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# Here's How to Get Ready for the New Year

Sunday, 21 December 2008

For anyone with a website, the next few weeks is a good time to be thinking about your goals for next year.

To get your business started on the right path in 2009 it's valuable to know what worked in 2008.

Which means it's a great time to be asking your customers what they think; so you can plan ahead.

An online survey is going to be the quickest and easiest way to get the information you need without overloading your customers.

Did you know that...

Surveys conducted by phone take between 4 to 6 weeks to complete, posted & self-administered surveys take between 5 & 7 weeks, whilst web surveys only take 20 days or less.

When planning to run a web survey there are a few things you can do to help get great results.

Decide on your topic

Be specific. It's better to run surveys frequently that stick to a single topic than to create a survey that would rival the National Census questionnaire.

Decide when you'll conduct the survey

Watch out for holidays and other events that could impact on people having time to answer your questions.

Write your questions

Use the framing questions below to keep you on track

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Does the question give you the information you want to know?

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Will this question give you answers that will help achieve your goals?

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Is this question on topic or is it unrelated to your goals?

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How will you use the answers this question will get?

Decide on an incentive

Having an incentive increases the chances that you'll get lots of people answering your questions. The incentive may be that they get to see the survey results, you might choose to reward everyone either with a gift or a donation, or have a lottery where only one person wins a prize.

Create your survey

Choose a service that best suits your budget and needs. Here's a list to get you started -

SurveyMonkey - [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)  
SurveyGizmo - [www.surveygizmo.com](http://www.surveygizmo.com)  
PollDaddy - [www.polldaddy.com](http://www.polldaddy.com)  
Question Pro - [www.questionpro.com](http://www.questionpro.com)  
Public Eye - [www.publiceye.com.au](http://www.publiceye.com.au)

Guidelines for designing your survey

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Keep the questions easy to read - use (Arial, Verdana or Helvetica) bold black text on a white background.

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Limit the number of questions per page to avoid the frustration of scrolling.

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Use previous and next buttons when your survey has more questions than can fit on a single page.

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Show a progress bar on each page of your survey so that it's clear how much has been completed and how much more is still to be done.

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Number all questions to make it easy for people to work out if all have been answered.

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Group similar questions together to assist with concentration.

Invite your customers to contribute

Give them a bit of background so they know the purpose and goal of what you're doing, how long the survey is active for, what the incentive is, how their information & privacy will be protected, and some contact details for it they have questions or in the case of things going wrong.

Decide whether to send reminders

Send reminders if you need to get as many responses as possible. Stimulate their senses by mentioning the earlier invitation, sympathising with their shortage of time and mention why it's important for them to answer the questions (remind them of the incentive & deadline for the survey).

Thank people

Thank the people who took part and answered your questions so they know they're appreciated and will be encouraged to respond again next time.

Evaluate and act on the data

Whether the results are predicatble or surprising, you need to have the courage to act on what you've learnt.

Armed with the data you now have everything you need to plan how you'll achieve your business goals for 2009.

To see how you can put a survey into action quickly and easily, here's one we created using Survey Gizmo.

By providing genuine and heartfelt responses to the questions we can better serve your needs in 2009.

Related Reading

How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide

ISBN: 978-1412966689

Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation (Applied Social Research Methods)

ISBN: 978-0803945838

## Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method

ISBN: 978-0471698685