



7 BIGGEST MISTAKES BUSINESSES Make With Surveys!

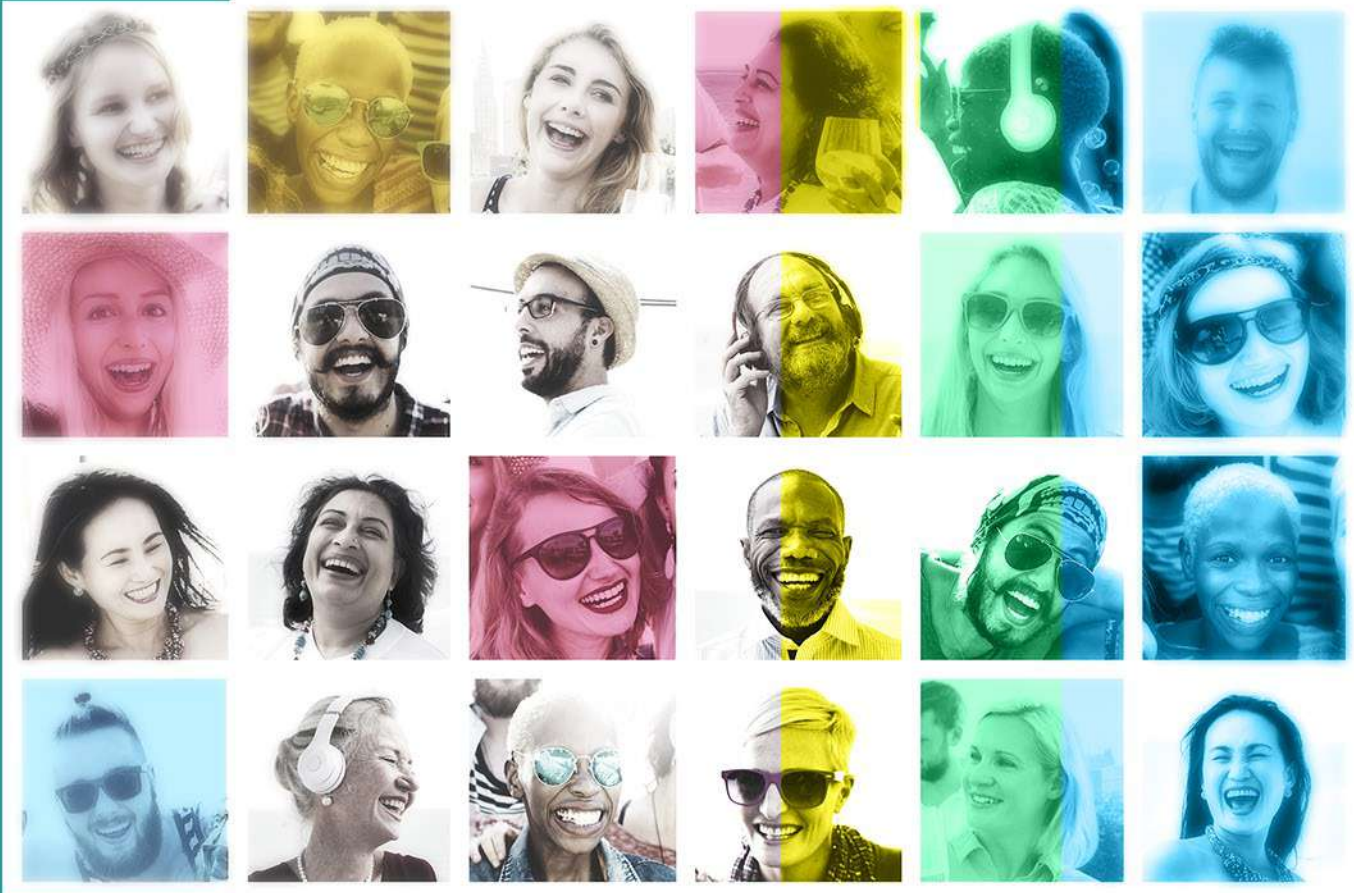
By: Eriks Celmins

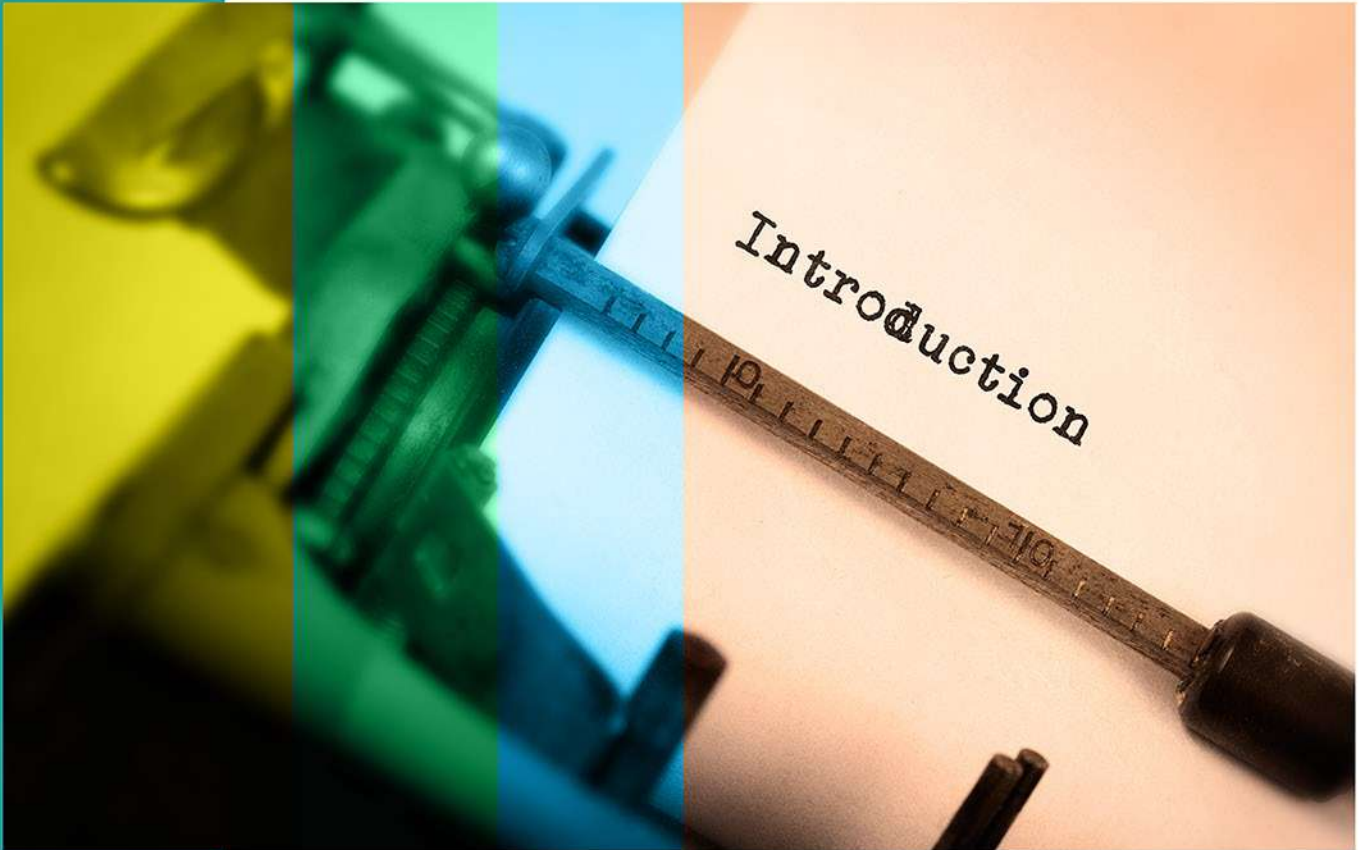


Global innovator

The Engagement Method

IT MIGHT BE YOUR SURVEY, BUT IT'S THE CUSTOMER WHO'S IN CONTROL!





Engagement is all about making your survey warm, friendly, even a fun experience. So participants feel comfortable sharing their time, opinions and feelings with you.

Of course, data collection has to be an organised, structured process. But to engage with people - your VIP customers - and uncover actionable insights, not just data, it's no different to your other brand touchpoints.

Where it's not just about the transaction, but building a strong relationship and longer Customer Lifetime Value.

The customer is in control of your reputation. And they'll tell their social circles how they feel at your touchpoints, giving you a thumbs up or down.

In these tips I show you how to avoid 7 common mistakes when building your survey.

1

DON'T FORGET THE LEGALS



All marketing is relationships. And for your insights program to be an effective touchpoint, customers must feel safe, respected, and completely trusting of your intentions.

Tell participants their survey answers will be merged with everyone else's data, and they won't be personally identified in the analysis.

In an online forum this can be managed by using first or nick-names only. Or even anonymous code-names in a more sensitive scenario e.g. B2B.

“ *Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships.* ”

STEPHEN R. COVEY

Make it clear their information won't be shared with any third-parties for sales purposes. People are well aware that databases are often on-sold, exposing to them to spam. The issue has been around a lot longer than Facebook!

And BTW that includes strictly avoiding the temptation to contact and upsell a customer, based on a survey question response! This is wrong, and a data-protection, legal nightmare.

HOT TIP

Parental Permission is needed for participation of Children (under-14), and for 'sensitive' questions of Young People (14-17). Best to avoid topics like alcohol, sex, and gambling, unless you have strict legal procedures in place. Check out esomar.org for guidelines.

2

BE TRANSPARENT



Don't try and hide who you are. Be up-front and honest, and your customers will respect you for it. Tell them WHY you're doing the survey, and how they're tangibly helping you.

If you're trying to solve a problem, then tell them something about it. Even if you're concerned about revealing a weakness or tipping off competitors. From a customer perspective, your candour will be powerfully engaging.

“ A lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity.

DALAI LAMA ”

Although we don't advocate a long questionnaire, people are more likely to be forgiving and complete the survey, if you communicate a strong sense of purpose. It's all about them feeling involved in your issue.

And you'll receive honest, direct answers in reply.

HOT TIP

Turn your decision-making dilemma into a question. E.g. "I'm trying to decide whether to do X or Y. Which one would you choose?" You could even have an open-ended "And why do you say that?" for added insight.

3

THINK OF PEOPLE, NOT STATS



It's very easy to be immersed in data, if not overwhelmed, by an endless stream of metrics, KPIs etc. Understandably essential for management to run the business.

But it can mean being disconnected with the source of all the numbers. Real, flesh & blood people who are unique individuals, with their own stories, and experiences with the brands in their life.

So when building your survey, be aware that individuals in the same narrow Demographic group, such as age & gender, can have totally different 'Psychographics' (or mindsets).

“ *It's hard to target a message to a generic 35-year-old middle-class working mother of two. It's much easier to target a message to Jennifer, who has two children under four, works as a paralegal, and is always looking for quick but healthy dinners and ways to spend more time with her kids and less time on housework.*

ELIZABETH GARDNER ”

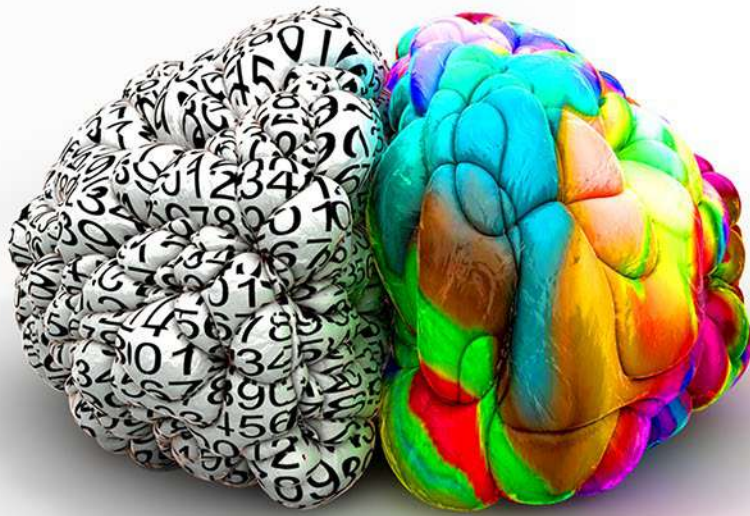
Filtering your results on a particular mindset - how they prefer to use your product, or the motivators of their usage, brings you closer to your participants as people. And facilitates development of profiled segments, marketing more in tune with their emotional drivers.

HOT TIP

Include a small number of 'mindset' questions. E.g. whether they are fast or slow to adopt new products, or whether they regard shopping as therapeutic or a chore. Customise them to your category, and use the data to create customer personas.

4

ENGAGE THE WHOLE BRAIN



For good reason research is often a Left-Brain activity, tied-up in logic, metrics and facts. It's about highly-structured tasks and content.

And surveys the most common form that most of us are exposed to as marketers – whether conducting a study, or being a participant in someone else's project.

Which is all fine in terms of organising the activity. But not always helpful when it comes to integrating with brand values, and reaching into your customer's head. To find the deeper, emotional drivers in the Right-Brain.

“ *The Right-Brain qualities of inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness, and meaning, increasingly will determine who flourishes, and who flounders.* ”

DANIEL H. PINK

So try using multimedia elements in questions. The right image or GIF, or even a video or audio clip can trigger a more engaged response. Though keep it short for mobile phones.

And your survey will feel relatable, stimulating and fun!

HOT TIP

Take care not to 'lead' the participant. E.g. if you were asking where they like to holiday, you wouldn't have an image of the beach. Instead you could show suitcases ready at the door.

5

WRITE LIKE A FRIEND, NOT A DATA SCIENTIST



After years of conditioning, it's natural for a marketer to feel that a questionnaire has to be written in formal, academic language to avoid bias, and unconsciously 'leading' responses.

Of course, you do have to avoid ambiguous or confusing questions. Or using your industry's jargon, understandable only to your team. Which is why testing your questions with outsiders can help.

On the other hand, also avoid try-hard slang.

“ I have this perception that my friends are the consumer, and if it doesn't work on them, then I'm not doing it.

RHIANNA ”

Plain & simple is the mantra – think Twitter with the disciplines of word economy and one thought at a time.

A formal question may say “Please rate our service performance, on each of the following items”, compared to a friendlier “How you feel about these features of our service?”

HOT TIP

Attractive visual presentation of your layout, questions and ratings scales is vital for engagement. Depending on the survey platform, you may be able to access fun tools like emoji scales and sliders.

6

MAKE IT INVITING



Instead of asking people to “fill out a survey”, like a tax-form, ask for their help to improve your product or service, to make it better for them.

In this automated bot-world, people respond really well to personalised, human contact.

And being asked for their opinion by a decision-maker. You could even send a short video from the CEO as an explainer of the purpose.

“ *It’s easier to love a brand when the brand loves you back* ”
SETH GODIN

The invitation can be sharpened further by reflecting the target you’re trying to reach. This especially helps if the project is aimed at a particular segment of your database. Which BTW is often more productive than a more generalised, catch-all exercise.

So for a sports club membership survey, for instance, you might say “I invite you as a long-time, valued member, to help me plan next season. Along with others like yourself, your experienced opinions will be invaluable.”

HOT TIP

Customers usually complete your survey in isolation. So use language that creates a ‘sense of community’, where people feel part of a group collaboration to solve your issues.

7

INCENTIVISE CREATIVELY



While its necessary to basically thank and reward people for their time in helping you, the tone of how this is framed makes a big difference to engagement.

It's not necessarily about ramping up the cash value. Because there's a point where ever-escalating rewards won't attract someone to a perceived, low-engagement experience.

WIIFM (What's In It For Me) comes from the emotional benefit of 'making a difference', as well as cash or merchandise prize-draws.

“ I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

MAYA ANGELOU ”

Consider a creative 'money can't buy' gift, where you offer a premium opportunity related to your brand. Which will also generate social sharing in that person's circle, amplifying your branding, all from one insights project.

HOT TIP

It's about people feeling valued, not the value of the incentive.

BONUS TIP

COLLECT PERMISSION



At the end of your survey, ALWAYS include a Research-Permission question. Write in a friendly way like “Could I occasionally ask for your opinions again in the future?”

The idea is to build a profiled database/panel of people who actively want to help you. Which makes it much easier and faster to send out an urgent question, and not bombard your whole database.

Don't burn them though, restrict contacts to a minimum once every 6-8 weeks. And consider inviting them to other types of engaging projects like online discussion groups.

NEVER send promotional/sales messages. If they're also on your sales database, that's separate, and business as usual. But your 'Insights Panel' should only be for that purpose, to preserve the integrity of your relationship and data. And give it a warm & friendly name in your communications.

THE TAKEAWAY

Customer surveys can now be created and distributed in many different ways. But whatever the method, the fundamentals of Trust & Engagement always apply.

So, always say thank you! Not only send a personal note to each participant, but also share-back the highlights of YOUR learnings, and THEIR influence. You could even do a short video. Make them feel like a brand VIP, and they'll be more likely to get involved next time.

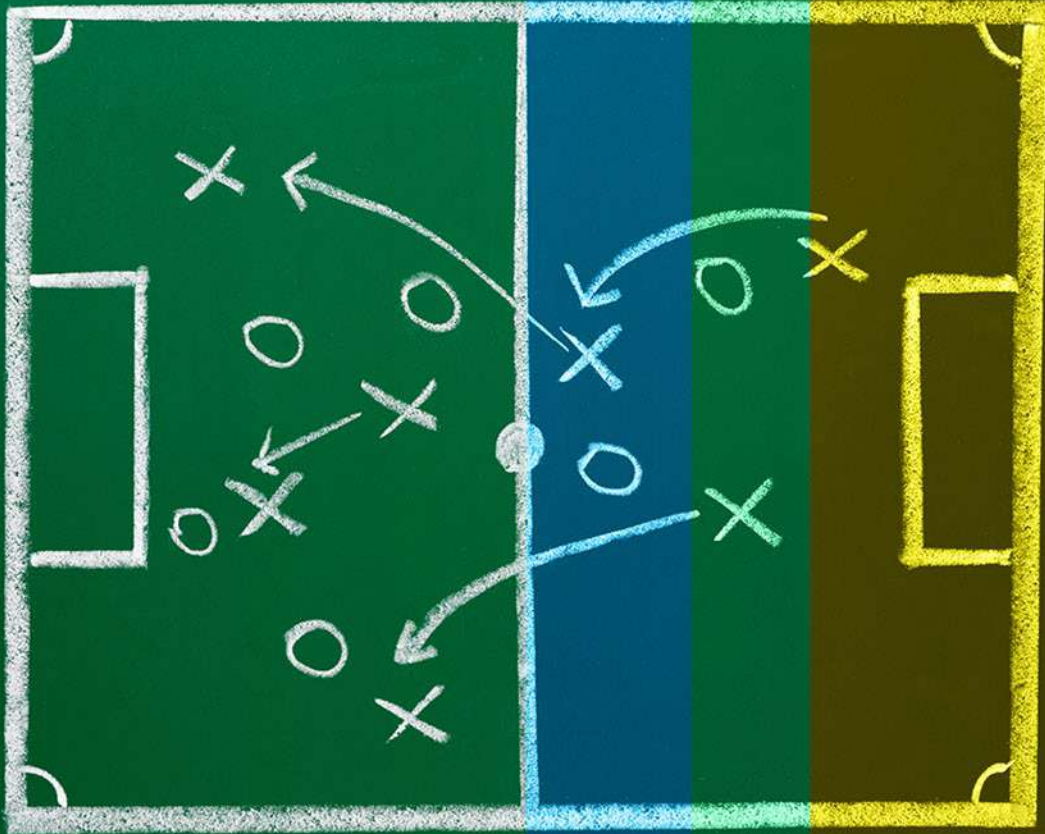




TIP SHEET SUMMARY

- 1 Don't forget the legals
- 2 Be transparent
- 3 Think of people, not stats
- 4 Engage the whole brain
- 5 Write like a friend, not a data scientist
- 6 Make it inviting
- 7 Incentivise creatively

**BONUS TIP -
COLLECT PERMISSION**



HOT TIP ACTION LIST

Parental Permission is needed for participation of Children (under-14), and for 'sensitive' questions of Young People (14-17). Best to avoid topics like alcohol, sex, and gambling, unless you have strict legal procedures in place. Check out esomar.org for guidelines.

Turn your decision-making dilemma into a question. E.g. "I'm trying to decide whether to do X or Y. Which one would you choose?" You could even have an open-ended "And why do you say that?" for added insight.

Include a small number of 'mindset' questions. E.g. whether they are fast or slow to adopt new products, or whether they regard shopping as therapeutic or a chore. Customise them to your category, and use the data to create customer personas.

Take care not to 'lead' the participant. E.g. if you were asking where they like to holiday, you wouldn't have an image of the beach. Instead you could show suitcases ready at the door.

Attractive visual presentation of your layout, questions and ratings scales is vital for engagement. Depending on the survey platform, you may be able to access fun tools like emoji scales and sliders.

Customers usually complete your survey in isolation. So use language that creates a 'sense of community', where people feel part of a group collaboration on your issues.

It's about people feeling valued, not the value of the incentive.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eriks Celmins brings a wealth of global experience in talking to media & entertainment audiences. As a long-time People First Research consultant, in both quantitative & qualitative techniques.

He is the innovative mind behind The Engagement Method, helping businesses gather actionable insights and build customer relationships.

Eriks passionately believes in the power of research as conversation. Which you can access on his new social-style, mobile-qual platform **cliizii** ... **Customer Led Insights** made easy.

Full Member of AMSRS (Australian Market & Social Research Society).





Engage
4 Insights
People First Research