



Collaboration

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# Comms Questionnaire Essentials – Quick Tips

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## Tip 3

### 'Other, please specify' is your friend

Sometimes it's just not possible to know all of the possible answers to a question. If you're in doubt about whether your answer list is complete, then include an 'other' option. This is particularly useful if you are looking to understand the impact of a problem or list of information sources, for example.



## Tip 1

### Know the answers you're looking for

Do you already have a story or headlines in mind? Do you have a hypothesis to validate? Do you have an impact or mastery model to create? Knowing these in advance make the questionnaire-writing much easier! By starting with desired outputs, we can easily test whether the questions are likely to lead to that specific headline or model (depending on the actual data of course!). The questions should support the story of the headline and by being clever we can make sure we have 'back-ups for an alternative headline' which provide a great narrative, even if you don't quite get the key headlines you were hoping for. However, remember also not to make the questions too self-serving!



## Tip 2

### Use closed questions

Instead of open questions try to use closed questions that have a list of ready-made responses or coded answers (i.e. code frames) that respondents can tick.

- > by doing this people only have a few options of how to answer the question. Having open questions leads to lots of uncategorised data that can be difficult to convert to stats or headlines. However, open questions are good if you want quotes to back up a point.
- > Closed questions with a relevant, comprehensive (Googling around the question subject will help you with this!) list of answers will allow you to get meaningful percentages.



## Tip 4

### Get more impactful stats

If you want to increase your chances of getting one or two impactful stats then using shorter or more consolidated codes frames is the best option. Long code frames are the equivalent of 'too much choice', and results may be too varied to single out any one option. Another way of getting higher percentages is to use multiple response questions (i.e. tick all that apply); this means that people can check lots of different answers so getting higher percentages for each code.



## Tip 5

### Avoid ranking questions – make things easy cognitively

To make it as easy as possible for respondents, try to avoid ranking questions (e.g. what's your 1st, 2nd, 3rd choice). A significant amount of mental effort is required to order every option, it adds time and those who find it too difficult will just choose randomly so they can get through to the next question, resulting in inaccurate data.

- > If you must use ranking questions, try to limit the number of options (codes) to between 3 and 5.

Instead use a rating question or Likert scale (e.g. marks out of 5 or 10, strongly agree, disagree etc.). This not only makes the questions easier to answer, but also provides more sensitivity in the responses, whilst still allowing them to be reported as 'first' or 'most preferred'. The sensitivity of the data can then not only be used for PR research, but also more complex analysis.



### Tip 6

#### Make sure that the format is interesting

Try to mix it up with short and long questions. Include a few images, or a video if relevant. If you can, put some simple to answer questions among a set that require more thought.

Try not to ask lots of grid questions (i.e. rating questions), as these can become very tedious to answer. Keeping respondents interested increases the quality of responses, and the speed of fieldwork, as people are less likely to quit halfway through!

### Tip 7

#### Watch the length

We generally recommend sticking to a maximum of 30 questions, as more than this can cause people lose interest. However, also be mindful that 15 long or complex questions can be the same survey length as 30 short or simple questions. If a survey is too long, the questions towards the end can fall victim to respondent fatigue, meaning responses will drop in quality. So, try to be concise and avoid 'nice to have's. Respondents prefer the shorter questionnaires (and they cost less too!).

### Tip 8

#### Be mindful of the audience sensitivities

Try not to be offensive, even if you want to create a thought provoking or controversial headline. Ask yourself how you would feel if you were in the shoes of the respondent and asked that question.

### Tip 9

#### Think multiple topics

Consider dividing the questionnaire into different sections covering varying topics. You can then release one campaign or short white paper per quarter, throughout the year from just one survey. Most trend data surveys have a shelf life of 12 months. The larger the scale project and the broader the topics, the longer you can tap into the results, even forming the basis as reference for other people's commentary. Topical surveys are relevant to journalist for around 6 months.

### Tip 10

#### Ask us to review your questions

We have extensive experience reviewing questionnaires to help make the more concise, flow better or align more closely to predicted headlines. Our questionnaire services generally come in three levels:

- > **Free advice** – offered on all ready-written questionnaires
- > **Semi questionnaire design** – usually involves questions and headlines being written by the client, which we create into a fully formed questionnaire along with code frames
- > **Full questionnaire design** – as it says on the tin!



Sapio help you outline your model, collect evidence and map out the stages. All you need to do is let the world know about the great things you've uncovered.

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