

The
Essential

**Pre-Launch
ONLINE SURVEY**

Checklist 



Bramm Research Inc.
Better Information. Better Solutions.

1ST Edition

The Essential Pre-Launch Online Survey Checklist



This checklist has been developed to help you with your next online survey. It is a simple tool that will insure that you've covered all the bases.

Please distribute, copy or reprint this material for your colleagues and clients.

You will find additional information in the appendix. Please contact me if you would like a review of your project, questionnaire or results. Also, please go to our website and sign-up for our newsletter to receive useful information related to survey research.



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Before You Do Anything

1

Determine why you are doing this survey. Step number one in the research process is to ask, “why are we conducting this survey”? Everything will flow from the answer to this question including the method and the questions you ask.

Before You Send Out Your Invitation

2

Send out a pre-announcement email to your respondents. Usually this will be a couple of days before the actual launch of the survey. This is just a short note to say that an important survey will be sent on a specific date.

Your Invitation

3

The invitation outlines objectives of the survey and explains how the results will be used. It gives respondents a valid reason to complete the questionnaire. It answers the question... “what’s in it for me”?

4

Your invitation contains the guarantee of confidentiality. Use wording along the lines of...“Your completed survey will be tabulated along with those from other respondents. Your responses are entirely confidential”.

5

We recommend that your invitation includes a completion date. This is the date when the fieldwork for the survey will be closed. This provides a sense of urgency and will usually help your response rate.

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6

Consider the use of an incentive. If appropriate you may offer all respondents a summary of the results. Alternatively, we often include a draw for a cash prize. However, we have found that offering all respondents something, no matter how small, works better than a draw.

7

Provide your respondents with a survey administrator contact name, email address and phone number. This individual will be able to answer any technical questions regarding the survey.

8

The invitation will be signed by a senior staff person. This may be the executive director or CEO. We recommend including contact information for this person. Also, indicate that they are available to answer any questions regarding the overall objectives of the survey.

Your Questionnaire

9

Your questionnaire has an introductory section that reiterates the purpose of the survey. It will once again provide a point of contact in case the respondent encounters a problem.

10

Your introduction gives respondents a brief overview of the survey. Think of it as a roadmap. Also divide your survey into sections with clearly marked headings.

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11

Consider what will happen if respondents only get part way through the survey and then quit. Have you captured key information that will allow you to use their partial responses? Consider putting key questions up front e.g. demographics.

12

Your survey platform should give respondent the option to save and continue the survey in case they are interrupted while completing it. Be sure to outline this feature in the introduction.

13

Review your questions. Are they clear and concise and expressed in simple language or are they vague and ambiguous? Have you eliminated acronyms and specialized language that may not be understood by all respondents?

14

Are you using open-ended questions sparingly? These can be time consuming for a respondent to complete. Only use them when necessary.

15

Ask yourself, "Is there common agreement in the terms I am using"? For example, we might ask, "In the past year have you used social media?" Do we mean since the beginning of the year or the past 52 weeks?

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16

Give very precise instructions for each question. For example, instruct the respondent to check “one box only” or “check all that apply”. Also, it’s a good idea to **emphasize** important words in the question or instructions.

17

If you are providing the respondent with a list of alternatives in a close-ended question, make sure that the list of responses contains all possibilities. This list should give them the opportunity to check “other”. This can be followed with “please specify” and a text box so that you can capture this information.

18

Don’t present your respondents with a long list and ask them to rank them in order of importance. This is a very challenging and frustrating task. It is better to present the list and ask them to pick the top three most important items.

19

Build a pretest into your schedule. Taking the time to have a handful of respondents review the questionnaire will insure that they understand the meaning of the questions and the instructions being used.

20

You’ve created your online survey. Have you tested it to make sure that it’s mobile friendly? An increasing percentage of your respondents will be completing the survey on a mobile device or a tablet.



Scheduling Reminders

21

I usually send out two or three reminders. Send out your first reminder about a week after your original invitation. Subsequent reminders will go on a weekly basis. Avoid sending out your invitations and reminders on either a Monday or a Friday.

22

When you send out your reminders you will want to remove the email addresses of those who have already responded. Some online survey platforms allow you to give each respondent a unique code that can be tracked. Note: this mechanism is used only to remove responders from subsequent invitations. It is not used link responses with individual respondents.

23

When you send out your final reminder make sure that respondents know that the survey is closing. This can be as simple as putting “final reminder” somewhere in the subject line. This lets all respondents who have been procrastinating know that it’s time to complete their survey.

After The Fieldwork Has Closed

24

Send out a note to all respondents once the survey has closed and you’ve had a look at the responses. This is where you thank your respondents for participating in the survey. But more importantly you tell them the top two or three findings of the research, how you are going to act upon these findings and when. This closes the loop and sets you up for your next survey. Respondents feel as though they’ve been heard and that the time taken to respond was worthwhile.

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We hope that you found this checklist useful. Sign-up on our website for our newsletter to receive news of other publications.

Bramm Research www.brammresearch.com has been conducting research surveys for more than 20 years. We have worked on hundreds of projects both in Canada and the U.S. We have experience in all types of survey research, from large-scale online surveys to focus groups and individual interviews.

We conduct studies within vertical/niche markets including surveys amongst members of various professional and business associations. Over the past few years we have conducted projects with architects, board directors, carpenters, doctors, farmers, insurance brokers, interior designers, lawyers, otolaryngologists, podiatrists, retirees and truckers.

I am a member of the Canadian Society of Association Executives (CSAE) and the research partner of the Trillium Chapter (Ontario) of the CSAE.

As well, I have been a member of the MRIA (Marketing Research and Intelligence Association) for 26 years. I hold the CMRP designation (Certified Marketing Research Professional).



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