. However, certain items must be covered.

It is important to emphasise in the heading that it is Market Research.

Every questionnaire should include questions that are structured in such a way that the answers to the following questions can be calculated:-

- How many customers are there?
- How often do they buy?
- How much will they pay?
- Will they buy from You?

By analysing the answers to these questions you can get an estimate of your **Potential Future Sales**.

Additional questions will be needed to obtain further information specific to your product or service. There may be information you wish to acquire to enable you to make choices and decisions about the product or service you intend to offer.

Ask for personal details at the end of the questionnaire so that you have time to develop a rapport with the respondent.

If the respondent won't give an address, get a postcode - this will give you an indication if there is a specific area that you should target.