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Simple steps for online survey success by Bloomtools

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Customer feedback is an important part of any business.  Without it, businesses often wouldnâ€™t know when they need to make changes, add new products or improve their services.  Thanks to the Internet and email, there is now a fast and simple way to get feedback from your customers â€“ online surveys.

An online survey is the same as a normal survey â€“ a series of questions that the respondent has to answer â€“ except itâ€™s on the Internet.  They are a great option for businesses of any size for collecting information from their customers or other groups.  Not only are they easy to create, they are also very cost-effective to distribute and collecting and analysing results is simple.

You can create basic online surveys in your email program, but for the most professional presentation and the best results, you need to use an email marketing system like Bloomtools Ezy Communicator.

Here are the 6 steps to creating an effective online survey:

1. Prepare yourself

There is no point in throwing together a few survey questions and sending it straight out to your entire database â€“ youâ€™ll be very lucky if you get anything valuable back.  In order to get the best results from your survey, you need to spend a bit of time planning before you send it.

The first thing to do is to set out your objectives. Think about exactly what the purpose of your survey is and what you want to achieve with it.  It may be something simple like improving customer service or something more specific like streamlining your ordering system with suppliers.  Outlining your objectives also helps you target your survey to particular groups within your database. Sending the same survey to your whole database will probably be a waste of time because there are so many different groups within your list.

Spending some time planning your survey will make it far easier to write the questions you need and ensure you get the best results possible.

2. Brainstorm your questions

So know you what the survey is about and who it is aimed at, itâ€™s time to start writing your questions. Sit down with a pen and paper or use a whiteboard to brainstorm everything you want to ask your recipients about in the survey.  Donâ€™t worry about formally writing up the questions straight away â€“ ge your ideas down first, and then finalise the wording of the questions later.

You should start of with basic information such as age, gender and location just so you have an idea of what type of person the recipient is.  Itâ€™s best not to ask for a name, because people are far more likely to respond honestly to an anonymous survey.  Also, donâ€™t be too specific with these questions â€ use age brackets like â€™20-30 years oldâ€™ and general locations like states or regions.

After youâ€™ve got the basics covered, you need to focus on the serious questions.  The nature of these questions will really depend on what you are trying to achieve with your survey, so there are no real rules or guidelines, apart from keeping it as short, simple and relevant as possible.

3. Organise your questions

The next step in creating an online survey is to organise your questions.  This involves the structure of the answers for your questions and also the order in which your questions appear.

With the answers to your questions, you have three main options â€“ free text, multiple choice or multiple tick boxes.  Free text means you provide a space for the recipient to answer in any way they please and write as much as they want.  This is best for questions that need a longer, more detailed answer, but it does make measuring results difficult.  Multiple choice involves listing several answer options for the question and allowing the recipient to choose only one answer.  Multiple choice is quick and simple for participants, but can restrict their answer.  Multiple tick boxes are similar to multiple choice â€“ several options for the participants to choose from, but it differs in the fact that respondents are not restricted to one answer, so they can tick as many boxes as they like.  The type of answer structure you choose can impact on the results of your survey, so make you sure you choose logical answers that will encourage people to participate.

Now that your questions and answers are ready to go, you need to put the questions in the most logical and easy to understand order.  Apart from starting with basic demographic information like age, the placement of your questions is really up to and what you think makes the most sense. Also, if your survey is long it is a good idea to divide your questions into sections such as â€œStore Layoutâ€•, â€œProduct Rangeâ€• and â€œStaff Serviceâ€•, to make it easier for your contacts to navigate understand.

4. Attract participants

Now that youâ€™ve created this great survey, how do you get people to participate in it?  Distributing and promoting your online survey is easy and cost effective thanks to email.  Simply use your email marketing program (like the Bloomtools Ezy Communicator) to email your survey to your contacts.

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