

Drayton Bird

# Use Questionnaires



***“Some techniques - and questionnaires are a good example - are so deceptively simple and obvious that people ignore them. They're not "creative" enough. Well, screw "creative". I like things that work. And questionnaires work.”***

A friend in Australia, Gail Brennan, recently sent me a question about questionnaire responses.

Nobody knows more about this than my old colleague Andrew Boddington, who is one of the best direct marketers I know, so after giving my opinion, I referred her to him.

Then it suddenly occurred to me that this is a subject well worth talking about, and nobody knows more about it than Andrew.

I have worked with him for many years now off and on. His speciality, I guess, is database. But his knowledge of marketing is much wider - and he makes everything seem so simple.

So, after one or two comments from me, he has kindly written a quick guide to what you should know about the subject.

### **Why questionnaires?**

Some techniques - and questionnaires are a good example - are so deceptively simple and obvious that people ignore them. They're not "creative" enough.

Well, screw "creative". I like things that work. And questionnaires work.

People love to give you their opinions. The questionnaire is a very unthreatening way to approach people.

You just have to ask nicely and often amazingly high percentages will reply.

When they do reply, this gives you an excuse to talk to them again

Here is Andrew's advice for you:

- People agonise over making the survey short for maximum response, but do not fear a long survey. As long as the questions seem 'natural and logical' to the reader, they will complete it, once the first few questions have been answered.
- If you have some questions which are more critical than others, make sure the survey has clear sections - the first with the main questions, then the next introduced with the words "You do not have to answer these, but if you do so, it'll mean x, y and z benefit...and will only take a

few minutes more..."

- Response can be increased by a variety of details. A lot depends on the honesty in the introduction, why you are doing the survey, what is in it for the responder (altruism, sense of helping self or fellows, and maybe even the chance to win something in a free draw, as a gesture of thanks), explaining how the results will be used, and even how they can see a copy of the results (usually a simple summary).
- People love being asked for their opinion ('your opinion matters to us'), so use flattery to increase participation.
- Make the introduction from someone they already might know and respect, rather than have no name at all. Even have it look like a letter, with a signature and photo for a touch of warmth.



- Much depends on the layout, the clarity of type face and typography, and the use of colours, tints and boxed sections make it look less daunting.
- It sounds radical, but question how much response is really needed. Statistically a lower response sample may be fine, so that the views are representative.
- Try a reminder mailing/emailing after the initial response has dried up from the first survey. Non-responders are not against responding, they just have busy lives, are lazy, like all human beings, so a courteous reminder will typically get half as much response again.
- Consider how/when the survey gets handed over, emailed or mailed. Is there a better moment, so they'll be more disposed to take part?

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### About the Author

In 2003, the Chartered Institute of Marketing named Drayton Bird one of 50 living individuals who have shaped today's marketing. He has spoken in 53 countries for many organisations, and much of what he discusses derive from his work with many of the world's greatest brands. These include American Express, Audi, Bentley, British Airways, Cisco, Deutsche Post, Ford, IBM, McKinsey, Mercedes, Microsoft, Nestle, Philips, Procter & Gamble, Toyota, Unilever, Visa and Volkswagen. In various capacities – mostly as a writer – Drayton has helped sell everything from Airbus planes to Peppa Pig. His book, *Commonsense Direct and Digital Marketing*, out in 17 languages, has been the UK's best seller on the subject every year since 1982.

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